

Columba College Policy for School Tours and Field Trips

The objective of an educational tour should be that it provides a significant benefit in the educational, intellectual, cultural and social development of the maximum number of pupils in the particular grade/grades taking part in the tour and which benefit cannot be provided by in school activities alone.

DES Circular 20/04

This policy is drafted in the context of the DES Circular letter 20/04 and in keeping with the Health and Safety at Work Act 2005.

Educational tours of more than one day should be arranged if possible, to coincide with normal school holidays as set out in CL 20/04.

If an educational tour/ field trip is an integral part of a school programme the Board of Management of the school may grant permission for it to be held during term time as per CL 20/04

1: Introduction

Columba College believes that students can derive a great deal of educational value from participation in well organised tours and field trips. Such activities give students the opportunity to engage in activities not available to them in the classroom, help develop student's skills and fuel their imagination. This policy is designed to help principals, teachers, members of the Board of Management, and others to ensure that student's staff safe as they engage in educational tours and trips.

Most school tours and field trips take place without incident and the Board of Management is satisfied that teachers are already demonstrating a high level of safety awareness. Keeping this in mind, this policy is designed to ensure that good planning and attention to safety measures are in place to prevent accidents and incidents and lessen the seriousness of those that do occur.

The Board of Management expect that all tours and field trips will be thoroughly planned. Reasonable care must be exercised in the nature of the trip being planned, this extends to transport, cost, regard to the age of the students and potential dangers that they may be exposed to.

1.1: Before going on a tour

Planning a trip abroad should be done well in advance, in consultation with the students and parents/guardians. (appendix1)

For local and one day events Appendix 1 should be completed and returned to school

All trips abroad should be booked through a reputable travel agency with experience in the organisation of trips for schools.

Every effort should be made to ensure that the cost involved does not prevent any student from participating. A procedure should be put in place where students can pay for the trip over a period of time.

As places are usually limited on tours abroad, Columba College operates on a 'first come, first served' basis.

1.2: Supervision

Columba College expects that all school tours will be adequately supervised and recommends the following ratios when a risk assessment has been carried out and the health and safety of the students is assessed.

- Games: 1 teacher: 20 students
- Field trips: 1 teacher :20students
- Adventure activities: 1 teacher: 10 students
- Farm Visits: 1 teacher:10 students
- School tours in Ireland: 1 teacher: 10 students
- School tours overseas: 1 teacher:10 students
- Beach/River field trips: 1teacher:10 students

It is not recommended that personal other than teachers/ Special Needs Assistants would engage in chaperoning or supervising students while on tours and trips. In the rare occasion this may occur, in this regard it is recommended that the garda clearance is requested of the person who is accompanying the group. It is also recommended that Special Needs Assistants only accompany a group along with a teacher.

1.3: Preparing students

Students who are well informed about tours and field trips are in a position to make a clear decision on their participation and less likely to be involved in an incident. Students should clearly understand what is expected of them and should know exactly what the activity entails. Students must be made aware of any potential dangers and how they should act to ensure their own safety and that of others.

Students should be made aware that if their behaviour is such that is concern for their safety or that of others that they will be withdrawn from the activity. If such an incident occurred on a residential trip it is the obligation of the parents /guardian to cover the cost.

For some students an overnight trip may be their first experience away from home. All students should be made aware of the following:

- The aims and objectives of the trip
- Background information on the location
- Basic words and phrases of the country they are travelling to if going overseas
- Relevant customs and cultures of the country they are going to
- What standard of behaviour is expected
- Who is responsible for the group

- Appropriate and inappropriate social conduct
- What to do if separated from the group
- What to do if approached by someone from outside the group
- Pocket money and personal belongings
- Emergency procedures including phone numbers, location of fire exits ect.

There are occasions where remote supervision may have to take place, for example when students are on shopping trips or certain adventure activities. In this case parents should be made aware of this well in advance of the tour or field trip. Students should be advised to stay in group of 3 or 4 and they should be given clear instruction as to meeting points and checking in with supervisors at pre arranged times.

1.4: Communicating with parents

Parents should be informed in writing of all tours and field trips. It is recommended that before residential trips and trips overseas that parents are provided with the opportunity to meet the organising teachers and supervising teachers if possible.

Parents need to be made aware of the following:

- Dates of the trip
- Aims and objectives of the trip
- Times of departure and return
- Location of departure and return- parents must agree to collect students on the return
- Modes of transport
- Details of accommodation
- Names of leaders and accompanying staff
- Details of planned activities
- Standards of behaviour expected
- What students should take on the trip
- What students should not take on or home from the trip
- Details of insurance- it is recommended that all students opt to take insurance cover with the LWETB at the start of the school year. Insurance for overseas trips will be provided by the company that the tour is booked with.
- Money required while on the trip
- Information regarding consent. If content is not provided the student should not be taken on the trip (Appendix 1)

1.5: Charging for trips

All non-curricular and optional trips are voluntary

Groups leaders and those organising trips need to be mindful of the social and economic status of families when charging for trips. Planning should be done well on advance and a procedure should be

put in place where by parents can pay for the trip over a period of time. Consideration should be given to funding for the trip in order to minimize costs.

Monies paid in advance will be forfeited if a student withdraws from a tour. In certain circumstances of illness etc, these monies may be claimed back through the company's insurance policy

2: Specific tours and trips

2.1: Adventure activities

The group leader should check and agree all activities in advance of the trip, making arrangements for supervision between activities is necessary

The ages, range and competence of the group as well as any other relevant information of the group should be made available to the provider of the activity.

The group leader is responsible for the group even when the instruction of certain activities lies with the activity provider.

Some adventure activities, such as those under the Gaisce Awards may require student to work without direct supervision. In this case specific parental consent must be sought.

The Gaisce leader should be satisfied that the students have the necessary experience, confidence, physical ability, judgment and skills to be left without direct supervision.

2.2: Farm visits

Taking student's to a farm should be carefully planned. The risks to be assessed should include those arising from the misuse of farm machinery and the dangers associated with Ecoli, food poisoning and other infections.

The group leader should check that the farm is well managed and holds a good reputation for safety standards and for animal welfare.

2.3: Traveling overseas

This can be hugely rewarding for students some of the factors that need to be considered are as follows

- Language- Teachers/students should familiarise themselves with common phrases
- Culture- Teachers/students should have an awareness of body language, behaviour's, dress code, local customs, etc. while overseas
- Airline and ferry regulations including baggage allowances
- Money- Teachers/students should be aware of local currency and how to carry monies and valuables discreetly
- How to use phones abroad and the international codes required.

3: Responsibilities of all involved.

3.1: Parent/Guardian responsibilities

Parents/guardians need to be aware and remind their son/daughter of the following:

- The payment of a deposit or of the full amount does not constitute as a contract as a severe breach of the schools Code of Behaviour may result in a student being banned from travelling on the tour.
- School rules regarding behaviour, discipline etc. applies at all stages of the tour as the good name of the school must be promoted at all times.
- The consumption of alcoholic drink even by students legally entitled to drink is absolutely forbidden.
- The consumption, sale or use of any illegal substance is absolutely forbidden.
- Room curfews must be obeyed.
- Breaches of rules will be brought to the attention of the school authorities.
- Sanctions will be decided by the school
- Members of the group must remember that they are visitors to another country and the customs and culture of that country must be respected.

It is the obligation of the parents/guardian to ensure that their son/daughter has a passport at the time of booking.

Students are obliged to have a EHIC card- formally known as the E111 form which entitles students to free medical assistance while abroad.

It is preferable that the parents/guardian's avail of the opportunity to meet teachers who are taking students overseas.

Parents and students need to be aware that if

Student responsibilities

Should clearly understand what is expected of them and what the tour will entail.

Students need to be aware of the standards of behaviour is and need to understand that they need to follow the rules.

Any student who's behaviour is cause for concern may be withdrawn from the trip.

Unexpected costs ensued from a withdrawal/early return from any trip will be covered by the parents/guardians of the student.

3.2: Group leader responsibilities

The group leader should ensure that all members of the group have valid passports and visas required in the early stages of planning a trip.

If a group includes students whose national or immigration status is in doubt, it is advisable to make enquiries to the Department of Foreign Affairs.

If a student is subject to a care order, foster parents will need to seek Social Services consent to any proposed trip.

Tour leaders should ensure that adequate insurance cover is in place and that written parental approval is obtained for each student to take part in the tour.

The detailed itinerary including contact numbers will be provided to all involved in travelling in advance of departure

The tour leader will provide a full list of the travel group to the school principal.

Before traveling, the group leader needs should ensure that he/she takes with him/her:

- Travel tickets, passports, visas.
- A copy of the contract from the travel agency and the emergency contact number
- Medical documentation if required
- Parental consent forms and permission for the group leader to authorise emergency treatment on parental behalf
- Phone numbers, both at home and work of school Principal
- Contact numbers for parents/guardians
- Details of the tour insurance and the company phone number
- The name address and contact number for the group's accommodation
- Details of local emergency services

The tour leaders are committed to ensuring that the tour will be a memorable event for all participants and the full cooperation of everybody is required for this.

The group leader must ensure that all supervisors are aware and understand their roles and responsibilities

All supervisors have a responsibility to act as a positive role model for students in terms of their behaviour while on school trips.

Regular counting of students should take place, particularly before leaving a venue. All supervisors should carry a list of students.

The group leader should resist splitting the group while travelling. If this has to be done, then each group should have a separate group leader.

Supervisors should ensure that all members of the group are aware of a rendezvous point in the event that the group become separated.

3.3: Principal responsibility

Full details of the trip must remain in the school with the school Principal or designated person.

This includes:

- The list of all students and staff travelling
- The itinerary and contact numbers for the group
- Contact details for the parents/guardians of the group
- Copies of parental consent forms
- Copies of travel documents including insurance

It is the Principal's responsibility to ensure that this information is available at all times- particularly if the trip takes place when the school is closed.

4: Emergency procedures

Teachers and staff in charge of students during a school trip have a duty of care to ensure the students are safe.

If an incident/accident should occur the priorities are

- Assess the situation- establish the nature and extent of the emergency
- Ensure that the group is safe and looked after and is kept together at all times
- Attend to those involved in the incident
- Inform emergency services, if applicable and contact the school principal and parents/guardians
- Accompany student to hospital
- Notify the travel agent
- Notify insurance company
- Keep a written account of all events
- Fill in emergency report (appendix 3)

The group leader should take charge of the situation and ensure that back up cover is arranged to supervise the remaining students

5: Implementation and review

The Board of Management, Principal, Deputy principal and all staff are responsible for the implementation of this policy. This policy will be reviewed every two years and/or in light of any legislative changes.

