

Policy on School Trips and Out-of-School Activities

Preamble:

An important element in a comprehensive curriculum is the provision of a wide range of extra-curricular experiences including sporting, artistic, musical, cultural, literary, social, leisure and spiritual activities.

The Abbey School recognises that such activities represent a valuable aspect of the learning process and contribute to the development of a rounded individual. They supplement and complement in-school learning and activities and provide opportunities for students to broaden their horizons in ways that would not be possible within the confines of the school premises alone.

Sanction for Trips, Tours etc.

All out-of-school activities must be approved in advance by the Board of Management. Trips to sporting fixtures, quizzes, plays, adventure centres etc. within Ireland can be approved in a general way at the first meeting of the Board of Management each year.

Activities which involve students leaving the country must have specific approval from the Board and at least two months notice must be given in advance. The India Project, School Tours, Exchanges with our partner schools in Europe are examples of activities in this category.

Insurance Cover

The School Authorities will ensure that the school's insurance cover meets any potential liabilities that may arise from out-of-school activities.

- Public liability insurance will be in place in order to protect the school if the school's activities result in bodily injury to others, including students.
- Employer's liability insurance will be in place to cover the school from claims by employees who suffer bodily injury in the course of employment by the school.
- All pupils will be afforded the option of having personal accident insurance to provide cover for situations where accidents occur for which the school cannot be deemed negligent.
- Travel insurance will be obligatory if the activity involves overseas travel.

Transport

The school will insist that transportation suppliers hired by the school accept certain conditions of hiring. Such conditions will include:

- The vehicle supplied must be suitable and well maintained, with teachers having the right to refuse any vehicle that they deem unsuitable for the outing in favour of a more suitable replacement vehicle or a refund.
- The driver should be used to dealing with students and have a full knowledge of and follow the itinerary and timetable for the activity, subject to changes by the teachers.
- The driver is responsible for the safety of the students while travelling, but teachers have the right to intervene in cases where they feel that a student's safety is being compromised.

Health and Safety

For any school the well-being of the students in its care is a top priority. Out-of-School activities create unique situations in which the health and safety issues that are part of the everyday education process take on added significance due to such factors as location and the type of activity in question.

It should be noted that approaches to health and safety are not intended to “wrap students in cotton wool” but rather to minimise the risk of serious harm befalling a student. It is clear that bumps, bruises and even injuries are inevitable in some physical activities.

The school will put in place the following procedures to help staff better care for students:

- Upon entry to the school parents will be asked to indicate whether a student suffers from any condition that would create undue risk by participating in strenuous activities.
- Parents will be asked if their son is on any form of medication and what precautions teachers should take particularly in the case of overnight stays.
- Any student who is allocated a Special Needs Assistant will be accompanied by that Assistant or by a member of the student’s family if there are leaving the school premises for an outside activity.
- Basic First Aid boxes will be available to deal with minor injuries at all games involving the school.
- Teachers taking students out of school will have reliable mobile phones.
- There will be closer supervision of students that are known to be at a higher health risk than normal (i.e. asthmatics or epileptics).
- Before booking any outside location such as an Adventure Centre the school authorities will, as far as possible, check the adequacy of the equipment provided, the qualifications of the supervisors and instructors, the availability of a local doctor and emergency procedures, if relevant.
- Details of any accidents/injuries will be entered in the school’s Accident Record Book.

Code of Behaviour

The school’s Code of Behaviour will govern student behaviour during all out-of-school activities. This includes the journey to and from the venue. Certain behavioural issues will be highlighted for the students:

- Full school uniform must be worn unless otherwise instructed by the school authorities.
- NO smoking or alcohol consumption is allowed.
- NO student may leave the student group without permission from a teacher.
- Students must obey all instructions from outside supervisors, bus drivers etc., particularly those related to safety and health issues.
- Students must remain in assigned accommodation and rooms during overnight or longer trips and must on no account, either on their own or with others, leave the hotel or hostel without clear permission from a teacher.
- Students on buses must not act in a manner that distracts the driver and thereby prejudices the safety of other passengers and road users.
- The utmost respect must be shown to the general public, to the authorities and students of other schools, to outside providers of facilities and their employees and to the property of others.
- All students will be made aware in advance of what to do if they accidentally become separated from the group i.e. remain at a particular location or contact a fellow student by text or telephone. They will also be provided with the address and phone number of the Hotel/Hostel where the group is staying, if applicable.
- Students must not purchase pornographic or dangerous material such as offensive weapons.

- Students representing the school in, for example, sporting fixtures may be asked to make a nominal contribution to the cost of hiring a bus.

The disciplinary procedures in the Code of Behaviour and the sanctions outlined therein may be applied to any student who infringes any of the rules outlined above or indeed any other school rule while on an out-of-school activity.

It should be noted that one option that may be exercised by the school authorities is exclusion from future out-of-school activity. This might have to be considered in cases where a student has been found, upon investigation, to be overly disruptive or to have constituted a danger to himself or others or to have brought the good name of the school into disrepute by his activities.

In very grave cases, such as involvement with drugs, the student may have to be sent home from a school tour to a foreign country. In any such case the parents of the students may be asked to

- (a) come and collect him and take him home or
- (b) agree to have him flown home unaccompanied but in the care of the airline staff and to then meet him on arrival in Ireland.

In the case of overnight stays in Ireland the parents of an offending student may be asked to

- (a) come and collect him and take him home or
- (b) agree to have him brought home by a teacher in a taxi.

All expenses in such cases will have to be borne by the student and his parents and it will be a condition of being accepted on any such tour that this sanction is accepted by the parents of the student in advance of travelling.

Supervision

The Board recognise that teachers and other staff members engaged in extra-curricular activities give up a large portion of their time voluntarily to ensure the continuation and success of these important areas of school life.

Such teachers take on a great responsibility as they have to be extra vigilant when taking children out of the school and they have to pay attention to such things as road safety, behaviour on the bus, risks posed by particular venues and the health and safety of all the students in their care.

The ratio of supervision to students will vary according to the activity being undertaken, its duration, and the ages of the students taking part; for example, a group of 6th years attending a theatre may require much less supervision than a group of 2nd years on a hiking trip. However, two people, at least one of whom is a teacher, should accompany every group leaving the school for an activity outside the town. Such supervisors will have a mobile phone for use in case of emergency.

Overnight Stays

In the case of overnight stays the school authorities will:

- (a) strive to ensure in advance that the accommodation is clean, safe and appropriate for the students
- (b) establish a list of the items that the students should bring with them
- (c) become aware of whether students are prone to any problems that may have particular relevance to overnight stays (e.g. sleepwalking, bedwetting or nightmares.)

- (d) ensure that the students are made aware of an evacuation plan in the event of a fire
- (e) conduct regular headcounts to ensure all students are accounted for
- (f) make provision for medical care if it should be required
- (g) provide students with the address and phone number of the Hotel/Hostel where the group are staying.
- (h) In the case of school exchanges get confirmation from the authorities on the relevant partner school that the homes to which our students are being sent are safe, reliable and hospitable.
- (i) Parents will be expected to reimburse the school for any medical supplies or for any expenses incurred on behalf of their son.

Arrival Home by Bus

In the normal course of events all activities will start and finish at the school. However, some parents may request in writing or by phone to the office that for convenience sake the bus should drop their son at a location on the way home, which is comparatively close to their residence. In any such case the student will be dropped at a normal bus stopping point and the parent must guarantee that they or a person nominated by them in advance will meet the bus when it arrives at that location in order to take charge of their son. If the parent or designated person is not present then the student will be brought back to the school.

In the case of senior students i.e. Transition Year and upwards, parents may send in a note to the school authorities at the beginning of the school year giving their son permission to get off a bus at a suitable location and absolving the school of any responsibility for their welfare from that point onwards.

Child Protection

As out-of-school activities involve locations and people external to the school premises/community there is an additional onus on the school authorities to ensure that good practice prevails at all times.

The Child Protection Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools have been adopted by the Abbey Board of Management as official school policy in this area. Students are advised to report any worries, concerns that they may have to their parents, the Principal or another teacher. All such reports will be handled sensitively and without delay by the official Child Protection Officer nominated by the Board of Management.

Review

This policy and the procedures therein will be reviewed in the light of experience and at least every two years.

The policy came into effect on October 11th 2007, having been approved by the Board of Management at a regular meeting of the Board on October 11th 2007 and revised on May 23rd 2013