



Oatlands College School Trips Policy

Scope of 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 applies to all students of Oatlands College, 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 that students are clearly identified or identifiable as students at the school. The Code of Behaviour, therefore, in all its detail applies to all outings and trips, including those that involve an overnight stay.

Rationale for School Trips and relevant policy

Oatlands College, 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.

The policy operates within a legislative framework and takes account of the following-

- The Education Act, 1998
- The Education Welfare Act, 2000
- The Equal Status Act, 2000
- The Equality Act, 2004
- The circular letter M20/04. (DES)
- The Education for persons with special needs, 2004
- Children First, 2015
- The child protection procedures for primary and post primary schools,2017

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.

Day Trips

Day Trips may take place during the school day and may extend beyond normal school hours.

Some examples of day trips are:

- Fieldwork 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 programmes in the school (Transition Year/LCVP)
- Sports events outside the school day e.g., Wednesday afternoons
- Attendance at school sporting event in a supporting capacity

Any teacher planning to organise a day trip or any non-sporting outing during class time, must first request approval from the Principal and Deputy Principal in advance of the proposed date. The principal must approve the trip before it is publicised.

Once a trip has been approved, the organiser should notify students and parents with details of the trip and all relevant information, as soon as possible.

Full details of the trip, including date, time and names of participating students must be added to the school calendar and emailed to all staff by the organising teacher as early as possible 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 and/or emailed to all staff by the organising teacher in advance of the event.

Students who have a history of inappropriate behaviour may be excluded from day trips.

Students with Special Educational Needs may need additional consideration on all trips and if necessary, the organising teacher should liaise with the Learning Support department to identify these specific needs. Students may be accompanied by an SNA (Special Needs Assistants) if appropriate.

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 travelling.

Apart from exceptional cases, where teachers have communicated with the parents involved, the teacher will always be accompanied by another staff member on a school trip.

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. 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 journey to/from the school.

Certain trips may involve activities/travel to and from a venue that may not be directly supervised. Senior students (Transition, 5th and 6th year students) may be given the autonomy to make their own way to meet a teacher at a destination where possible. Students will be given the details in advance.

An Accident/Incident Report Form must be completed for all accidents or incidents that may have occurred on the trip

Transition years have one trip consent form in their school journal that covers all trips and which must be signed at the beginning of the school year.

Travel by Coach

Bus companies hired by the school must be fully insured. Buses have safety belts fitted for each person traveling. Teachers will endeavour to ensure that all pupils wear their seat belts. All bus drivers must be Garda vetted and certificates must be submitted to the school on request.

The following rules apply to conduct on buses:

- Only one student per seat.
- Students must remain seated at all times
- Students must wear their seat belt at all times
- Students may not eat or drink on the bus unless given permission to do so by the supervising teacher
- Students must enter and exit a bus quietly and in an orderly manner
- Students who consistently disobey the above rules will not be permitted to travel on subsequent trips

Overnight Expeditions or Trips Abroad

Other trips may be over-night expeditions or of longer duration. These may be co-curricular activities organised by subject departments, trips arranged for Year Groups, or ones that are part of the Outdoor Education Programme.

Some examples are:

- History Trips e.g.: Derry
- Transition Year trips - e.g., Germany, France
- Exchange programmes involving a group of students and teacher(s)
- Volunteer Immersion programmes e.g.: Barrettstown, Jamaica
- Activity based trips – e.g.: Delphi or Carlingford Outdoor Education Centre

School Tour

A school tour is defined as any group travel involving at least one overnight stay. The school will only use the services of licensed tour operators/travel agents when organizing excursions outside the island of Ireland. In general, the ratio of teachers to students is 1:8 though different circumstances may influence the actual ratio. The Tour Leader will be expected to ensure that the tour is conducted in accordance with agreed standards.

Organisation and Approval

The tour organiser will discuss with the Principal the proposed destination, dates, and details.

Factors involved in preliminary discussions include:

- Educational Value
- Price and Overall Value for Money
- Suggested Itinerary
- Well-being of students
- Safety of Location/Established structure in place to cope with school groups.

At this stage, an application to proceed with the tour will be made to the Board of Management. In circular letter, M20/04 the Department of Education and Science has devolved to Boards of Management the authorisation to grant approval for educational tours by school groups both inside and outside the State subject to a number of criteria.

A general outline of the tour, including travel dates, tour company details, travel insurance, the total tour price, the general tour itinerary and the rationale for the trip in relation to educational value and other benefits, should accompany the request for permission.

The Board of Management will consider the following when reaching its decision

1. The appropriateness of the proposed trip in terms of DES Circular M20/04.
2. The staffing arrangements for the trip and for the school.
3. The financial controls in place for the trip

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 workload 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 trip. For example, 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, class tutors with classes on hikes etc.

Selection of Students/Application Procedures:

A meeting will be held for the relevant students who may wish to go on the proposed school tour.

A letter will be given to the students for their parents/guardians with brief details of destination/itinerary/estimated prices (dependent on ultimate uptake)/payment dates etc. Parents/guardians must be made aware that the organiser reserves the right to make minor changes to the itinerary. In addition, application forms will also be distributed to all those who are interested in applying for the tour. This letter aims to establish level of interest and does not in itself constitute an offer of a place on the tour.

The Tour Leader and Deputy Leader will now examine the application forms and decide which students are to be offered a position on the school tour. They will consult and meet with the principal to discuss the behavioural record of the relevant group. Other staff members of the school may be consulted on which students are or are not allowed to go on the school tour, but the tour leader and Principal will have final say. At this stage, some students may be excluded due to their behavioural record.

Where there is over-subscription of eligible students, priority is given to those students who are studying the subject if applicable and otherwise students to be offered a place on the trip will be decided by lottery.

If a passport is required, a photocopy of the student's passport may be required. All passports must be valid for at least six months following the trip. These copies will be stored in a secure location and shredded upon returning from 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/guardians should be informed that students with non-EU passports might 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/guardians that the onus is on them to ensure that their son has all necessary up-to-date documentation well in advance of the trip.

Parents/guardians should be informed in good time if there are any mandatory or recommended inoculations for the destination. It is important to note that the onus is on the parent/guardian to plan for their child to receive all necessary inoculations.

A meeting of those students who have been granted permission to travel will be called where they will be given a letter outlining specific dates to pay non-refundable deposits. A student will not secure a place on the tour until the deposit is paid.

The tour leader may require parents/guardians to attend an information meeting prior to the excursion. If such a meeting is deemed necessary or desirable, it may be stipulated that non-attendance without prior notification will result in permission to travel being revoked from the relevant student(s). Guidelines for spending money and money for extras such as meals and excursions will also be communicated to parents.

Students and parents/guardians will also be required to provide relevant personal, medical, and contact details, including passport details. Students and parents/guardians will be informed that any errors or subsequent changes to details will result in fees levied by the airline and are outside the control of the tour organiser or the travel company.

In accordance with Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Services (INIS) guidelines the parent(s)/guardian of each student who is to travel is required to submit a signed letter from the child's parent(s)/guardian giving consent for travel and providing their contact details.

Contact Information

The tour leader must ensure that complete contact information is left with the principal/deputy principal during the tour for use in the event of an emergency.

This should include:

- Names, addresses and home contact numbers of all those going on the tour.
- Full details of the itinerary, hotel addresses, phone numbers etc.
- A contact telephone number for each member of the tour team.

Students should have the mobile phone number of trip leader — to be carried with them at all times while on the trip in case of an emergency.

Payment/Finance

After paying, the deposit students will pay the remaining fees by the dates and means outlined in the excursion's communications as drafted by the tour leader and approved by the principal.

All school tours travelling outside of the island of Ireland must be booked through a bonded licensed travel agent or tour operator from the approved list on www.aviationreg.ie. Payments from students should be made out directly to the travel agent or tour operator. Cheques made out to the bonded travel operator can be collected by the school. These cheques can then be forwarded to the bonded tour operator by the school.

Where the tour is organised without the use of a travel agent:

A detailed record of all participating students and the amounts paid should be retained.

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.

Separate financial records should be maintained for each school trip.

Parents should be informed as early as possible of the full cost associated with the excursion.

Any surplus remaining at the end of a tour will remain in the school tour account to be utilised in future tours.

Expected Standard of Behaviour

We at Oatlands College have very high expectations of behaviour, and we expect such standards to be maintained during all extra-curricular activities.

Participation in a school tour is a huge vote of confidence in a student on behalf of Oatlands College and requires every student to always act in a mature and responsible manner.

The tour leader will meet with the students prior to departure and outline the Code of Behaviour.

Regular school rules apply when on school tours (except for uniform) and a special emphasis is put on the following:

- Students are expected to follow instructions given by the tour leader, any of the accompanying teachers or any local guides for the duration of the excursion.
- Students are expected to behave in a mannerly and punctual way and are expected to attend all organised activities.
- Students may not leave the tour group at any time unless agreed by the teachers.
- Students are expected to treat each other with respect. Fighting or abusive language will not be tolerated.
- Students must not smoke, vape, drink alcohol, or take illegal drugs.
- Students are forbidden from obtaining tattoos or piercings while on school trips.
- Students must not give the name of the hotel or their personal details to anyone.
- Students must not enter another guest's hotel room or allow anybody into their room.
- Once a group has retired at night, no student has permission to be in another student's room, on the corridors or in any other area of the premises.
- Each student is responsible for their own property, e.g., luggage, money, etc. All personal belongings should be clearly marked. The school cannot accept responsibility for students' property.
- The tour leader should check all rooms before students have access to them and make a note of any damage done prior to their arrival. Vacated rooms should also be checked for damage. Students must show respect to all property that will be used over the school tour e.g., hotel property, tour bus, etc.
- If the tour leader suspects that a student possesses items deemed unsuitable, a search of rooms and/or personal property (bags, suitcases etc.) may be made. Two members of the tour team should carry out inspections. They should not have any contact with a student's clothing. If a search of clothing is deemed necessary students will be asked to empty contents themselves while the teachers observe. 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.

- If a student is found to be in serious breach of any of the rules in the School Code of Behaviour, the tour leader will contact the principal immediately. In the event of a serious breach of the Code of Behaviour, a student may be sent home early from a trip. Parents/guardians are expected to cover any additional cost that may arise from this.

Mobile phone usage on School Trips

School trips are an invaluable educational experience for students and a fantastic opportunity for students to bond with their peers. We want our students to get the most out of any school trip and we will insist on limited screen time on trips. In some instances, teachers may keep mobile phones in a secure location and give them to students for a certain time each day. If this is planned, students/parents will be told of these arrangements in advance.

This policy was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management on 5th December 2022.