

PORT MACQUARIE STEINER SCHOOL

2.4 EXCURSIONS POLICY

Drafted date: 4 th March 2018	By: Melodie Ayriss	Approved by Board date: 27 th March 2018
Reviewed date: 20 th March 2018	By: Ruth Gallagher	Next review due date: March 2019
Associated policies:	9.5 PMQSS Staff Code of Conduct 2.2 PMQSS Student Code of Conduct 6.1 PMQSS Parent, Guardian and School Community Code of Conduct 2.5 PMQSS Student Welfare and Security Policy 8.9 PMQSS Risk Management Policy	
Associated Laws:	<i>Education Act 1990</i> <i>Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998</i> <i>Crimes Act 1900</i> <i>Ombudsman Act 1974</i> <i>Civil Liability Act 2002</i>	

INTENTION

To clearly outline the expectations and requirements regarding school excursions.

INTRODUCTION

Excursions are an integral part of our curriculum and teaching and learning program. They relate to learning experiences provided by the School occurring beyond the usual daily routine. The education program includes a variety of age appropriate local excursions. All students, including those who find excursions challenging are supported to be able to participate.

POLICY

Excursions are an important part of the School's educational program and every reasonable effort will be made so that all students are able to participate. This will include working closely with parents and guardians to identify and address the needs of individual students and if required to modify activities (within reason).

It is expected that excursions organised by the School will:

- be of educational and social value to the students;
- support learning and cause minimum disruption to other areas of the curriculum;
- be safe for the students and staff;
- have adequate supervision, bearing in mind the type of activity being undertaken, age and ability of the students involved;
- be suitable for the students' ages, levels of maturity, experience, capacity and natural propensity for curiosity; and
- be inclusive of all students within the relevant learning context;

The procedures for booking excursions, completing risk assessment and management plans and notifying relevant stakeholders must be followed. See below for more information on

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this.

Students must have written permission from their parents or guardians to attend excursions.

Students must be dressed appropriately and behave appropriately with the support of the supervising teacher at all times whilst on excursions.

Excursions must be discussed with and approved by the Class Teacher and the Head Teacher (or their nominee).

Any teacher taking students on an unauthorised excursion or camp or not complying with the this Policy, the PMQSS Staff Code of Conduct and PMQSS Child Protection Policy, risks dismissal for misconduct due to exceptional breach of duty of care.

1. Risk Assessment and Management Plan (RAMP)

A Risk Assessment and Management Plan must be undertaken and developed prior to the excursion. This is required under work health and safety legislation. This may or may not require a representative of the School to visit the excursion site prior to the excursion taking place. In many cases, a briefing from a person responsible for the site will suffice. In other cases, especially where the activity is high risk or the site is unfamiliar, a site visit may be required prior to the excursion to assess the risks.

In determining whether a site visit is required, the School will consider:

- the information given by the excursion provider. Many excursion providers are experienced in giving the information required by this Policy and will provide sufficient information to Schools for a risk assessment to be carried out and a risk management plan to be prepared without the need for a site visit. This information may be provided by way of documentation and or a briefing from a person responsible for the site.
- the nature of the excursion, including the location of the site and the riskiness of the activities to be undertaken.
- the familiarity of the supervising teacher with the excursion site, including transport arrangements. For example, if public transport is to be used to attend the site, the supervising teacher should ensure that they are familiar with the transport arrangements; and
- any special needs of the students participating in the excursion.

The most cautious approach is to arrange a site visit prior to the excursion, but this may not always be practical or necessary.

Potential hazards and risks that may arise during each stage of the excursion should be identified and measures put in place to eliminate or minimise these risks.

Each excursion RAMP must be discussed with and approved by the Head Teacher (or their nominee). The RAMP must be communicated to all staff and other adults attending the excursion and copies taken with the supervising teacher/s.

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A copy of the authorised RAMP and permission notes for excursions must be given to the Head Teacher (or their nominee) for filing.

Any activity involving water or swimming must have a staff member who possesses current accreditation in cardiopulmonary resuscitation and emergency care.

Swimming and Water Activities: any excursion involving swimming or water activities requires the Teacher in Charge to ensure all eight elements of the *Water Safety Guidelines for Unstructured Aquatic Activity* (venue selection; parent/caregiver consent; staff induction; student induction; testing student proficiency; and classifying students) are all complied with. This document can be found on the DET website on the Sport and Physical Activity in Schools Safe Conduct Guidelines page:

<http://www.sports.det.nsw.edu.au/spguide/activities/swimming/swimming.php>

Any excursion note involving swimming or water sports must also include the *Aquatic Activity Consent Form*.

A first aid kit commensurate with the activities being undertaken must be taken on all excursions.

2. Teachers and Supervision

The School will ensure that supervising teachers:

- a) have been selected because they have appropriate skills and expertise;
- b) have selected the excursion themselves or have been extensively briefed on the nature of the excursion;
- c) have been consulted about and involved in the preparation of the risk assessment and risk management plan for the excursion;
- d) have been trained in relation to all relevant elements of the risk assessment and management plan; and
- e) understand their role and obligations regarding supervision, emergency procedures and First Aid

Staff numbers for supervision must be sufficient to ensure the safety of students traveling to and from excursions and during the excursion. Mobile phone contact should be maintained at all times between supervisors. When determining the teacher to student ratio, consideration must be given to the age of the students, their maturity level, the location of the excursion, anticipated behaviour and the nature of the activities to be undertaken.

All excursions must leave from the School except at the discretion of the Head Teacher (or their nominee). Without specific parental permission, all excursions must return to the School and not be dismissed from the venue.

3. Volunteers

The School will consider whether parents and guardians or other volunteers should assist in excursions. It is important to note that, because of the non-delegable nature of the duty of

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care (and work health and safety obligations), the School should ensure that there are sufficient teachers to properly administer the excursion and sufficient teachers and responsible volunteers to supervise the students.

If volunteers are to assist, the School will ensure that:

- a) they are appropriately briefed in relation to their responsibilities, safety and behaviour requirements;
- b) supervisory roles and responsibilities are clearly allocated and understood by all involved;
- c) parents and guardians are notified when volunteers (including other parents or guardians) are to be assisting in excursions.

Regular volunteers must be directed to complete a Working with Children check. Completed checks must be forwarded to the Head Teacher (or their nominee).

4. Safety

The School will ensure that they are aware if any safety equipment is required for the excursion.

If safety equipment is required the School must:

- a) ensure that it is provided by the excursion provider (and make such enquiries as required to satisfy themselves that the equipment is properly maintained); or
- b) ensure that it is provided by the School; or
- c) advise the students of the need to provide safety equipment and that participation in the excursion will not be permitted without such equipment.

5. Medical Information

For many excursions it will not be necessary to collect a new medical information form. The School must, however, ensure that any medical information held by the School on the Student Medical Form is appropriate and takes account of the activities included the excursion. If it does not, additional medical information should be sought. This can be addressed in the permission note.

The School should know the health and fitness of students who are to participate in excursions and make a decision as to whether the excursion activities are appropriate in light of this knowledge.

The School must ensure that permission to obtain appropriate medical treatment if required is obtained from parents and guardians. This can be addressed in the permission note.

The School must ensure that First Aid procedures are prepared and known by teachers and volunteers attending the excursions.

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Particular Individual Health Care Plans may need to be prepared for students with special needs. See PMQSS Medical Treatment Policy for more information on this.

6. Authorisation

Excursions must be authorised by the Head Teacher (or their nominee) before:

- permission notes can be distributed;
- money is collected; or
- bookings are finalised .

The Head Teacher (or their nominee) must countersign the permission note and approve the risk assessment management plan.

7. Permission Notes and Consent

The School will ensure that parents and guardians are kept informed about all excursions that students are to be attending.

Parental or guardian consent is required for a student to attend an excursion in the form of a signed permission note. Consent must be received at least one day prior to the excursion departing.

The School must obtain the permission of a student's parent or guardian prior to the student's participation in the excursion because Schools must provide sufficient information to allow parents to make an informed decision as to whether or not to allow their child to participate in a particular excursion.

Permission forms must include, at a minimum, the following information:

- location of the excursion;
- description and aims of the excursion;
- teacher/s in charge and any volunteers assisting the teacher;
- excursion itinerary or information sheet; and
- proposed travel arrangements.

It is important to note that the consent of a parent or guardian to a student's participation in an excursion does not absolve the School of liability or alter the School's duty of care. Parents and guardians do not, in consenting to a student's participation in an excursion, consent to negligent acts or omissions of the School. Rather the purpose of the permission form is to provide parents and guardians with sufficient information to:

- a) make an informed decision as to whether their child should be permitted to participate in the excursion; and
- b) assess whether any information about a child's special needs is required.

For events involving specific skills, parents and guardians are required to indicate the skill level of the student.

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If permission is not granted for a student to attend an excursion, appropriate alternate arrangements must be made.

8. Transport

Safe transport or walking arrangements must be made for excursions. It may be necessary to test the route to the destination prior to the excursion. Students cannot make their own way to and from a venue. Students can be dismissed from an excursion venue provided they have written permission and are collected by authorised persons.

Bus Travel: The Teacher in Charge should request buses with seat belts for all excursions. It is mandatory for buses to be fitted with seatbelts for all long distance travel. Adequate supervision and safety usually means at least one staff member and one other adult per bus. Each student and supervisor must have a seat on the bus.

Car travel: The transport of students in registered cars of licensed staff members or parents should only occur in those circumstances where there is no feasible alternative transportation. Written permission from parents and guardians must be obtained for this specific form of travel. Parents and guardians must be fully informed of, and agree to the arrangements, and the Teacher in Charge of the excursion must take all steps to ensure the safety and wellbeing of students.

9. Student Briefings and Preparation

Prior to the excursion, students should be given age-appropriate information about the excursion including:

- a) general information about the aims of the excursion and the activities they can expect;
- b) information about appropriate behaviour whilst on the excursion;
- c) instructions to follow directions given by (as appropriate) teachers, volunteers, third party providers and so on. In particular, students should be advised to follow all safety instructions;
- d) information about particular risks they may face during the excursion. Any safety information that has been provided to the School in relation to the excursion should be passed on to the students;
- e) information in relation to dealing with unexpected situations and risks that might occur during the excursion; and
- f) information in relation to steps that should be taken should a student feel unsafe or uncomfortable at any time during the excursion. This information should include ways of seeking help should concern arise during an excursion.

Students should be told that they have a right to feel safe during excursions. Students should be advised of ways to seek help if they are concerned about the behaviour of any person participating in the excursion.

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If any pre-excursion activities or preparations are required, the briefing should take place early enough to allow the activities or preparations to take place.

Where the excursion involves an activity that students have not previously undertaken or require training in, the School must ensure that instructions and assistance are given to novice students until they acquire the necessary skills.

The School will consider whether children who have not displayed sensible, reliable behaviour at school should be excluded from participating in school excursions.

10. Changes to Circumstances

The School will ensure that appropriate contingency plans are in place in the event of inclement weather or changes in the circumstances of the excursion environment.

In the lead up to the excursion the School must (as appropriate):

- a) check safety warnings;
- b) consult relevant authorities;
- c) monitor weather conditions; and
- d) be prepared to cancel or amend the excursion due to changing circumstances or safety concerns.

11. Third Party Providers

Where a third party provider is to conduct the excursion, the School must be satisfied that the third party provider is sufficiently experienced and competent to carry out the excursion.

The level of investigation required will depend on:

- a) the nature of the excursion;
- b) any special characteristics of the students participating in the excursion;
- c) the riskiness of the activities to be undertaken on the excursion;
- d) the skills and experience of the teachers in relation to the activities to be undertaken on the excursion;
- e) the School's past experience with the third party provider; and
- f) the supervising teacher's familiarity with the location of the excursion.

While the use of external providers does not remove the duty of care or exclude the School's liability, in relation to duty of care, it can assist the School where they are able to rely on expertise that the School may not have, limit the matters which the School must consider, reduce the risk of being sued or share the burden of any liability.

However, under work health and safety legislation, while the external provider will have obligations under this legislation, the School will continue to have overlapping obligations. The School needs to ensure that it is satisfied that third party providers will take all steps

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necessary to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the health and safety of workers and students and that it is satisfied as to the experience and competence of a third party provider.

Depending on the circumstances and the activity involved, the School may need to make some or all of the following inquiries:

Safety

- a) request copies of or information as to the:
 - safety policies implemented by the third party provider;
 - nature of, and steps taken to eliminate or minimise known hazards;
 - training, supervision and monitoring that will be in place to ensure compliance with safe procedures;
 - safety record of the third party provider; and
 - emergency procedures and First Aid arrangements in place.
- b) request confirmation that equipment and machinery (including personal protective equipment) is maintained, repaired and in good working order

Personnel

- a) request copies of the curriculum vitae of guides who will be in charge of students and request confirmation that the guides have appropriate expertise and qualifications for the activities being undertaken; and
- b) confirm that the provider and any person working with students is appropriately accredited to work with children, including under child protection legislation.

Insurance

- a) request evidence of the third party provider's public liability insurance

General

- a) request references from previous participants;
- b) make inquiries of the Department of Fair Trading to determine whether there has been any complaints about the third party provider;
- c) request evidence of accreditation or licensing of the venue and its staff for the activities to be undertaken;
- d) request information about access and special requirements for students with special needs; and
- e) confirm the availability of appropriate facilities for example: refreshments, toilets.

Depending on the nature of the excursion, and particularly the level of risk involved, the School may want to review some or all of this material, rather than simply requesting confirmation that it exists. The higher the risk the more involved the School should be in this process.

Consultation

- a) Where there are a number of duty holders e.g. the School and the third party provider, they should consult in relation to safety issues.

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12. Steps the School Must Take During an Excursion

Immediately prior to the excursion, students should be reminded:

- a) of any specific safety instructions given in relation to the excursion;
- b) of appropriate and safe behaviour whilst on the excursion; and
- c) to follow instructions given to them by persons in authority for the duration of the excursion. The students must be made aware of who the persons in authority are.

Teachers must implement control systems to ensure that students are supervised at all times during excursions and do not become lost. This might include head counts, buddy systems, provision of maps, and the arrangement of rendezvous points and so on.

Teachers must ensure that behavioural standards are enforced during the excursion and that inappropriate behaviour is prevented.

Even where a teacher is unfamiliar with an excursion site or the activities to be undertaken on an excursion, the teacher can take steps to discharge the School's duty of care by:

- a) inspecting the premises to ensure that they appear safe;
- b) familiarising themselves with emergency procedures, including the location of emergency exits;
- c) satisfying themselves that the equipment to be used is apparently safe and is under the control of competent and careful people who are supervising its use;
- d) satisfying themselves that the premises are staffed by people:
 - i. engaged in active supervision;
 - ii. apparently competent, careful and experienced; and
- e) observing the checks and inspections carried out by the provider to ensure they are adequate.

Teachers should continue to supervise students throughout the excursion, even in the course of activities conducted by third party providers. This is because the School's duty of care is non-delegable. Accordingly, the staff to student ratio must be sufficient to maintain control of students throughout the excursion.

If a teacher considers that a risk to the students has arisen, the teacher must take steps to eliminate or minimise that risk.

If the excursion is to take place outside, students and others should be encouraged to wear appropriate sun protection.

Students must not be permitted to take part in 'extra' activities in the course of an excursion if these activities are of a kind that would normally require the consent of parents and guardians.

Where the activities undertaken require specific skills, teachers should consider whether it is appropriate to separate novices from more experienced students in order to prevent injuries.

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Teachers should ensure that, where relevant, they have a copy of a student's medical record or special medical needs with them during the excursion.

13. Risk Warnings

Appropriate risk warnings may assist in reducing the School's liability for breach of duty of care.

The provision of a risk warning will not impact on a School's work health and safety obligations or potential exposure for breach of those obligations.

As a risk warning is not effective unless it is given by or behalf of the party seeking to rely on it, a risk warning given by a third party excursion provider will not protect the School. The School should have regard to these risk warnings and determine whether a similar warning should be given on behalf of the School.

Risk warnings should be provided to both students (where appropriate) and parents.

Risk warnings given pursuant to the provisions of the *Civil Liability Act 2002* will only be effective where the excursion is a recreational activity within the meaning of that Act. There remains little case law on this aspect of the legislation. At this stage, the educational purpose of many excursions may preclude the application of the provisions relating to risk warnings.

In addition, the risk warning provisions do not apply if the student was required by the School to attend the excursion.

15. High Risk Excursions

Excursions that involve risky activities (such as adventure tours and camping) are higher risk and require additional care and planning as well as specific parental consent. Given the age of the students attending the School, it is not foreseen that high risk excursions will be offered however, the School must be adequately able to make this judgement.

Specific measures must be taken to deal with the individual risks these excursions face. Of particular importance is:

- a) ensuring the supervision ratio is adequate;
- b) ensuring supervising teachers and others in positions of responsibility have appropriate experience and qualifications;
- c) ensuring contingency plans and emergency procedures are in place; and
- d) being prepared to alter plans should conditions change or risks arise.

16. Budget, Bookings and Collecting Money

A budget for excursions will be approved by the Head Teacher (or their nominee) and the School Board on an annual basis.

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All excursions must be approved by the Head Teacher (or their nominee) and excursions must be planned and executed within the allocated budget for each excursion. Any variation to the budget for excursions must be approved by the Head Teacher (or their nominee).

All planned excursion venue bookings are made by the Teacher in Charge – this may be the Class Teacher or Head Teacher. Bus bookings will be made by the Administration Officer, who may also support the booking of venues if approved by the Head Teacher (or their nominee).

Where the Head Teacher is arranging the excursion, they must seek approval from the President of the School Board.

Bookings are not to be made until the excursion has been approved by the Head Teacher (or their nominee) after the RAMP has been submitted and approved, and the excursion authorised by the Head Teacher (or their nominee).

When an excursion cost, not covered by an Excursion Levy built into School fees, is incurred it is billed to the student's term fees. Parents and guardians must be informed if an excursion cost is covered by the Excursion Levy or at an additional cost, with reasons for this provided.

A list of students attending each excursion for which an additional cost is incurred must be forwarded to the Administration Officer.

No Teacher is to receive any money for excursions from students.

17. Record Keeping

A copy of the Risk Assessment and Management Plan (RAMP), advice and information given to parents and guardians and the approved budget must be forwarded to the Head Teacher (or their nominee) prior to the excursion and kept along with the signed permission notes and medical forms (if appropriate).

After each excursion has been completed, the Teacher in Charge must complete an excursion cover sheet signing off on the excursion and detailing any changes to circumstances and incidents. All permission notes and information relating to the excursion, as well as a copy of the RAMP and budget must be archived with a completed excursion cover sheet.

PROCEDURE(S)

To obtain approval for an excursion, the Teacher in Charge:

1. Plans excursions to fit in with their teaching and learning program and discusses these with the Head Teacher (or their nominee).
2. Submits a proposed excursion plan to the Head Teacher (or their nominee) at the beginning of the year and each term.
3. Discusses possible and proposed excursions with parents and guardians in the Parent and Guardian Meeting held at the beginning of each term so they have advance notice.

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4. For each excursion, submits a Risk Assessment and Management Plan (RAMP) and budget to the Head Teacher (or their nominee) for their approval. A minimum of one week is usually required for the approval process.

Once the excursion is approved, the Teacher in Charge:

5. Submits a Staff Leave of Absence form to the Head Teacher (or their nominee) and notifies the staff member in charge of organising casual relief if this will be required.
6. Makes the appropriate bookings, arranges staff and volunteers.
7. Sends written information and a permission note to the parents and guardians, if required arranges an excursion meeting or several excursion meetings and forwards a copy of this to the Administration Officer.

Note: Parents need to be given a reasonable amount of time to consider and plan for the excursion. As a guide, formal notification in the form of written information and permission notes should be given to parents and guardians a minimum of 2 weeks before lower risk excursions occurring within one day.

8. Collects signed permission notes, medical forms (if required).
9. Forwards a list of students attending the excursion to the Administration Officer.
10. Consent must be received at least one day prior to departure. If a student has not been given consent, the Teacher in Charge of the excursion or a designated Administration Officer may ring the parent or guardian to seek consent. A written record of oral consent must be kept with the other permission notes. If possible the parent or guardian must also send an SMS and or email giving consent. If no consent is given, the student must remain at School and complete an alternative learning experience. Consent should not be given or sought on the day of the excursion.
11. An accurate list of all students participating is then communicated to all teachers and non-teaching adults supervising and or attending the excursion.
12. The Teacher in Charge must communicate any changes to circumstances to the Head Teacher (or their nominee) as early as they arise so that administration staff can inform parents and guardians as this is required.
13. After each excursion has been completed, the Teacher in Charge must complete an excursion cover sheet signing off on the excursion and detailing any changes to circumstances and incidents.
14. All permission notes and information relating to the excursion, as well as a copy of the RAMP and budget must be archived with a completed excursion cover sheet.

RESOURCES

Risk Assessment and Management Plan – under development
Excursion Permission Note – under development

REVIEW

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This policy will be reviewed annually.