

MERCY SECONDARY SCHOOL KILBEGGAN

SCHOOL TRIPS POLICY

Scope of School Trips Policy

- The term ‘school trip’ covers all expeditions off the school premises. This policy is applicable to all members of staff who organize such trips and to the students - and their parents/guardians - who are participating in these activities.
- The Code of Behaviour of Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan applies to all students of Mercy Secondary School, and relates to all school activities both during and outside of normal school hours; it applies both on and off the school grounds and anywhere students are clearly identified or identifiable as students of the school. The Code of Behaviour, therefore, in all its detail applies to all outings and trips, whether or not they involve an overnight stay.

Rationale for School Trips and relevant policy

- Mercy Secondary School, in line with its mission statement recognizes that exposure to a variety of experiences and cultures is part of a holistic education.
- The curriculum content of some subjects requires field studies/trips/recreational activities, which take place off school grounds.
- Trips assist in bonding between students, as well as providing teachers with an opportunity to get to know students in a non-school environment.
- There should be a balanced programme of outings and trips for the school year that does not prove too costly to parents and does not overburden the school timetable.
- All educational trips must be consistent with the rationale as specified by the DES in Circular Letter M20/04. All reasonable efforts will be made to satisfy all the criteria contained in this circular.
- This policy will assist staff in ensuring that proper standards of financial management and health & safety are implemented on all school trips.
- There is a need to clarify expectations of behaviour for all trips and to outline the conditions whereby a student may be refused permission to be included on a trip.

Procedures to be Followed by all Staff Organising School Trips

School trips have considerable educational value. However, they must be planned and organised in a way that causes least disruption to the day-to-day routine.

(a) Day Trips

- Day Trips may take place during the school day, or may extend beyond normal school hours. Some examples of day trips are:
 - Field work associated with specific subjects such as Biology, Geography
 - History trips
 - Visits to Art Galleries, Exhibitions, Museums, Theatre visits
 - Careers exhibitions and University Open Days
 - Debates
 - Concerts
 - Events in connection with Transition Year
- Any teacher planning to organise a day trip or any non-sporting outing during class time, must first inform the Principal and Deputy Principal of the intended date, at least one month in advance of the proposed date. The trip must be approved by the Principal.
- As a courtesy to colleagues, full details, including date, time and names of participating students must be posted on the staff room notice board by the organising teacher at least one week before the event.
- Sporting activities that are scheduled during class times must be agreed with the Principal/Deputy Principal at least one week in advance and details of the students involved posted on the staff room notice board by the organising teacher at least 3 days in advance of the event.
- Students who have a history of inappropriate behaviour may be excluded from day trips.
- Students with Special Educational Needs Eg: Dyspraxia need additional consideration on all trips and if necessary the organising teacher should liaise with the Learning Support department to identify these specific needs.
- On all day trips there must be an appropriate ratio between the number of students and the number of staff traveling, in accordance with criteria agreed by the Board of Management in advance.. This ratio will vary depending on the nature of the trip and the age of the students traveling.

- All students going on any trip during normal class hours **must** return permission forms signed by parents/guardians to the teacher-in-charge, before the outing takes place. Students who have not returned permission forms **may not** participate in the trip. Supplies of the permission forms are available from the Office. Staff should arrange with the School Secretary to take a school mobile telephone with them in case of emergency
- The organising teacher must keep a careful note of any monies paid by students for the trip and issue receipts for same. Monies should be handed in to the school Secretary with a completed lodgment form (available from the Office). Staff are asked to ensure costings cover the entire cost of the proposed trip.
- For trips that extend beyond normal school hours, it is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure that arrangements are in place for their son's/daughter's journey to/from the school.
- An Accident /Incident Report Form must be completed for all accidents or incidents which may have occurred on the trip
- Members of staff taking students in coaches should note and apply the procedures set out in that policy document.

(b) Overnight Expeditions or Trips Abroad.

- Other trips may be over-night expeditions or of longer duration. These may be co-circular activities organised by subject departments, or trips arranged for Year Groups, or ones that are part of the Outdoor Education Programme. Some examples are:
 - Irish trips - e.g. Donegal, Mayo
 - Exchange programmes involving a group of students and teacher(s)
 - Transition Year and Sixth Year trips - e.g. Germany, France
 - Delphi Outdoor Education Centre
 - Carlingford Outdoor Education Centre
- Members of staff, who wish to take students on an overseas trip, must submit their request for approval to the Board of Management by completing the attached Trip Proposal Form. Included in the proposal, should be the educational or other benefits that the students will derive from the trip. The Board of Management will consider the following when reaching its decision
 - the appropriateness of the proposed trip in terms of DES Circular M20/04.
 - The staffing arrangements for the trip and for the school
 - The financial controls in place for the trip
- The school will only use the services of licensed tour operators/travel agents when organizing trips outside the state, as pre the Aviation Regulation Act 2001.

- The number of students participating varies depending on the nature of the trip and the staff/student ratio will be appropriate to the age group and as recommended by the travel agency.
- Staff will be informed of planned expeditions and invited to indicate to the teacher-in-charge if they are interested in being a member of the staff team that will accompany the students. All members of staff will be expected to share the work load beforehand, where necessary and during the trip. Decisions about which members of staff join a trip will depend on such factors as the size of the group, the gender balance, requirements specific to the particular trip e.g. Irish teachers on a trip to the Gaeltacht, French and/or German teachers on a trip to Europe, teachers with Outdoor qualifications on adventure trips, Year Heads with year group, Form Teachers with classes on hikes and so on.
- The following general financial guidelines should be followed when organizing a trip
 - At least two teachers should be involved in the financial administration.
 - Separate financial records should be maintained for each school trip.
 - A detailed record of all participating students and the amounts paid should be retained.
 - Parents should be informed as early as possible of the full cost associated with the trip.
 - Written permission should be received from the parents of all trip participants and a receipt for all money paid should be issued.
 - Proper and full insurance cover must be in place for all school trips.
 - All money collected for a school trip should be lodged as soon as possible in the main school bank account.
- Students should be required to pay an initial deposit, followed by the remainder of the money within a stated period of time. Payments should be by means of a cheque / money orders / bank drafts made payable to the school, **not the individual teacher.** Students should place their payment in a sealed envelope with their name on it. These payments should be then handed into the school Secretary by the teacher(s) in question, with a completed lodgment form (available from the Office).
- In the case of trips being oversubscribed, priority is given to those students who are studying the appropriate subject. Staff in charge reserve the right to refuse any student they deem unsuitable for the trip. Those considered unsuitable would include:
 - _ student's who in the past have proved unruly or undisciplined on trips
 - _ student's who have a poor discipline record in the school

- The initial letter to parents should contain a draft itinerary and deadline for registering and payment of non-refundable deposit. Parents must be made aware that the organiser reserves the right to make minor changes to the itinerary.
- If a passport is required, a photocopy of the student's passport must be included with the deposit. All passports must be valid for at least six months following the trip.
- Visas may be necessary for the destination and some countries require them to be processed together. There may be an additional cost to secure a visa. Parents should be informed that students with non-EU passports may need visas for EU countries.
- Students must have their E111 or European Health Insurance Card for travel to countries in the EU.
- It is important to impress upon parents that the onus is on them to ensure that their son/daughter has all necessary up-to-date documentation well in advance of the trip.
- Parents should be informed in good time if there are any mandatory or recommended inoculations for the destination. It is important that parents realise that the onus is on them to make arrangements for their son/daughter to receive all necessary inoculations.
- Students must attend all information meetings and co-operate with all requests pertaining to the trip.
- Parents must sign permission forms specific to the trip for students up to the age of 18
- Notification to parents should include details of proposed itinerary, dates, the cost of travel, insurance, food and accommodation. Guidelines for spending money and money for extras such as meals and excursions will also be communicated to parents.
- Mobile phone communication between teachers/supervisors and students on the trip may be necessary. A list should be made of participants' mobile phone numbers (as given on the Permission Form) and students should have the mobile phone number of trip leader – to be carried with them at all times while on the trip. A mobile phone is available from the School, as staff members are not required to give their personal mobile phone numbers to students.
- The trip organiser should have two emergency contact numbers; usually this will be the Principal and the Deputy Principal.
- If necessary two members of staff should carry out inspection of rooms or personal property (bags, suitcases etc) with the student present. This will only be done for good reasons based on reasonable grounds, such as concern for

physical safety, suspected possession or use of a banned substance or other concerns.

- Staff should not have any physical contact with a student's clothing. If a search is deemed necessary, the student should be asked to empty his/her own pockets or to search the clothing that he/she is wearing.
- If a student is found to be in serious breach of any of the rules in the School Code of Behaviour, the staff in charge must contact the Principal immediately.
- An Accident/Incident Report Form must be completed for all accidents or incidents which have occurred. Examples of reportable incidents include: persistent lateness at the rendezvous point; not staying with the group; rudeness to teachers; and serious breach of school rules, particularly in relation to alleged or proven alcohol or substance abuse.
- Members of staff taking students on trips which involve travel in coaches should note and apply the procedures set out in that policy document.

(c) General Guidelines for Inter-School Competitions

- Each coach is responsible for taking a properly equipped first-aid kit to his/her match.
- If a minor accident occurs the coach will treat it on the spot. In the event of a serious accident the coach will ring an ambulance directly.
- Any accident deemed to be of a serious nature is recorded on an accident report form, a copy of which is submitted to the Principal. PE staff will appraise students of the necessary safety equipment for each respective sport.
- The PE staff organise transport to and from all matches, using a recognised coach company. Students representing the school in competitions are not required to pay for buses.
- When an away match is organised during school hours, the number of staff traveling must be dependent upon the staffing requirements of the activities in school. Generally one teacher will travel with a team. The needs of the students in school must receive priority when organising such matches.
- It is school policy that all students are encouraged to participate in team competitions. However, the school recognizes that it is the parents/guardians prerogative how often their child shall be involved in such competitions.
- Members of staff taking students on trips which involve travel in coaches should note and apply the procedures set out in that policy document.

(d) Coach Trips

Full details of bus bookings must be entered in the book in the main Office. Members of staff taking students away in coaches should note and apply the following:

- All coaches used by the school must have an up to date PSV License and Certificate.
- Before setting off, the emergency exits must be pointed out to students.
- Central aisles and access to exits must be kept clear at all times.
- Students must be advised to remain seated facing forward and not to have unnecessary movement during the journey. Where seat belts are fitted, these must be used.
- Smoking is not permitted on board coaches.
- In the event of any emergency, students should leave the coach by the nearest exit as quickly as possible and re-assemble at a given area where a head-count can be quickly made.
- Students should not go back to the coach for any reason until the all clear is given..
- If the teacher in charge considers that there was anything the matter with the coach, or that the behaviour of students was not appropriate, a full report must be given to the Principal as soon as possible after returning to the school.
- A list of persons on the coach must be placed on the Staff Room notice board before the departure of the coach.
- In the event of a delay for any reason in the time of returning to school, the teacher in charge must telephone the school. A notice giving the information to parents will then be posted on the inside of the main door, together with messages from parents for their children.

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting of

_____ (date)

Signed _____ Chairperson

Next review date : _____