

MOTHER TERESA CATHOLIC COLLEGE

EXCURSION & CAMPS POLICY

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RATIONALE

At Mother Teresa Catholic College, excursions play a major role in enhancing learning programs organised by the school for which students are required to be away from the school. They are an integral part of our educational program. They provide opportunities for both the educational and faith development of our students and reflect Catholic principles and values. The students gain opportunities to experience life outside of school in situations that they may not otherwise.

PRINCIPLES

- School excursions shall be designed to enhance the educational program offered by the school.
- The duty of care exists at all times. The safety of all students is of utmost importance.
- The school excursion is to be regarded as an extension of the school. The same code of conduct expected during school hours is expected of all students, staff and supervisors for the duration of the excursion.

PROCEDURES

- Formal notice of class excursions must be given to the principal for approval 4 weeks prior (or as soon as possible) to the planned event. Class Excursion Form (Appendix 2) to be completed and submitted to Principal.
- Excursion Procedure and Costings form (Appendix 1) to be read.
- Students shall not be allowed to attend a school excursion unless written permission is granted by the parent/guardian. The permission note shall outline all details of the excursion and items required.
- The organising teacher must know each child's individual medical needs and conditions.
- The student-adult ratio for the school excursion shall be determined according to the "Camps and Excursion:" guidelines for Catholic Schools.
- Excursion file of children with severe medical conditions must be taken.
- Emergency contact number list to be on inside cover of excursion file.
- Class checklist must be taken and checked off before and after. List of children attending the excursion on the day must be given to the school secretary prior to departure.
- Children must travel together under supervision of the class teacher (No travelling in parents cars).
- Ensure that parent helpers are informed of excursion expectations.

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

- Planning and organisation of excursions should allow sufficient time to ensure suitable bus transport to be organised.
- Children must travel together under supervision of the class teacher.
- Wherever possible the whole group will travel together.
- Wherever practical students shall travel in a bus fitted with seatbelts.
- There should be no travelling in parent's cars without the prior authorisation of the principal and the parents of the children.
- In all instances, when the students will be required to travel by bus, the teacher shall attempt to obtain a bus/coach with seatbelts for the journey.
- If a bus/coach with seatbelts is not available for hire, the principal at his/her discretion shall provide another bus/coach for the excursion.
- In the event that a bus/coach is being provided without seatbelts the parents of the students using the bus/coach will be notified in advance and fully informed of this course of action, allowing parents sufficient time to make other arrangements if they choose not to send their child on this bus/coach.

MAJOR EMERGENCIES

Assemble all children immediately in a safe location and complete a roll call. Contact emergency services

Ring school and advise the Principal of the situation and provide all necessary information.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED

- Whistle
- Witches hats to define boundaries (if required)
- First aid box (this must be maintained and stocked prior to excursion)
- Mobile phone
- Excursion file
- Checklists
- Sunscreen
- Drink container

AQUATIC EXCURSIONS

Teachers are to be familiar with the requirements as outlined in the *“School Camps and Excursions: Guidelines for Catholic Schools”* file located in the front office before any excursion is undertaken.

Prior to entry of water:

1. At least one teacher holding a current bronze medallion must supervise no more than one class at a time while an aquatic activity is being undertaken. The appropriate adult: student ratio must also be adhered to. This person is responsible for any rescue. This person is also in charge of deeming the body of water safe and suitable for children to enter.
2. The student-adult ratio for the school excursion shall be determined according to the “Camps and Excursion:” guidelines for Catholic Schools.

Table 1. Closed Water

Students	Qualified Supervisors	Non-Qualified Supervisors	Total Supervisors
1-12	1	1	2
13-24	1	1	2
25-32	1	2	3
33-36	2	1	3

Table 2. Open Water

Students	Qualified Supervisors	Non-Qualified Supervisors	Total Supervisors
1-8	1	1	2
9-16	1	1	2
17-24	2	1	3
25-32	2	2	4

- The above student-adult ratios are maximum limits. Other factors to consider are:
 - The age of the student
 - Gender balance
 - Location of the excursion

SWIMMING CARNIVAL SUPERVISION RATIOS

The Department of Education specifies minimum supervision ratios for swimming carnivals in their Outdoor Education and Recreation Activities Policy as follows (as at January 2017):

- Closed Water: 2 supervisors per 32 students (at least one qualified)
- Open Water: 2 supervisors per 16 students (at least one qualified)

Qualified supervisors must hold current recognised qualifications.

These include:

- School Teacher Aquatic Rescue Training (START) RLSSA
- Bronze Medallion RLSSA
- Bronze Medallion SLSSA
- Surf Rescue Certificate SLSSA

3. The teacher with the bronze medallion is in charge of the class at all times.
4. Boundaries must be set prior to children entering the water.
5. Children that are to be entering the water need to know where to meet (away from the water) in case of an emergency.
6. In case of an emergency, where multiple classes are present at the one excursion, all children must be aware of their emergency home-room location where they must be checked off their classroom register by the teacher in charge of that room.
7. Children must be made aware of water safety signals i.e.
 - 3 sharp whistle blows means to exit the water immediately.
 - Children must wave a closed fist above their head if they are in trouble.
 - 1 whistle blow means to stop look and listen.
7. Teachers must be located at the appropriate depth according to the children's skill level.
8. Children must be marked off a class list prior to entry and exit of the water.

ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT NEEDED

- Flags to mark swimming boundaries.
- Flotation device e.g. boogie board.
- Megaphone

QUALIFICATIONS

Qualifications recognised by the Department of Education and Department of Sport and

- Recreation include (but are not limited to):
- School Teachers Aquatic Rescue Training Certificate (START)
- Royal Life Saving Society – Bronze Medallion
- Surf Life Saving – Bronze Medallion
- Surf Life Saving – Surf Rescue
- AUSTSWIM - Teacher of Swimming and Water Safety (including CPR) (pools only)

SPORTS EVENTS AND CARNIVALS

To enhance the enjoyment and well-being of students participating in school organised sporting events, specific activity risk assessments are vital.

Whilst the focus of these Guidelines is on events run as an excursion, it is important to note that many of these hazards and risks will also apply when sports events are run on school premises.

Some specific risks/hazards include (but are not limited to):

PEOPLE

- Competency/certification requirements for teaching staff and staff assisting with activities (e.g. starters using pistols require accreditation)
- Number of staff attending that are first aid trained – Sports First Aid training is available through Sports Medicine Australia and other organisations.

- Staff unfamiliar with sport events/activities; inadequate expertise for effective supervision
- Familiarity with venue procedures including evacuation and emergency management
- Physical injury upon participation due to inadequate training/preparation
- Monitoring student departures following event if not by school transport

EQUIPMENT

- Stocked First Aid Kits relevant to activities
- Competition area/sports equipment may pose unique hazards to injuries and accidents
- Sufficient access to water to ensure student's remain hydrated
- Protection from weather
- Starting pistols / aerosol powered air horns (storage, access, ear protection; permits; accreditation to use). Alternatives methods are recommended due to safety issues with this equipment

ENVIRONMENT

- A plan to monitor student's movements to avoid lost or missing students.
- Use of toilet facilities at public parks and venues (i.e. ease of public access to students).
- Student's moving frequently around the venue for events; keeping track measures
- Change rooms - access and privacy

OVER NIGHT CAMP

Consider the overall educational worth and relevance of an excursion that removes students from their usual place of residence for one night or more.

Given the additional costs and risks involved, determine if the excursion can be safe and worthwhile. To provide maximum educational benefit to students, develop a cross-curricular approach.

Planning considerations that take into account other educational subjects and educational opportunities may assist in creating excursions that generate multiple learning outcomes. This may also minimise disruption to educational programs where students are away from the classroom for extended periods.

Overnight excursions increase risks and hazards across all key areas but especially around transport, location, supervision, accommodation and activities (planned and unplanned).

The intended educational outcomes do not outweigh the requirement to minimise potential harm to students and all participants. Consider carefully whether the additional risks are manageable and ensure actions are implemented.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Whilst not defined as an excursion, the same principles of risk management and duty of care apply to any overnight activities held on school premises (e.g. camping on school oval).

In addition to the previous information provided throughout the section on Key Risk Areas, also consider the following examples of some of the additional risks that may be associated with overnight excursions (including but limited to the following areas).

- While on camp, duty of care responsibilities are required of staff and supervisors on a 24 hour a day basis. Therefore, staff and supervisors will not use any intoxicating substances at any time during the camp.
- Before the camp is booked, the school must ensure that the students will be transported to and from the camp in a safe and proper manner, whatever the mode of transport.
- The principal shall ensure the drivers of any vehicles are persons who act responsibly and give due regard to the safety and well being of students. All drivers should have a current and appropriate drivers license.
- No alcohol is to be consumed by teachers or parental help while on camp.
- At the conclusion of the camp, a report should be submitted to the Principal.

It should cover:

- The adequacy of the camp.
- Recommendations for the future use of the camp site.
- The overall management of the camp.
- Any injuries that occurred.
- The achievement or otherwise of the objectives of the camp.
- Other information relating to specific incidents of the camp.
- Any other information that may assist in the planning of future camps.

TRANSPORT

- Is the mode of transport appropriate for the location?
- Is it the safest option?
- Is it financially viable?
- Is the length of journey appropriate for the age group of students?
- How will the journey be managed?
- Will it require additional training, preparation, equipment for participants?
- Will a long journey impact on supervision strategies?
- Might the journey generate additional medical, physical or psychological issues?
- Is the planned route hazardous or complicated? Are the roads safe? Are there alternative routes?

LOCATION

- How well do you know the area/s in which the excursion will occur?
- What are the safety considerations of the area/s you will be visiting? E.g. is there a lot of crime? Are there high risks of bushfire or flooding?
- Are other groups using the same site/facilities? What impact will other groups have?
- What communication facilities/capacity is available? Is additional equipment required?

SUPERVISION

- Will supervision be gender appropriate at all times?
- What are the supervision strategies throughout the night/s? Will there be curfews / bed checks? How will bathroom visits be supervised?

- Will there be sufficient supervision to all students throughout the night/s?
- Have appropriate checks on participants/external providers been conducted (WWC)?

ACCOMMODATION

- Are the rooms/dorms/camps/tents secure?
- What rules/procedures need to be specified/in place regarding sleeping arrangements?
- How will room's etc.be accessible? Will the Teacher in Charge have access at all times?
- Will accommodation be located together e.g. hotels rooms in same corridor?
- Is the accommodation located in a safe area or does it have a high crime rate?

ACTIVITIES

Consider both planned and unplanned activities (including 'free time') and how these will need to be conducted when staying away from school/home/boarding.

These will be greatly impacted by your setting/location which may generate additional considerations relevant to your excursion.

It is recommended that 'free time' is kept to a minimum to reduce possible exposure to harm and rather a detailed itinerary is established and maintained.

Example considerations include (but are not limited to):

- Are there minimal impact requirements that may drive what activities can occur and how they may occur? E.g. [Leave No Trace](#) practices.
- Is additional training, preparation or equipment required?
- What are the supervision strategies for unplanned activities or 'free time'?
- What is the communication and emergency plan and procedures for 'free time'?
- Are activities including dining, entertainment and shopping age appropriate and well planned/prepared for?
- Are supervisors clear about their conduct and actions throughout the excursion? E.g. Alcohol consumption during dinner at a restaurant?

ADVENTURE ACTIVITIES

Activities that are organised off school premises for physical and outdoor education often involve the conduct of adventure activities.

These include (but are not limited to):

- Abseiling
- Artificial climbing
- Bushwalking
- Canoeing & kayaking
- Challenge ropes
- Four-wheel driving
- Horse trail riding
- Mountain biking
- Recreational angling
- Caving

- River rafting
- Rock climbing
- Snow Sports
- Surfing
- Trail Bike riding
- Archery
- Canyoning
- Sea kayaking
- Surf kayaking
- Snorkelling
- Wildlife swims
- Scuba diving

Australian Adventure Activity Standards (AAS) are currently under development which will result in the establishment of national standards for the conduct of these activities.

Resources and support regarding the requirements and standards for the conduct of adventure activities should be accessed via the following organisations:

- Outdoors WA
- Outdoor Council of Australia (OCA)
- National Outdoor Leadership Registration Scheme (NOLRS)

Physical and outdoor education staff in schools should embed risk management practices and plan/conduct adventure activities in alignment with the Standards.

Many such staff throughout CEWA already do this and may be able to provide support to other staff throughout the system.

INTRA/INTER-STATE TRAVEL

Excursions that involve lengthy and distant travel away from home should undergo a risk assessment process taking into account the key risk areas discussed throughout this document.

Additional considerations specific to intra or interstate travel would revolve largely around increased exposure to possible harm related to transport, accommodation, activities and emergency response plans.

Given the increased distance from home, plans should be prepared to ensure that if needed students will be able to return home readily and easily.

Additional financial considerations are also a factor in such scenarios and parents should be aware of these potential additional costs.

Students should also obtain individual travel insurance at a level appropriate for the location, activities and equipment involved and at a coverage satisfactory to parent/carer requirements.

Refer to the section on Insurance under International Travel for further information on Catholic Education Western Australia website.

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

The learning opportunities possible via exposure to other cultures and environments around the globe are numerous.

CEWA schools must consider how these learning opportunities link to the educational responsibilities required of schools (i.e. how they meet curriculum requirements).

This should be determined prior to the commencement of planning for international excursions.

It is valuable to consider why and how an international excursion is the responsibility of a school to organise and conduct (as opposed to being a choice by parents to arrange privately).

Consider also whether the educational goals may be met in ways that do not involve overseas travel. This is vital given the risks to participant safety, health and well-being are increased significantly when overseas travel is involved and, the ability to mitigate these risks can be far more difficult to enact.

Extensive research, planning, preparation and risk mitigation actions are necessary for a Principal to make an informed decision as to whether sufficient reasonable actions have been taken to reduce all foreseeable risks to an acceptable level.

Outlined below are examples of some of the additional factors to consider when researching and planning an international excursion in addition to previous information in these Guidelines.

VACCINATIONS AND DISEASES

Some countries require travellers to obtain specific vaccinations prior to departure.

Check the requirements for all of your destinations as early as possible and communicate this clearly to parents. Parents will be responsible for seeking their own medical advice and obtaining any required vaccines for their child.

A copy of the record should be obtained by the school so that proof of immunisation can be verified by the school as a possible pre-requisite for attendance.

It is possible that some parents may choose for their child not to obtain a particular immunisation, in which case participation in the excursion may not be possible.

Also determine the timeframes associated with immunisations as some may need to be administered 6 months before departure. This may have a significant impact on the planning of an international excursion and require parent/carer consultation much earlier than originally expected.

There are numerous infectious diseases around the world for which preventative treatments may not currently exist. Research your travel destinations extensively regarding health issues prior to departure and prepare participants as well as parents of the associated health risks.

Also keep in mind that food preparation and handling standards vary widely around the world and in some locations illness may be common from poor hygiene practices.

This also extends to consideration of clean, safe, drinkable and useable water, including rivers, lakes, and any open water that may carry water-borne parasites and infectious diseases.

Prepare all participants extensively about practices to reduce health risks throughout an international excursion.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

International travel can be a costly exercise.

Budgets should be initially estimated and then clarified as specific details develop.

Keep costs down to a minimum to ensure financial inclusivity of all students and consult with parents early to identify potential issues and concerns.

This should be the intent regardless of whether the excursion is compulsory or optional. For further information please refer to CECWA Policy on School Fees.

In addition to costs associated with transportation, accommodation, travel insurance, travel documents, meals and paid activities also ensure consideration is given to student's personal expenditure and potential additional costs that may occur if emergency travel is required.

Personal expenditure should be arranged and determined by parents in a method suitable to their own requirements. However, no participants should carry large amounts of cash. Numerous, safer alternatives exist.

Consultation with parents and participants regarding who has responsibility of personal spending money should be clarified prior to departure and a strategy established and communicated. This may also include mechanisms for accessing emergency spending money should any money cards be lost.

Schools should also obtain advice through their relevant financial officer regarding any tax implications or reporting requirements regarding expenditures, invoices, receipts. School staff may also choose to seek their own independent financial advice regarding any potential tax implications regarding their own costs and expenditures.

CRITICAL INCIDENTS AND EMERGENCIES

Travelling overseas exposes participants to risks and hazards that may not exist in Australia. Added to that are the complexities of responding to incidents and emergencies in a foreign country operating in systems unfamiliar to participants and the supervision team.

Preparation and planning is essential to ensure such situations are responded to effectively and efficiently. Become familiar with such necessities including (but not limited to):

- Access to and operation of local medical facilities/systems
- Access to emergency services such as police, ambulance, fire
- Available transport mechanisms to travel readily to airport, hospital, police
- Available Consular services
- Supervision strategies if students need to be separated e.g. to obtain medical treatment

Preparation of Emergency Response Plans gather all such relevant information and tools for ready implementation if required. When in a foreign country, the supervision team should be well versed with local facilities and procedures.

INSURANCE

Travel insurance should be an essential requirement for all participants.

This should be communicated to all participants including parents.

Part of this communication should specify that it is the responsibility of the parents to obtain travel insurance for their child. Schools should not take on the responsibility of arranging travel insurance for students.

Parents should conduct their own research into the level of insurance coverage they would like to acquire for their child to meet their specific requirements.

Suggest they research and discuss with insurers the following factors:

- Each destinations and transport methods.
- The duration of the trip.
- The activities that have been planned and what may occur during any free time.
- The items, valuables, equipment being taken.
- Any medical considerations
- Coverage in case of emergency including medical, natural disaster, terrorist activity

Parents should understand for themselves what circumstances will be covered and those that will not. This may be especially relevant of cancellations due to changes in travel warnings or natural disasters, or, if any specific medical considerations exist.

Parents may then obtain the type and level of cover they are most comfortable with for their child.

Ensure that the school obtains a copy of the travel insurance certificate to:

- a. Ensure that it has been obtained, and
- b. To provide assistance to students should the need arise to utilise the cover.

MEDICATIONS AND MEDICAL TREATMENTS OVERSEAS

Any participants taking prescription medicines overseas, must be aware of travel advice for the countries being visited to check their legality. There may exist very serious consequences for travellers caught with illegal medicines.

Schools should recommend parents check with their treating practitioner and relevant embassies. This should be recorded on information gathered about students/participants to verify this has been checked.

It is generally recommended that a letter from the treating medical professional is obtained and carried by the participant and that any medications remain in their original packaging.

School staff should work very closely with parents of students with any medical issues that may require treatment whilst overseas.

Determine, in consultation with the treating medical practitioner, such things as:

- What precautions need to be established?
- What possible implications may result should the medical condition be triggered or worsens?

- What treatment options will be available throughout the journey and at what cost?
- Will the treatment options meet the needs of the participant?
- Does examination of the travel insurance provide sufficient coverage where there are pre-existing medical conditions?

Where assistance may be required contact the Australian Consulate and ensure the supervision team has the relevant contact numbers at hand at all times.

Additional communication and supervision strategies may be necessary to monitor the health of participants with medical conditions (including those with mental health difficulties).

Consideration should also be given to what impact any incidents may have on other students and participants as this may be identified as a risk to their health and well-being.

SUPERVISION STRATEGIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

In addition to the information outlined previously regarding Supervision, international excursions should factor contingency supervision plans in cases of emergencies.

There should be minimum of two teaching staff on any international excursion to ensure supervision continuity in case of emergency or illness of a participant. It would be advisable to also have a third teacher, fully prepared and on stand-by, should one of the teacher supervisors become incapacitated.

The supervision group should consist of at least one person with appropriate first aid qualifications relevant to the participants attending and activities being undertaken. This may include CPR qualifications and water rescue qualifications as outlined in these Guidelines.

Any parents attending an international excursion should not be assumed to have the duty of care of his/her child. It is an educational activity organised by the school and therefore the responsibility of care remains with the Principal.

Consider also what supervision arrangements would occur if the parent or carer becomes ill or incapacitated: what strategies will exist to supervise the affected student/s?

Prepare and plan supervision strategies and ratios appropriate to the destinations you are travelling to. Communicate these in detail to all participants.

STUDENT PREPARATION

Ensure students receive sufficient information, training, development and instruction prior to the commencement of the international excursion.

A few examples include:

- Make them aware of the risks and hazards.
- Educate them on cultural requirements and protocols that may need to be adhered to
- Discuss methods on safety precautions relevant to that country
- Document procedures for any new or unfamiliar components of the excursion
- Establish behavioural expectations and safety protocols
- Determine what preparation may be necessary prior to any activities being conducted

STUDENT SELECTION FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

Some schools choose to have students apply to attend an international excursion.

This may ensure that any minimum requirements necessary to attend the excursion are met. Consideration of factors may include capabilities, maturity, and academic progress, relevance/impact to students' academic program, relevant skills, and behavioural requirements.

Ensure applications provide sufficient information for students and their parents to make informed decisions about whether to apply and outline the assessment methodology to be applied to select students and to determine waitlists.

TRAVEL AGENTS

At all times schools should use the services of a reputable travel agent to book travel and tours (including for intra and interstate travel).

In 2014 the travel industry was de-regulated and as such travel agents are no longer required to be licensed. Regardless, any travel agents utilised should demonstrate a good reputation.

Whilst school staff conducting internet searches may yield less expensive options, use such research to negotiate costs with travel agents and obtain quotes from several different providers to ensure you are being financially judicious.

Schools that choose to coordinate the purchase of domestic and overseas travel and accommodation as part of an excursion must be mindful that the provision of such travel services by a school may bring it within the Australian Consumer Laws and the penalties and remedies for breaches of such law.

Ideally, schools should give parents detailed itineraries and other information and allow parents to book and pay for travel and accommodation. Alternatively, a school may nominate a reputable travel agent to liaise with parents so that no payments are made directly to the school and the travel agent will be responsible for the delivery of those services and any failures to do so.

If a school chooses to book travel and accommodation for students it should realise that it may become liable for any loss or damage that arises from the students' use of those services.

A school should also discuss with their insurer any additional policies it should consider to cover it for any loss or damage that occurs during the excursion, including arising from travel and accommodation.

STUDENT BILLETING

Student billeting during excursions has the potential to reduce costs and enhance cultural immersion.

However, the arranging of student accommodation during an excursion in private homes poses additional risks and hazards that may fall well beyond the capacity of the Principal and school staff to control.

As a school approved educational program, the Principal maintains his/her duty of care to participants on an excursion, including when a student is billeted.

Criminal history checks, Working with Children Checks, site (accommodation) hazards and appropriate supervision are just a few examples of the risks posed when a student is billeted in private accommodation.

Given much of these risks would be difficult to mitigate (e.g. WWC are not available overseas, nor are site inspections), this may not be the most suitable form of accommodation for students on an excursion and consideration of safety issues should outweigh cost saving and cultural immersion opportunities.

Consider a scenario that involves a student staying on his/her own, with people unknown to the Principal, in an environment not assessed for hazards, in a property that has no requirement for safety standards. There are immediate concerns evident regarding potential risks and hazards to the safety, health and well-being of the student. Further, the recommendation of a family by a 'sister' school may not be sufficient for a Principal to have taken all reasonable steps to reduce the risk of harm to a student.

Unless the risks can be reduced there is little option but to control them by removing the possibility altogether. This may be more feasible when billeting is within Australia and more problematic when overseas.

Some examples of risk areas associated with student billeting include (but are not limited to):

- Poor hygiene conditions in the home
- Safety issues associated with the accommodation
- Exposure to harm from host family members
- Unknown sleeping arrangements
- Insufficient capacity for student to communicate easily with school staff/parents
- Student unfamiliar/unprepared to respond to emergency situations
- Student rules, procedures and guidelines not monitored or followed by host family
- Inadequate insurance coverage
- Language barriers between student and host family
- Host family are not suitable role models
- Host family unaware of school policies and conduct/behaviour expectations
- Host family have unsafe private transport or are reckless drivers/have poor driving records

Refer to the section on Insurance under International Travel for further information on Catholic Education Western Australia website.