

OFF-SITE SUPERVISION OF STUDENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Off-Site Supervision of Students Procedure applies to all Diocese of Sale Catholic Education Limited ('**DOSCEL**') workplaces.

Camps and excursions are a recognised part of school activities and staff can reasonably expect to be required by the school to conduct camps and excursions as part of their normal work duties. Because camps and excursions necessarily involve both staff and students leaving school premises, there may be increased risks to their health and safety. The increased risk may arise from either or both of the following factors:

- The nature of the camp or excursion itself (for example, a short walking excursion to look at environmental features in the school's vicinity poses less risk than a camping trip).
- A less controlled environment (that is, the reduced control that the school can exercise over external factors such as the safety of the excursion site or the people with whom students might come into contact).

2.0 PURPOSE

The obligation to protect the health and safety of staff and students extends to activities away from school, such as school excursions and camps

This Procedure is to ensure the health and safety of staff, students and volunteers on camps and excursions is managed just as it would be within school grounds.

3.0 PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

The principal or delegated authority, having reviewed and ratified the activity plan in advance, will not approve or recommend an off-site activity for approval unless they are satisfied that the activity is reasonably safe and that it can be adequately supervised.

In accordance with the DOSCEL Delegation Register – Schools, the principal or delegated authority will submit applications to DOSCEL for consideration and approval for the following activities:

- Camps
- Overnight Excursions
- High Risk Activities as determined by DOSCEL
- Interstate tours

- Overseas tours

An Activity Planning Checklist and Risk Assessment signed by both the teacher in charge and the principal should be completed for all off-site activities. Additional supporting documents are required to be submitted for activities requiring DOSCEL approval.

3.1 Overview

During an off-site school activity, a teacher employed by DOSCEL has responsibility for the safety of the students from the moment of leaving to the moment of dismissal. Supervision of students during an off-site activity cannot be delegated to a non-teaching staff member, parent, volunteer or external activity provider.

The parent or guardian must receive prior written or electronic advice about travel plans (including times of departure and arrival and mode of transport), educational activities and supervision arrangements. Permission forms must be signed by the parent or guardian, although this consent does not relieve teachers supervising excursions from their responsibilities towards students.

A parent or guardian's consent is to allow the child to engage in an activity for which reasonable care will be taken for the safety of the child. Where reasonable care is not taken, it falls outside the scope of what has been consented to by the parent or guardian.

3.2 Planning Requirements

In advance of every off-site activity, the Student Activity Locator (SAL) will be completed.

A designated 'Teacher in Charge' will plan and coordinate each camp, excursion or activity.

In consultation with the teacher in charge, the principal is responsible for approving the activity or recommending the activity for approval. An activity will normally be approved with the following conditions:

- a) Activities are relevant to the classroom curriculum program.
- b) A risk assessment has been completed showing:
 - hazards pertaining to the excursion have been identified
 - the potential risks associated with the hazards have been assessed
 - ways of controlling the risks have been identified.
- c) Sufficient numbers of school staff or other approved persons are assigned to accompany each party of pupils to ensure proper and adequate supervision. The ratio of staff to students must reflect the nature of the risk involved. For example, more staff may be required for high-risk activities.
- d) All volunteers and contractors have undertaken an induction program through the school and have undergone and completed a satisfactory Working with Children Check and, if necessary, a National Police Record Check and are well known to the principal or a senior member of the staff.

- e) Parents/Guardians have been informed in writing of the details of the activity and of the arrangements made for the children.
- f) Where the children are required to leave school grounds, a written statement is required to be obtained from the parent/guardian of each child granting permission for the child to participate in the activity and incorporating a statement of consent to medical treatment.
- g) The school authority or teachers are not required to meet any of the costs associated with the activity.
- h) Minimum staff-student and male-female ratios have been met for activity type.
- i) Satisfactory arrangements are made for those students not attending the excursion. This includes sufficient work and adequate supervision.
- j) Provision has been made for the consents and permissions to be kept secure by the teacher in charge while on the camp, excursion or activity and the school office has a list of all participants, including any known and declared medical conditions and/or medication requirements and a list of contact emergency numbers.
- k) The excursion group has access to a mobile phone or satellite for quick communication if an emergency develops. Mobile coverage is also considered when planning the activity.
- l) The excursion group has access to a first aid kit. First aid equipment appropriate to the excursion must be readily available at all times on the excursion. There are sufficient numbers of staff attending the activity who are trained and qualified in administering first-aid.
- m) The time taken for the activity does not exceed what is considered to be a reasonable amount of time away from the normal classroom program.
- n) The staff responsible for the organisation and supervision of the activity are aware of their legal responsibility on such excursions.
- o) Parents have been notified in advance (Camps, two months' notice and excursions, four weeks' notice).
- p) Where the activity involves a camp, overnight excursion, high risk activity as determined by DOSCEL, interstate tour or overseas tour, applications must be submitted for consideration and approval by DOSCEL, using documentation determined by DOSCEL.
- q) Where two or more schools are involved in an activity, each school has applied for approval and, in the case of a joint activity, there should be one nominated teacher in charge for the activity.

3.3 Permission

For students younger than 18 years, parent or guardian consent or permission is required. If a child is living independently of the parent or guardian, then contact should be made with the Executive Manager: Industrial Relations / Human Resources to determine if the student can sign enrolment forms and enter agreements with the school concerning medical

treatment, outdoor education activities (camps and excursions) and other matters for which the parent or guardian may be asked to give permission.

Students 18 years or older do not require parental permission or consent but must personally provide this permission.

Schools must obtain written or electronic permission from parents or guardians for offsite school activities, including school camps, excursions.

The permission form needs to be descriptive and informative: the date and time of excursion, the name of the responsible teacher, the staff who will be attending, the number of students involved, mode of transport, the plan of activities, the aims of the day's activities, risks involved, emergency contact information, closest medical facility/hospital, time of departure and time of return. This information helps the parent or guardian make an informed decision, and the information needs to be provided in a language that the parent or guardian understands.

Ensure parents/carers are informed that students may be sent home from an excursion in the event of illness or serious misbehaviour and any costs relating to the student's return will be the parent or carer's responsibility.

Included on the permission form are the steps that will be followed when a student breaches any rules or in the event of serious illness. Parents or guardians need to agree and sign off that they are prepared to collect their child from any offsite activity when their child is involved in serious misbehaviour and any costs relating to the student's return will be the parent or guardian's responsibility.

The rules for offsite activities that have been implemented for the safety of all must be clearly and frequently articulated to all staff, students and parents or guardians. The explanation of rules and procedures need to be framed in such a way that students understand the consequences that will ensue when rules are breached by them.

3.4 Transport

Where vehicles are used to transport people on an excursion, only drivers with licences 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. Though Victorian law and transport regulations allow for a certain number of people to stand in buses, this practice may not be sound in a school excursion, particularly one involving young children. Instead, the school should 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.

While a supervising teacher cannot influence the skill of a bus driver, they can have some influence over the proper loading of the bus, plans as to where children should embark and disembark, and behaviour of students while on the bus.

Schools must:

- not direct staff members to transport other staff, students, or equipment in their own private vehicle
- avoid use of private vehicles (including staff, volunteer workers, parents and guardians etc.) whenever possible.

Where transporting a small number of students to a school activity in a private vehicle is unavoidable the principal or approved delegate must ensure:

- private vehicles used have current and valid registration certificates
- the driver has a current and valid driver's licence
- compliance with child seat belt/restraint laws
- sighting of the vehicle's comprehensive insurance policy noting liability at law by way of damages of not less than \$20 million and the policy indemnifies DOSCEL
- that if the driver is a staff member they are a member of the supervising staff
- that if the driver is not a staff member, appropriate volunteer checks have been undertaken
- discussion in relation to reimbursement of travel expenses have been held
- parents/guardians are advised that their child will be transported in a private vehicle and by whom
- the school keeps accurate records of the students travelling in each vehicle, in case of an accident occurring.

3.5 Insurance

Transport insurance should be arranged to cover accidents en route. Where teachers do use their own cars to transport students, they must ensure that their personal insurance cover is adequate; notes a liability at law by way of damages of not less than \$20 million; that the policy indemnifies DOSCEL; that the school administration is aware of the use of the car for school business; and that the car used is safe.

3.6 Supervision

An important element in countering risks to students' health and safety on excursions is the provision of appropriate supervision. Schools will often engage volunteers to assist in excursions. It is important to realise that just as the school cannot delegate a duty of care to a teacher, it will be equally liable for any negligent acts or omissions of other supervising staff or volunteers.

All staff and volunteers who are involved in an excursion should be thoroughly briefed prior to the commencement of the excursion and responsibilities allocated (for example, a non-teaching staff member, parent, volunteer or external activity provider cannot supervise students/activities without a registered teacher present).

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.

3.7 Risk Assessment

The School will complete an assessment of the risks that may arise from any proposed excursion or camp well in advance. The assessment will cover any foreseeable hazards and risks, and set out the ways in which the risks will be managed (including the supervision arrangements). The risks involved and the control measures used will depend very much on the particular activity.

In any given bushfire location or season, extreme care must be given in all stages of planning for the camp or excursion. Consideration will be given to changing the venue or timing of the activity if there is risk of bushfire.

3.8 Student Activity Locator

It is a requirement that all offsite activities are uploaded to the Student Activity Locator (SAL) which is available on the Catholic Education Victoria Network website ([CEVN](#)).