

ST PIUS X HIGH SCHOOL POLICY STATEMENT EXCURSIONS

1. Rationale

Excursions are regarded as valuable educational experiences, integral to teaching and learning within a catholic school. Excursions potentially pose risks to the health, safety and welfare of participants. The instructions and guidelines in this document are directed at managing such risks. St. Pius X High School is committed to providing a safe, secure, disciplined and quality learning environment in which students can develop their individual talents, interests and abilities through a curriculum that fosters the intellectual, physical, social and moral development of the student. Excursions are a valuable teaching and learning vehicle and can be integral to quality curriculum delivery.

Excursions (Definition):

- 1.1 The term excursion when used in this policy relates to a learning experience external to the school site.
- 1.2 The student group participating in the excursion may be a class or classes or students drawn from a number of classes. They may be, for example, a team, a performance group or an audience for a performance.
- 1.3 An excursion can range from a brief visit of less than one hour to a local point of interest, to an extended journey occupying a number of days, weeks or months requiring overnight or long term accommodation.

2. Aims

- 2.1 St Pius X High School, through this Excursions Policy aims:
 - 2.1.1 To integrate meaningful learning experiences that involve activities which are external to the school environment into the school curriculum.
 - 2.1.2 To allow students to participate in activities which involve integration within the wider community.

3. Implementation

3.1 Determining the educational value of an excursion must take account of the needs and resources of the school, the needs of the students and the total learning program of St. Pius X High School.

- 3.1.1 While recognising the potential benefits of excursions, teachers at St. Pius X High School must also recognise that such activities may interrupt normal learning routines of students. Accordingly, the principal (or his/her delegate) must consider the educational value of all proposed excursions in relation to the overall needs and resources of the school.
- 3.1.2 The rationale for any excursion should reference the school's curriculum objectives and should be relevant to their achievement. Prior to any excursion there must be consultation between the principal (or his/her delegate) and teacher or teachers concerned with its organisation.
- 3.1.3 Parents or caregivers must be informed in writing of the details of any excursion, including details of all planned activities, their educational value, the method of transport and level of supervision.
- 3.1.4 Prior to approving excursions involving film screenings and live performances, principals must give careful consideration to the appropriateness of the film or performance for the proposed viewing group.
- 3.1.5 Schools must not arrange for students to attend any film or view a video or DVD that is classified R 18+. Films classified MA 15+ are also legally restricted. Parents and caregivers must be informed of the classification of the film and provided with the opportunity to withdraw their child. The principal may delegate the task of previewing the entire film or performance to an executive member of staff who will then advise the principal as to its suitability and acceptability. The principal, however, retains responsibility for granting approval and must take into account the age and maturity of the students.

3.2 Excursions are inclusive, and all students within the specific learning group are to be given the opportunity to participate.

- 3.2.1 Unless exceptional circumstances exist, all students should have the opportunity to participate in an excursion. Costs should be organised to ensure as far as possible that there is no undue financial burden imposed upon individual members of the group or their families. Where financial hardship is understood to be the reason for a student's non-participation, the school should endeavour to provide financial assistance where this is possible.
- 3.2.2 The support needs of students with disabilities or medical conditions will require careful consideration and consultation with parents and caregivers. Appropriate support should be provided for these students so they can access the learning experiences available through excursions.
- 3.2.3 Parents and caregivers, including those of students from language backgrounds other than English, should be informed of the educational value of the excursion and how it is an integral part of the learning program.

3.3 A duty of care is owed to students in the school environment and while on excursions.

- 3.3.1 Excursions are potentially the most hazardous activities for school-related accidents. The duty of care owed to students applies whether the school excursion is held during school hours, after school, on the weekend or during school holidays.

- 3.3.2 Teachers planning excursions must consider emergency response planning, including medical procedures, and should check relevant forecasts or other safety warnings, including fire bans, immediately prior to events. In consultation with relevant authorities, schools must be prepared to alter or cancel excursions due to emerging safety concerns. These decisions must be communicated to students and parents as soon as possible.
- 3.3.3 The principal is to ensure that any excursion involving swimming or water activities and any excursion involving overnight stays, includes a member of staff who possesses current accreditation in cardiopulmonary resuscitation and emergency care. All other excursions must be accompanied by a member of staff who has undertaken emergency care training and whose qualifications are current. A first aid kit must be taken on all excursions.
- 3.3.4 No person (teacher, support staff, volunteer) who is attending an excursion to supervise students may consume alcohol at any time during the excursion regardless of the length of the excursion.

3.4 Teacher to student ratio.

- 3.4.1 The number of teachers to accompany the students for each excursion is to be determined by the principal. Decisions about the number of students and teachers should take into account factors such as the age of the students, their maturity, the location of the excursion, specific needs of students, anticipated behaviour and the nature of the activities to be undertaken.
- 3.4.2 Principals in determining the number of teachers required for an excursion should be guided by CSO directives on class sizes. Fewer students per teacher will be necessary for some excursions such as bushwalking.
- 3.4.3 Particular aquatic and outdoor recreation activities have specific teacher/instructor to student ratios.
- 3.4.4 There must be sufficient numbers of appropriate, responsible adults, including support teachers and teachers' aides, to ensure and assist with adequate supervision.
- 3.4.5 On overnight and extended excursions, supervisory and accommodation arrangements are to be such that no staff member or accompanying adult is placed in a position where there is potential for allegations of improper conduct to be made. In particular, sleeping and washing arrangements should not place any adults in a situation where the propriety of their behaviour could be questioned.
- 3.4.6 For coeducational groups, male and female staff supervisors are required. Organising teachers experiencing difficulties in meeting this requirement should consult the school principal.

3.5 The Catholic Schools Office's (CSO) duty of care owed to students for the duration of an excursion cannot be delegated from the school to parents, caregivers, volunteers or employees of external organisations.

- 3.5.1 Parents or caregivers will frequently volunteer to assist in excursions. The number of parents or caregivers who might be of assistance will vary according to circumstances.
- 3.5.2 The principal must be satisfied that there are sufficient teachers to maintain adequate control of the whole excursion. Teachers retain the ultimate responsibility for supervision.
- 3.5.3 In most circumstances volunteers who assist on excursions should not have to pay to attend.
- 3.5.4 Volunteers must be briefed on safety and behaviour measures prior to the excursion to ensure competency. The Teacher-in-Charge of the excursion must ensure that all volunteers accompanying the excursion as supervisors of students are currently listed on the CSO's Child Protection Declarations Register of Volunteers.
- 3.5.5 Potential volunteers must not accompany the excursion if they are not currently listed on the CSO's Child Protection Declarations Register of Volunteers.

3.6 A risk assessment is to be conducted and a risk management plan developed before seeking approval for any excursion.

- 3.6.1 The current WHS Act and Regulation require principals and teachers organising excursions to use risk management to ensure the health and safety of students, staff and excursion volunteers. Risk management supports better decision making by contributing to a greater insight into the potential risks and their impacts.
- 3.6.2 The CSO provides advice on the major steps in the risk management process as it relates to school excursions. A sample risk management plan proforma for excursions is also provided.
- 3.6.3 The Teacher-in-Charge of the excursion should ensure that individual health care plans for students with health care needs or disabilities include provision for the management of such conditions on excursions. A copy of this plan should be given to the relevant supervisors and its implications discussed before departure.
- 3.6.4 The extent of pre-excursion planning will depend on the nature of the excursion and its location. In many situations prior experience of the site or a briefing from a responsible person with a sound knowledge of the site will suffice. However, a visit to the proposed excursion site is recommended when unfamiliar or potentially high risk activities are contemplated e.g. wilderness camping or field trips to inhospitable terrain. In these circumstances the pre-excursion visit should address issues such as access, injury prevention and emergency evacuation.

3.7 Signed consent forms granting permission for students to participate in an excursion and a medical information form are to be obtained from parents or caregivers.

The fact that parents or caregivers consent to the participation of their child in an excursion should not be taken as removing the responsibility of school staff for taking all reasonable steps to ensure the particular activity is safe.

- 3.7.1 A School excursion: Parent or caregiver information sheet that includes School excursion Consent form and a School excursion: Medical information form must be issued.
- 3.7.2 For many excursions it will not be necessary to collect a new medical information form. Medical information held by the school should, however, be updated as required and take account of activities proposed for the excursion.
- 3.7.3 Information identifying food or other allergies, special dietary needs and other health care related issues (including prior conditions such as medical procedures in the last 12 months), should be provided by parents or caregivers. This information will assist planning to support students and minimise risks, including the risk of exposure to allergens for students at risk of anaphylactic reactions.
- 3.7.4 Excursion consent forms do not create any waiver of rights by the parent or the caregiver in relation to their child. The main purpose of consent forms and information forms is to give enough detail to parents and caregivers to allow them to make an informed decision about whether their child should attend the excursion. It is also to assist the parent or caregiver to provide relevant information to the school about the child's care needs.
- 3.7.5 The use of excursion consent forms covering multiple excursions should be limited. If excursions involving the same or very similar activities are to take place on a regular basis, e.g. each week for a term, one consent form may suffice. However, if a significant variation in the activities occurs, a separate consent form is required.
- 3.7.6 In exceptional circumstances, where it is not possible to obtain signed consent forms from parents or caregivers, oral approval can be sought. The principal must keep a written record of any oral approvals given by parents or caregivers.

- 3.7.7 When it is inappropriate to obtain parental or caregiver consent because of the age or living circumstances of the student, the consent can be sought from any other person considered appropriate by the principal. If no other person is available, written agreement to participate in the excursion must be obtained from the student.
- 3.7.8 If parents or caregivers do not permit participation of a student in an excursion, the school will make available a sound alternative educational experience where possible.
- 3.7.9 Collection of personal information such as consent and medical information should be done consistent with the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act.
- 3.7.10 No teacher, support staff or volunteer attending an excursion to supervise students may transport students in their own vehicle at any time unless they have written, signed parental permission to do so in advance of the excursion. On the rare occasion where it may become necessary to transport a student in a privately owned vehicle without such permission having been previously granted, the person responsible for transporting the student must seek permission to do so from the Principal. In emergency situations it is understood that time may not be available to seek such permission, in which case the decision to transport the student may be made by the most senior staff member present. At all times the safety of the student is paramount.

3.8 Safe transport or a safe walking route is to be organised for excursions.

- 3.8.1 In some circumstances where the site of the excursion is close to the school, it will be appropriate for students and their supervisors to walk to the site. The decision to walk should be preceded by a risk assessment and the route should be determined consistent with the objective of ensuring staff and student safety.
- 3.8.2 Public bus, ferry and rail and/or private bus transport should be used for school excursions, wherever appropriate.

What the principal (or his/her delegate) is responsible for:

- The number of teachers to accompany the students for each excursion is to be determined by the principal. Decisions about the number of students and teachers should take into account factors such as the age of the students, their maturity, the location of the excursion, specific needs of students, anticipated behaviour and the nature of the activities to be undertaken.
- The principal must ensure that a record of all excursions, including overseas excursions, is maintained. The record must include a copy of any advice given to parents or caregivers, costs and approval letters and administrative, supervision and travel details.
- Attendance on excursions is dependent on a student's record of behaviour and cooperation prior to the excursion. A student's attendance is subject to approval by the participating teacher(s) and/or principal. Students who are regularly uncooperative or regularly fail to complete course work may not be considered eligible to participate in an excursion.
- In the event of an injury to a student or third party or property damage during the course of an excursion, all records relating to the particular student as well as any general information about the excursion must be retained until the injured party reaches age 25, or for seven years, whichever is the greater.
- Prior to any excursion, students should be briefed on the school's expectations of their behaviour. Students should also be briefed about their right to be safe and protected, about protective strategies and of avenues for support should concerns arise. Organising teachers should take time to work with groups of students to consider unexpected situations and risks that might occur during the excursion and to discuss strategies, consistent with the risk management plan, for eliminating or controlling risks.

- Students participating in excursions to communities which are culturally different to their own should be briefed on cultural sensitivities and appropriate communication in cross-cultural contexts.
- An overseas excursion must have the endorsement of the principal and, when more than one school is involved, the principals of all participating schools. In addition, overseas excursions must be approved by director of the Catholic Schools Office.
- The principal must ensure that reporting procedures are in place in the event of an incident that occurs on an excursion.

4. BUDGET

All proposed excursions must be budgeted for appropriately. Organising teachers need to determine a cost per student that allows for all the payments related to the excursion including travel, entry fees etc. The cost per student is to include a 15% allowance for unforeseen payments etc.

Where an extended period of time away from school is involved (such as in the case of overseas or interstate trips) then provision for replacement staff at school may need to be factored into the cost of the excursion.

5. EVALUATION

This policy will be evaluated and updated as part of the St Pius X policy review cycle or as the need arises.

6. RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

The following relevant documents are available on the school network and in the staffroom:

- 📁 St. Pius X Excursion Organisational Sheet- must be completed at least three weeks prior to excursion (more time required for overseas and interstate excursions)
- 📁 St. Pius X Excursion Risk Assessment form- must be completed at least three weeks prior to excursion (more time required for overseas and interstate excursions)