Hornsby North Public School

Excursion Policy (2008)
Hornsby North P.S. Excursion Policy [2008]

**General Requirements:**
The following statements of policy apply to excursions: [see NSW DET Excursions Policy PD/2004/0010/V03]

1. The term excursion when used in this document relates to a learning experience external to the school site and conducted under the auspices of the school.

2. The student group participating in the excursion may be a class, or students drawn from a number of classes. They may be a team, a performance group or an audience for a performance. An excursion can range from a brief visit of less than one hour to a local point of interest, to an extended journey of a number of days, weeks or months requiring overnight or long term accommodation.

3. An excursion is an integral part of the school’s curriculum and specifically for the students’ learning program and must be justified on this basis.

4. Excursions are inclusive, and all students within the specific learning group are to be given the opportunity to participate.

5. Usually an excursion will take place wholly within the official school week or term.

6. A duty of care is owed to students in the school environment and while on excursions and cannot be delegated to parents, caregivers, volunteers or employees of external organisations.

7. The obligation to report suspected risk of harm to children and young people applies throughout all stages of an excursion, as it does in schools.

8. Students must behave appropriately at all times on excursions, including when animals are encountered. Prior to excursions, they should be reminded of expected standards of behaviour and the application of the school's discipline code.

**Specific Requirements:**

1. While recognising the potential benefits of excursions, schools must also recognise that such activities may interrupt the normal learning routines of students. Accordingly, Principals must consider the educational value of a proposed excursion in relation to the total needs and resources of the school and in relation to the students’ needs and total learning program.

2. Prior to any excursion taking place there must be consultation between the Principal and staff concerned with its organisation. All excursions must have the approval of the Principal and when more than one school is involved, the Principals of all participating schools. [see appendices]

3. If the proposed excursion involves travel outside Australia, approval of an Assistant Director-General is also required.

4. Parents/guardians should be informed of the full details of any planned excursion in writing, including details of all planned activities for the excursion. Signed consent forms granting permission for students to participate in an excursion and a medical information form are to be obtained from parents or caregivers. [see consent and medical information appendices]

5. If it is not possible to obtain a signed consent form from parents, oral approval can be sought and the Principal will keep a record of any such oral approvals.

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6. When it is inappropriate to obtain parental consent because of the age/living circumstances of the student, the consent can be sought from any other person considered appropriate by the Principal.

7. A risk assessment involving all aspects of the excursion and student special needs is to be conducted and a risk management plan developed before seeking approval for any excursion. [see risk assessment appendices]

8. The risk assessment must be submitted with any initial order/s to the School Admin. Manager (SAM) who will supply a copy to the Occupational Health & Safety (OH&S) Coordinator.

9. All teachers organising excursions must use Government contract suppliers for transport, accommodation, supplies, special clothing requirements etc whenever possible; if government contract suppliers are not available for the items required, other suppliers can be used.

10. At HNPS, the latest that any excursion must be costed is in the term prior to its actual date. All final costing information is to be provided to the SAM prior to the end of a term, so excursion costs are included at the start of the next term’s fees for parents. No excursions will be authorised by the Principal during a term which will involve additional costs to parents within that term.

11. After deciding on the most appropriate supplier/s for the excursion, the organising teacher/s at Hornsby North P.S. (HNPS) must create an order for the transport, accommodation etc with the SAM so that supplier/s create an invoice. Once an invoice has been created, the organising teacher/s can discuss the appropriate payment options (e.g. cheque) with the SAM.

12. Expensive excursions should be avoided. Where financial hardship is understood to be the reason for a student’s non-participation, schools must endeavour to provide financial assistance.

13. If parents do not permit participation of a student in an excursion the school will make available a sound alternative educational experience.

**Conduct of Excursions**

**Transport**

1. Public transport (government bus, rail and ferry services, or private bus and ferry services) should be used for school excursions wherever possible.

2. The organising teacher should attempt to hire buses with seatbelts wherever practicable and particularly for long distance travel.

3. The transporting of students in the cars of staff members, parents, caregivers or volunteers should only occur in those circumstances where there is no feasible option available to provide alternative transportation. This may only occur under the following conditions:

- written permission is obtained from the parent/carer(s) of the student/s being transported
- the driver is licensed
- the vehicle is registered
- the number of passengers in the vehicle does not exceed the number of seatbelts
- current driver's licence and car registration details are sighted by the school prior to giving permission for students to be transported in the vehicle.
4. Comprehensive insurance is not generally required. Nevertheless, comprehensive insurance is required if a member of staff is authorised to use his or her vehicle for official business and wishes to make a claim for the payment of mileage.

5. Principals must ensure that all parents, caregivers or volunteers who transport students in cars complete a *Prohibited Employment Declaration* prior to the excursion.

6. In some circumstances where the site of the excursion is close to the school, it will be appropriate for students and supervisors to walk to the site. The decision to walk should be preceded by a risk assessment and the route deemed consistent with the objective of ensuring staff and student safety.

**Supervision (including Teacher: Student Ratio and Parental Involvement)**

1. The number of teachers to accompany the students for each excursion is to be determined by the principal (i.e. sufficient numbers of appropriate, responsible adults including support teachers and teachers' aides). Decisions about the number of students and teachers should take into account factors such as the age of the students, their maturity, the location of the excursion, specific needs of students, anticipated behaviour and the nature of the activities to be undertaken.

2. Principals in determining the number of teachers required for an excursion should be guided by Department statements on class sizes. Fewer students per teacher will be necessary for some excursions such as bushwalking. Particular aquatic and outdoor recreation activities have specific teacher/instructor to student ratios identified in the *Guidelines for Specific Activities section of Guidelines for the Safe Conduct of Sport and Physical Activity in Schools* policy.

3. Staff planning overnight or extended excursions should recognise their special duty of care for student safety and welfare in these circumstances and take all necessary steps to provide sufficient numbers of appropriate, responsible adults to ensure adequate supervision.

4. *Teachers retain the ultimate responsibility for supervision and cannot transfer that responsibility to parents, other volunteers or employees of external organizations eg hotel staff.*

5. For coeducational groups, male and female staff supervisors are required. Schools experiencing difficulties in meeting this requirement should consult their school education director.

6. Parents or caregivers will frequently volunteer to assist in excursions. The number of parents or caregivers who might be of assistance will vary according to circumstances. In most circumstances these volunteers who assist on excursions should not have to pay to attend.

7. Parents, caregivers and volunteers must be briefed on safety and behaviour measures prior to the excursion to ensure competency.

8. Principals must ensure that all parents, caregivers or volunteers accompanying school excursions complete a *Prohibited Employment Declaration* prior to the excursion.

8. On overnight and extended excursions, supervisory and accommodation arrangements are to be such that no staff member is placed in a position where there is a potential for allegations of improper conduct to be made. In particular, sleeping arrangements should not place any adults in a situation where the propriety of their behaviour could be questioned. Likewise, sleeping and supervisory arrangements are to ensure that no student is placed in a situation where there is the likelihood of sexual contact between students.
9. Principals are to ensure that any excursion involving swimming or water activities and any excursion involving overnight stays, includes a member of staff who possesses current accreditation in cardiopulmonary resuscitation and emergency care.

10. All other excursions must be accompanied by a member of staff who has undertaken emergency care training and whose qualifications are current. A first aid kit must be taken on all excursions.

**Additional Activities**

1. Students participating in an excursion must not be permitted to engage in additional or alternative activities which were not originally scheduled in the program and for which parental approval would normally have been necessary (e.g. horse riding, water activities).

**Special Requirements**

1. Where a particular excursion activity requires special equipment or apparel (eg hard hats), this must be used. Under no circumstances may safety requirements be compromised.

2. Where any excursion involves swimming or water activities, Principals may encourage but not insist that parents provide any floatation devices considered necessary for students. Parents must be asked to indicate the swimming ability of their children when giving consent for students to participate in excursions.

3. If parents indicate students are poor or non-swimmers and no floatation devices are available for use by the students, Principals will need to assess whether such students should participate in the swimming or water activities of the excursion. This assessment must take place irrespective of parental permission for the students to participate in the swimming or water activities.

**Film Screenings and Live Performances**

1. Prior to approving excursions involving film screenings and live performances the Principal will give careful consideration to the appropriateness film/performance for the viewing group.

2. HNPS must not arrange for students to attend any film or view a video or DVD that is classified R 18+, MA 15+ or M. G films may be shown. PG films may be shown only after parental permission has been received through a permission note being sent home.

3. Parents and caregivers must be informed of the classification of the film and provided with the opportunity to withdraw their child. The principal may delegate the task of previewing the entire film or performance to an executive member of staff who will then advise the principal as to its suitability and acceptability. The principal, however, retains responsibility for granting approval.
Unscheduled Activities

1. In addition to excursions, occasions for leaving the school grounds for brief, local, spontaneous educational activities will arise from time to time. The value of such visits is recognised and on rare occasions there may be insufficient time to obtain the permission of parents or caregivers prior to the visit.

2. Such visits may only take place at the discretion of the principal, who must ensure as far as possible the safety and welfare of students and be satisfied as to the value of the visit as an integral part of the school curriculum.

Record of Excursions

1. Principals must ensure that a record of all excursions, including overseas excursions, is maintained. The record must include a copy of any advice given to parents or caregivers, costs and approval letters and administrative, supervision and travel details.

2. Except in the case of injury to a student or third party or property damage, records relating to excursions can be disposed of in accordance with the Department’s document Procedures for disposing of school records (September 2000).

3. In the event of an injury to a student or third party or property damage during the course of an excursion, all records relating to the particular student as well as any general information about the excursion must be retained until the injured party reaches age 25, or for seven years, whichever is the greater.

Related Documents and Advice

Depending on the type of excursion, the following documents will contain useful guidance and advice:

3. Cruelty to Animals (96/169)
4. Guidelines for Schools and TAFE NSW Colleges and Campuses: Management of Serious Incidents (00/158)
5. Guidelines for the Safe Conduct of Sport and Physical Activity in Schools 1999 (PD/2002/0012)
6. Guidelines for the Implementation of the Working with Children Check and Completion of Prohibited Employment Declarations (01/248)
7. Money Matters Part 2: GST Guidelines for Schools (June 2001)
9. Use of seatbelts on buses (99/293)
10. Welfare of Students While Engaged in Activities Conducted Under the Auspices of the School (PD/2004/0019)

Responsibilities of staff conducting excursions are outlined in:

1. Settlement of the Dispute on the Care and Supervision of School Students (98/139)
3. Professional Responsibilities of Teachers (97/227)
4. Protecting and Supporting Children and Young People, Revised Procedures, December 2000