



MacKillop College

Policy: Excursions

Introduction

As a Catholic School, MacKillop is committed to supporting the wellbeing and safety of all members of our community and to the education of the whole person. Excursions support such development and are an important aspect of the school curriculum. As a recognised part of school activities staff can reasonably expect to be required by the school to conduct an excursion as part of their normal work duties. As excursions necessarily involve both staff and students leaving school premises, there may be increased risks to their health and safety. The health and safety of students on excursion is managed in a similar manner to how it is on school grounds. The increased risks may arise from either or both factors of

- the nature of the excursion itself
- a less controlled environment

Principles

MacKillop is committed to

- the provision of educationally valid excursions as part of the school curriculum and learning process
- preparing, managing, supervising and monitoring excursions in a manner that the health, safety and security of all involved and affected by the conduct of the excursion is not at risk

Objectives

MacKillop will aim to:

- comply with legislative and regulatory requirements for the organisation and management of excursions
- raise awareness with staff regarding any mandatory guidelines relating to excursions
- plan and conduct excursions using risk management principles
- keep records of the risk management process undertaken for each excursion
- include contingency arrangements and emergency procedures in the planning process
- fully brief and/or prepare staff, students and others involved in the excursions (such as supervising parents) on all aspects of an excursion before its commencement
- allocate and communicate supervisory roles and responsibilities to all staff and students going on the excursion
- inform and secure signed consent from parents regarding their son/daughter's involvement in the excursion
- staff excursions with members who have the requisite skills and experience for the excursion
- conduct a preliminary inspection of the excursion site where possible
- check the qualifications and licensing of, and safety precautions taken by, outside persons or agencies used as part of an excursion
- plan transport arrangements with the safety of participants in mind
- design excursions with consideration of the participant's levels of competence and ability
- ensure first aid equipment is appropriate to the excursion is readily available, and depending on the activity, have qualified first aid staff present

- provide insurance to cover the excursion
- follow up, investigate and record any inappropriate incident which occurs on an excursion

Implementation

- i) Principal commitment

The principal is responsible for ensuring that the objectives of this policy are integrated into practice.”

- ii) Staff commitment

Staff are responsible for ensuring that:

- they integrate all aspects of this policy into their excursion planning
- are compliant with this policy and associated procedures and guidelines

This policy works in conjunction with the following procedures, provisions and guidelines:

- OHS Policies
- DEECD Excursion Guidelines
- MacKillop College Excursion Application Form
- MacKillop College Excursion Checklist & Risk Assessment Matrix
- MacKillop College Critical Incident Guidelines

Date: June 2015

Rory Kennedy
(Principal)

Appendix 1: Excursion Planning Considerations

General

Under occupational health and safety (OHS) legislation, the term "workplace" will be interpreted quite broadly to include out of school environments. This means that the school's duty to provide a safe place of work for its employees extends to staff on excursions which are being conducted as part of their teaching duties. Staff injured on an excursion are also entitled to workers compensation.

Similarly, a school's duty of care to its students extends beyond the school's geographical boundary. It exists whenever the school ought reasonably to exercise control over students, including when they are on school excursions. School authorities have a non-delegable duty to ensure that reasonable care is taken to minimise the risk of injury to the students. Schools may be found "vicariously liable" for any negligent acts of staff while on excursions.

Under OHS legislation and the common law duty of care, schools are required to undertake risk management in relation to each and every excursion. This means taking all reasonable steps during the planning, organisation and execution of the excursion to minimise foreseeable risks of injury.

* What are foreseeable risks?

In determining whether a risk is foreseeable, the High Court has indicated that risks which are not "far fetched" or "fanciful" are foreseeable. It is recognised that accidents can and do happen, particularly on excursions, but the value of the excursion to the educational experience and personal development of students may outweigh any foreseeable risk of injury. It is important to identify the predictable risks, and to have contingency plans for the unpredictable ones.

* What standard of care is required of teachers on excursions?

The standard of care will vary depending on the level of risk associated with the activity. The standard of care required of a teacher would therefore be higher for an excursion which included hiking than it would be for an excursion to a museum.

In addition, factors such as the age of students, their physical and intellectual capacity and their maturity may also influence the standard of care to be applied. Any prior experience of the students and the staff in similar activities will also be of significance.

b) Guidelines

It is usual practice that the school principal must approve any excursion from the school. In some cases it will also be necessary to gain further approval from the relevant education department or from a School Board or Council. Organisers of excursions need to follow any guidelines laid down by these authorities.

c) Premises in the control of others

The duty of care owed by the school to staff and students, and owed by teachers supervising the excursion to students, remains even if the site of the excursion is controlled by somebody else. The amount of control a teacher can exercise over the premises may, however, mean that at least part of the duty of care may be transferred to the owner of the premises. The duty imposed on a school is discharged if it can reasonably conclude that the premises are apparently safe and staffed by competent and careful people. In these circumstances, there is still a responsibility for the school, and particularly staff involved, to make sure they have firsthand knowledge of the excursions site(s).

d) Insurance

The school should make sure its insurance policy extends to cover the excursion, or arrange special insurance as required.

e) Managing Excursions

Organisers of any excursion need to apply risk management principles. This means:

- identifying hazards pertaining to the excursion
- assessing the potential risks associated with the hazards
- deciding on ways of controlling the risks
- implementing appropriate control measures
- monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of these actions ·· this will include keeping records for use by future organisers of a similar excursion.

For excursions involving physical activities, including adventure sports, there are inherent risks associated with those activities which need to be assessed and controlled. Refer to "Adventure Activities / Sports" Policy.

f) Planning

School excursions should be undertaken and thoroughly planned according to all items on the Excursion Checklist and Risk Assessment Matrix

* Risk assessment and control

Before any excursion is approved the risks associated with excursion will be assessed and the responses planned to these identified risks. The risks involved and the control measures used will depend very much on the particular activity.

* Permission of parents or guardians

MacKillop College will in all circumstances obtain the permission of parents or guardians before taking students on an excursion. Parents need to be provided with sufficient information to enable them to make an informed decision.

A permission form is also an opportunity for schools to obtain information which may be needed to properly assess the risks to individual students. This is especially useful where the attribute causing added risk is not obvious and may not have been observed in the normal classroom environment (for example, allergies and debilitating phobias). School should advise parents to provide current health information relevant to the particular event.

Obtaining permission is also an opportunity to address other planning issues such as steps to be taken in the case of an emergency. A request for permission can also be a consent for teachers to use their best judgment in obtaining emergency care. A parent can authorise a teacher to obtain ambulance or other emergency assistance without the need for further contact with the parent to confirm that they are willing to bear any associated cost.

g) Supervision

An important element in countering risks to students' health and safety on excursions is the provision of appropriate supervision. It is important to realise that the school cannot delegate a duty of care to a teacher and will be equally liable for any negligent acts or omissions of supervising teachers.

All staff who are involved in an excursion should be thoroughly briefed prior to the commencement of the excursion.

Roll calls and head counts are important elements of supervision, particularly with certain groups of students and in particular environments. There is always a risk of someone becoming detached from the group during an excursion by simply wandering off, lingering at an interesting attraction, or sustaining an injury, illness or other misfortune which detains them. This may expose a student to further risk of harm, whether they are lost or not. Frequent head counts and roll calls will quickly determine if someone is missing and/or in need of assistance, when time may be critical.

h) First aid

First aid equipment appropriate to the excursion must be readily available at any time on the excursion. Depending on the nature of the activity, it may be appropriate to have one or more qualified first aid staff present.

i) Transport

Where vehicles are used to transport people on an excursion, only drivers with licenses appropriate to the type of vehicle can be used. Similarly, vehicles should be checked as to their condition. Vehicles should also be an appropriate mode of transport for the number and ages of people travelling and for the type of journey and destination. MacKillop College will hire buses with sufficient seats to cater for the number of people travelling. Where possible, the school should seek buses equipped with seat belts, given the extra safety these would provide.

* Insurance

Transport insurance should be arranged to cover accidents en route. If teachers use their own cars to transport students, they should ensure that their insurance cover is adequate, that the school administration is aware of the use of the car for school business and that the car used is safe.