



**OUR LADY OF MERCY SECONDARY SCHOOL**

**School Tour Policy**

**2024-2025**

## **OUR LADY OF MERCY SECONDARY SCHOOL TOUR POLICY**

### **Rationale**

School trips are a central and valued part of education in Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School. They serve to significantly enrich both the academic curriculum as taught in school and the cultural and social development of pupils who participate in them. This concurs with the guidelines of the Department of Education and Skills which state that, “the objective of educational tours for schools should be that they be of benefit in the intellectual, cultural and social development of the pupils taking part in them and any activity, in connection with the tour, which is in conflict with this objective is to be avoided.”

This Policy is drafted in the context of the Health and Safety at Work Acts 1989 and 2005 and Circular Letter M20/04 issued by the Department of Education and Skills.

This Policy should be read in its totality, as there may be some overlap in the requirements for planning specific trips and/or activities. For example, when planning a trip abroad the section on Residential Trips will also be important.

Educational tours of more than one day’s duration should be arranged to coincide with normal school holidays as set out in CL M20/04.

If an educational tour/field trip is an integral part of a school programme the Board of Management of the school may grant permission for the tour/field trip to be held during term time and as per the requirements of CL M20/04.

### **Objectives**

In line with the defined ethos of the school, the following objectives are sought in relation to school trips:

- To broaden the horizons of students.
- To enhance students’ social skills.
- To foster independence and maturity.
- To broaden intellectual experience.

- To promote greater understanding between different cultures.
- To improve communication skills.
- To improve language acquisition and skills.
- To promote involvement of all students and team building.
- To enhance the relationship between students and school staff.
- To increase the morale of students.
- To create positive memories of school.

### **Categories**

School trips are categorised under two headings- those that are demanded by the particular curriculum subject, such as field trips and those which deepen the student's knowledge and understanding of the cultural, social and physical aspects of the areas or countries visited. Student trips that seek to develop linguistic skills are a good example of the latter.

### **Procedures Prior to the Tour**

Participation in school tours is not a right but a privilege enabled by the significant financial investment of parents and that of staff time and energy. School personnel who volunteer to accompany pupils on school tours are in 'loco parentis' throughout the duration of the tour. The following procedures are in place to ensure, as far as possible, the care, welfare and safety of pupils in an out-of-school context. Staff members considering organising a school tour shall endeavour to:

- Inform the Principal of his/her intention and proposed itinerary (location, dates of departure and return, year groups of students and estimated cost of the trip) before informing pupils, remaining staff and parents. In the case of trips abroad, 12 months notice will be sought whilst overnight trips will require one months' notice.
- Obtain the written approval of the Board of Management. Conforming to circular M20/04, the Department of Education and Skills has devolved to Boards of Management the authorisation to grant approval for educational tours by schools both inside and outside the State subject to a number of criteria which are set out in this circular letter.

- Once staff members have been informed, give a brief presentation to targeted year groups on the purpose and details of the tour. For optional tours, students will be required to complete an 'Expression of Interest Form' at this presentation. (Upon completion of this form), students will then be distributed an information pack for parents/guardians on the objectives, proposed itinerary and practicalities of the tour in addition to an application form for completion by parents/guardians.
- Based on the application forms received from students, liaise with the Principal, Year Heads and Class Teachers on any concerns the Tour Leader may have in relation to particular students. Files of these students will be sought in relation to school attendance and behaviour. The school has the right to refuse student participation in the trip on the information supplied.
- Students will not be eligible to participate in any of the more expensive school trips (overnight or abroad) unless all standard moneys have been paid to the school (eg, Book Rental Fees for those participating in the scheme, all other annual school charges). This eligibility includes course fees for TY or LCA. Students with outstanding course fees will not be eligible to participate in TY or LCA specific trips. Separately, parents on payment plans must ensure that the payment of the plan is up to date of their son/daughter's participation in optional school tours. We expect parents/guardians to prioritise the cost of their child's education ahead of optional spending on expensive tours.
- Liaise with the subject teachers concerned to ensure students attending the trip are in fact students of that particular subject, i.e. a student wishing to attend a trip to France must be a current student of French.
- Once students have been notified of their successful applications and these have been filed away, inform parents/guardians in writing of an information meeting to be held on an out-of-school basis. It is at this meeting that parents/guardian will receive a copy of the School Tour Policy, a detailed breakdown of the proposed itinerary, final details of the cost of the trip including the necessary arrangements regarding deposits and pocket money and for trips abroad, other practicalities surrounding passports, visas, insurance including European Health Insurance Cards. Other items on the agenda at this meeting include information concerning room allocation and specific concerns of students such as medical conditions,

dietary requirements, special needs and phobias. Parents/guardians will also be requested at this meeting to supply their contact details with at least one phone number guaranteeing 24-hour access in the case of emergency. Finally, each student and his/her parent(s)/guardian(s) shall be required to sign a consent form which will be placed on file agreeing to abide by the rules and regulations governing the school tour.

- When student numbers are confirmed, invite staff members to join the team in consultation with the Principal. As much as is feasible, the allocation of one staff member per 8 paying students with male and female members where possible will be sought. One member of staff will be placed on standby in the event of a staff member unable to attend due to unforeseen circumstances. Prior to departure, staff members will be supplied with a student list for whom they will be responsible for the duration of the trip.
- Prior to departure, hold a meeting with students regarding room allocation. Subject to the numbers of rooms supplied by the accommodation supplier, students will be asked to communicate with whom they would like to share. The inclusion of particular students in rooms will be at the final discretion of the Tour Leader.
- For foreign tours, ensure students and staff members have current passports, visas, European Health Insurance cards for the duration of the trip and that two copies have been made of each - one for the school tour company and the other for the school. Also ensure that the full cost of the tour has been paid with all receipts issued. In the case of visas, it is up to each individual student and their parent(s)/guardian(s), to contact the embassies concerned within a reasonable time frame and provide the relevant documentation and fees.
- Ensure that adequate travel insurance and where appropriate, school insurance is in place.
- Ensure students gain maximum benefit from the trip by teaching students relevant material, linguistically or otherwise prior to the tour.
- In the case where school trips take place during class time, inform the attendance office in writing of absent students and for teaching staff, place a notice on the staff room notice board. Also liaise with the Deputy Principal regarding class cover.

- Hold a final meeting with parents to communicate any changes and other practical information from both parties since the initial meeting. It is at this meeting that parents will be asked to ensure their contact details are correct. Parents will also be provided with the emergency mobile number of the Tour Leader at this meeting whilst their children's contact numbers will also be requested. Also at this meeting, parents/guardians will be required to sign a consent form which will allow medical advice to be followed in the event of injury/illness and where it is not possible to contact them in the time available. In the event of accident or injury, medical opinion will be sought immediately and best practice will be followed. Parent(s)/guardian(s) will be contacted as soon as is practically possible. The Board has full confidence in the staff and their decisions. Finally, parents/guardians will receive a copy on request of the insurance cover provided by the school tour company and baggage labels will be distributed for students' luggage.
  
- Obtain a sum of money the amount of which to be decided by the Board to be used in the case of emergency.
  
- For accommodation suppliers who demand 'good behaviour bonds', collect the refundable necessary amounts from students and issue receipts. Upon departure from the destination, these bonds will be fully refunded provided no damage has been done to accommodation rooms.
  
- For trips abroad, collect students' passports, visas and European Health Insurance Cards nearer the time of departure.
  
- Finally, the school has the right to revise the student list of participants in the tour at any stage prior to departure. As per the consent form, if any deterioration is noted in terms of attendance and behaviour of particular students in school, this may run the risk of losing their place on the trip. This will be communicated to the student(s) concerned and their parents/guardians once a meeting has been held by the school authorities.

### **Code of Behaviour During the Tour**

The code of behaviour to be observed by pupils during the course of the school tour will be made known to students, their parent/guardians and school personnel at the initial meeting. In addition to the school's Code of Good Conduct, the Board of Management wishes to draw attention to the

following rules and regulations pertaining to school tours:

- Respect and obedience for all staff members.
- Respect for fellow students.
- Respect and obedience for cabin crew, fellow travellers, drivers, guides, instructors, accommodation staff, those sharing accommodation, restaurant staff, fellow diners, etc.
- Respect for local customs and laws particularly when travelling abroad.
- Full participation, relative to the abilities of students, in the activities schedule of the trip.
- No smoking.
- No purchase or consumption of alcohol, illegal substances, weapons or fireworks at any stage of the tour. In the event of students caught with these items in their possession, they will be immediately confiscated.
- Students must never wander off alone. It is advised that students stay within a minimum group of four during periods when they are given free time.
- Students must strictly adhere to meeting points and time allocation to avoid unnecessary concern.

### **Professional Responsibilities of Staff During the Tour**

Each staff member attending the trip shall take his/her 'duty of care' extremely seriously during the course of the trip. Mindful of the guidelines of the Department of Education and Skills regarding child protection (3.1.1. and 3.1.2.), the following must be observed:

- School personnel will act in a professional manner in the company of and responsibility for the care of young adults by maintaining the same standards of care as apply in a school situation.
- Enforce the agreed Code of Behaviour for out-of-school activities signed by pupils and their parents/guardians. The Tour Leader with his/her team will deal with minor breaches of the Code while away. Any serious breach will be reported to the Principal following the incident, e.g. in the event of a breach of the alcohol/illegal substance rule, the Tour Leader will inform the Principal immediately who will in turn inform the Chairperson of the Board of Management. Sanctions will be imposed as speedily as possible after the incident. The following steps may be taken:
  - Students may be excluded from activities for a day under supervision;
  - Parents/guardians may be asked to remove their son/daughter from the tour at their own

expense, e.g. fly student home;

- A written record of the incident will be given to the Principal and Parent(s)/Guardian(s) by the Tour Leader upon return;

- Upon return, the pupil(s) accompanied by parent(s)/guardian(s) will be interviewed by the Principal and if deemed necessary, the Board of Management. The Board of Management may impose a sanction up to and including expulsion.

The Tour Leader will carry out a full review of the tour with the team of travelling staff on return and report to the Principal outlining:

- the positive achievements of the tour will be discussed;
- any difficulties or problems that arose during the tour.

Finally, this policy will be reviewed and revised if necessary following a tour.

Signed:



Chairperson of Board of Management

Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2024

Date of next review: September 2025

Signed:



Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management

Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2024



## **RESIDENTIAL / FOREIGN TOUR RISK ASSESSMENT**

Complete this form for all Residential/Foreign Tours with students and submit to  
Principal

### GENERAL ACTION CHECKLIST TO REDUCE RISK

<b>ALL RESIDENTIAL VISITS</b>	<b>Y / N</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
Has the status of the tour operator/activity centre provider been checked?		
Does the Tour Operator/activity centre provider specialise in the organisation of the relevant tour/activity?		
Have you checked out background information on the area and the hotel/centre for suitability (e.g. hotel is not situated in areas renowned for violence/muggings/prostitution etc)?		
Have you checked that student rooms have individual locks to ensure personal safety?		
Is the ratio of supervisors to students adequate for the trip and complying with the conditions set out in the Educational Tours Policy of Louth and Meath ETB?		
Have you drawn up an itinerary, including details of activities and any free time allowed?		
Have you made clear arrangements for the supervision of free time including contact arrangements (i.e. checklist of names and intended destinations of students, agreed curfew times, safety of money, keeping in groups)?		
Is any of the party qualified in First Aid? If not who is the appointed person taking responsibility for First Aid Box?		
Have arrangements been made for special needs including access during travel and accommodation (e.g. disability/diet/medical etc)?		
If additional hazardous activities are included in the schedule have specific risk assessments been done to cover the activities (e.g. Ice skating/Skiing/Sailing/Swimming/Mountain walking/Theme Parks etc)?		
Have you provided a written briefing to both the students and their parents to cover the above, and provided them with appropriate contact numbers?		
Have you checked the safety/suitability of any equipment to be used?		
Have you obtained Parental Consent?		
Has planning for inclement weather/protection from sun been accounted for?		
Have you organised adequate insurance cover?		
<b>ADDITIONAL RISK CONTROLS FOR FOREIGN TOURS</b>	<b>Y/N</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
Have students been briefed about local customs and behavioural, dress codes etc?		
If vaccinations are necessary, have arrangements been made?		
Are supervisors clear on how to contact any Emergency Services and Irish Embassy in the country of visit?		
Have the students obtained a European Health Insurance Card (available from the Health Service Executive) to ensure sufficient medical cover?		
Have you verified that all passports are valid?		

Telephone number of Irish Embassy/Consulate in country to be visited: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed (Group Leader) ..... Date .....

**EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION**

*To be completed before the trip. Copies to be held by the group leader and school contact.*

School/group: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of group leader: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone No: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Deputy Group Leader: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_

Visit departure date: \_\_\_\_\_

Return information: Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Group: Total Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Adults: \_\_\_\_\_ Group Members: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have an emergency contact list for everyone in the Group? Y/N  
(If no, obtain one. If yes, attach it to this sheet.)

**EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION:**

**During school hours:**

Principal: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

Deputy/other: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

**Out of hours:**

Principal: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

Deputy/other: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

**Travel Company:**

Name/Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Company Travel Rep: Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Insurance/Emergency Assistance: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

**Accommodation:**

Hotel: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_



