

**ST. DOMINIC’S COLLEGE**

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**Educational Tours and Out of School Group Activities Policy**

The organisation of out of school group activities has long been an integral part of school life. Such activities may include attendance at sporting events, visits to appropriate exhibitions, conferences, festivals, field trips etc., longer term educational tours either in Ireland or abroad. These events serve to significantly enrich both the academic curriculum as taught in school and the social and personal development of those students participating in them. The organisation, particularly of school tours, requires a significant investment of staff time and energy. There are considerable implications in relation to the health and safety of pupils, the application of the school’s Code of Behaviour in an out-of-school context, and the loss of normal teaching time both for the participating pupils and those pupils whose teaching is disrupted due to the absence of the [participating teachers.

The Board of Management of St Dominic’s College, Cabra supports and encourages school tours. This policy is drafted in the context of the Health and Safety at Work Acts 1989 and 2005, and Circular Letter M20/04 issued by DES.

**Objective**

The objective of organising educational tours is to provide our pupils with opportunities to develop their educational, intellectual, cultural and social skills. The school believes that the students’ education is enriched significantly by the opportunities trips and visits offer. Educational tours and field trips should:

* reinforce classroom activities.
* enhance the learning process of as many pupils as possible by providing educational experiences which the classroom alone cannot provide.
* support the curriculum content of some subjects through field trips, tours, outings or other recreational activities.
* develop the interpersonal skills of the students.

**Procedures for Tours**

**1.** The approval of any school tour must be sought and obtained from the Principal.  
  
**2.** Board approval shall be required for each tour.  
  
**3.** It is for the Principal to decide which teachers will organize the tour and accompany the pupils. Prior to departure, one teacher/teachers shall be appointed as tour leader(s). It is recognised that the organisation of, or participation in any school tour, is voluntary on the part of teachers.  
   
**4.** The tour leader will prepare an outline proposal detailing the purpose, itinerary, dates and costs of the tour,

**5**. Each student and her parent(s)/guardian(s) shall be given a form outlining the rules, regulations and special requirements and they shall be required to sign that (i) they understand the rules (ii) they are willing to abide by them at all times.

**7.** A list of all students intending to travel must be submitted to the Principal.  The inclusion of particular students in a school tour shall be at the discretion of the school authorities.  

**Who goes on foreign tours?**

* National tours may be organised for Junior Cycle students. Foreign trips are restricted to Senior, including Transition Year, students.
* If possible, and according to guidelines issued by the JMB, only one school day should be missed. However, under exceptional circumstances, two days may be permitted.
* A trip for Transition Year may be organised every year. Language trips for Senior students rotate on a two year basis. A cross-curricular trip for Senior students may be organised every two years.
* To ensure inclusion and best practice, staff will be asked to submit, in as much as is possible, details of proposed trips at the start of each academic year. **The final date for submission will be the last Friday of September**. A **calendar** showing details of all trips will be posted in the staffroom.

**Pupil / Teacher ratio**

The ratio of teachers to pupils should reflect good practice, informed by health & safety considerations.

**Code of Behaviour**

The Code of Behaviour to be observed during the course of the tour will be the **school’s Code of Behaviour** as adopted by the Board of Management of St Dominic’s College. All pupils who travel as part of a school group represent the school. The safety of all involved is of primary concern so it is vital that all concerned familiarise themselves with this policy.   
  
**The Board of Management** specifically wishes to draw attention to the following:  
  
(i) students must obey members of staff at **all times**.  
  
(ii) students **must stay** with the tour group. A student may not go off by herself or wander off anywhere alone: students must stay in groups at all times.  
  
(iii) students must **not** purchase alcohol or tobacco products for any purpose at any stage of the tour.  
  
(iv) the use of alcohol or other non-medically prescribed drugs by students on a tour is absolutely **forbidden**.  
 The school management charge reserves the right to refuse any student they deem unsuitable for the tour. Those considered unsuitable would include:

* pupils who in the past have proved unruly or undisciplined on tours
* pupils who have a poor discipline record in the school

The school reserves the right to send a student home, at their own expense, in the event of a serious breach of the Code of Behaviour.

Parents should be aware that they are responsible for funding the immediate return of a pupil whose conduct gives rise for serious concern on a trip.

**Communication with Parents**

Parents/Guardians will be informed in writing of any off-site activity or tour

The content of the **consent form** will vary according to the type and duration of the trip.

When pupils travel abroad or engage in adventure activities parents/guardians will be invited into the school to attend a briefing meeting where details, oral and written, of the proposed trip will be provided

Pupils must attend all information meetings in school and co-operate with all requests pertaining to the tour

* A parental consent form has to be completed for each pupil. Included in this form should be the following:
* Any medication the pupil is taking
* Any recent illness suffered by the pupil
* Any special medical or dietary requirements
* If the pupil suffers from travel sickness
* Any other information the parent deems relevant
* The parent’s/guardian’s mobile and home phone numbers and address
* An alternative contact phone number and address
* Any special requirements relating to students with disabilities or special needs as related to the trip
* Medical consent will form part of the **parental consent form** for foreign and residential trips. Parents/guardians will be asked to agree in writing to the pupil receiving emergency treatment, including anaesthetic or blood transfusion as considered necessary by the medical authorities. If the parents/guardians do not agree to this, the pupil will not be permitted on the trip – given the additional responsibility this would entail for the school. Doctors in another country may be reluctant to operate on a student unless assured of parental authorisation for such treatment.

Pupils must have a current European Health Insurance Card for travel to EU countries and supply a copy of this to the tour leader prior to travel. It is the responsibility of the parent to ensure that their child has all necessary up-to-date documentation well in advance of the tour.

Parents and pupils are advised that deadlines for booking a place on a tour may have to be adjusted if demand exceeds places. Pupils should always assume that places will be allocated on a first come first served basis (provided all conditions are satisfied)

**Supervision**

Pupils leaving on a day activity must have their attendance recorded on the Roll prior to departure.

On trips which involve an overnight stay in Ireland or abroad, pupils will not be directly supervised on a 24-hour basis and all extended school tours will involve periods of time without direct supervision. Parents who are concerned that such a level of supervision is inappropriate or insufficient should not permit their son/daughter to take part in such trips.

**Insurance and Indemnity**

The tour leader must ensure that all pupils are adequately insured and that the tour operator provides a copy of their insurance cover to the school

Where, however, the tour is involved in an activity of a specialist nature, such as an outdoor education centre that requires supervision by trained professionals, the Board of Management may not rely entirely on the State Indemnity for insurance purposes.

In considering applications/requests from teachers to bring students on an outdoor activities type tour e.g. Transition year Group for outdoor pursuits, the Board should ensure:

1. Written applications giving full details of the proposed tour are submitted to School Management.
2. The school receives a copy of the Outdoor Activity/Pursuits Centre Public Liability insurance certificate and notes and limitations stated in the policy.
3. The school receives details of the professional qualifications/training of the Outdoor Activities/Pursuits Centre staff who will be leading/guiding the students in the specialist outdoor activities.
4. Parents/guardians should be encouraged to effect Personal Accident insurance cover for their students. The school insurance company should also be contacted to ensure the students are covered for these specialist outdoor activities under the Personal Accident Policy.
5. The State Indemnity still applies to the teachers who accompany the students to the Outdoor Activity/Pursuits Centre in the performance of their normal supervisory and pastoral role.
6. Where doubts remain then the Board of Management/School Management should seek and acquire appropriate insurance protection for the Board of management, teachers and for students.
7. Board of Management/School Management should not approve the release of teachers to supervise and or the attendance of students on these specialist tours to Outdoor Activity/Pursuits Centres unless all aspects of supervision, training and insurance are clarified with all interests and noted.

In the case of school tours outside the island of Ireland the Board of management should not rely on the State Indemnity for insurance purposes. Appropriate travel insurance should be taken out to cover those embarking on the tour.

**Professional Conduct of Staff**

All staff are required to be cognisant of their obligations under the Professional Code of Conduct for Teachers as set out by the Teaching Council of Ireland.

**General**

* A first aid kit is always carried on every trip. Wherever possible, one of the accompanying staff is a qualified first aider.
* Punctuality from both students and staff is essential for the smooth running of a trip.
* Roles and responsibilities for staff should be clearly defined before the day of departure.
* The core responsibility of staff, who are in loco parentis, must take priority over all other considerations.

**Payment**

* Cheques or postal orders should be issued in the name of the travel company **only**. Cash payments or monies issued to the school will not be accepted.
* The leader will issue a receipt for every payment received from a student and will keep up-to-date records of payments received.
* The leader should allow for a contingency fund.

**Contact Information**

The Tour Leader must have contact details for school management and parents in the event of an emergency.

The Tour Leader must carry all relevant personal details regarding each member of the tour i.e. health information, home contact details, approval for medical attention etc.

**Emergency Procedures**

* In the event of a serious incident/accident as many members of staff as is possible/practical in the circumstances shall come together; they shall agree on an outline of the details of the incident/accident and taking into account all the facts as they are known at that time, shall decide on a course of action. The details and the decision(s) taken shall be put in writing as close to the event as is reasonable. The Board accepts that in cases where there is lack of consensus over the course of action, the tour leader (where available) has the final decision.
* Tour leaders and all members of staff accompanying the tour must ensure that, if it becomes necessary to question a student about a potentially serious matter, another adult be present. In addition to the Code of Behaviour, students must adhere to the law of the country which they visit. In the event of a breach of this, due process of law will follow.

This Policy was ratified by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

This Policy is due for review on\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson, Board of Management, St Dominic’s College, Cabra.