



Knocknacarra Educate Together  
National School

# Off-Site Learning Experiences Policy

*This policy has been formulated by Knocknacarra ETNS to describe procedures and practices related to any off-site learning experiences, including official school tours as well as other excursions in the school vicinity and beyond.*

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## **Introduction and Rationale:**

Knocknacarra Educate Together NS places particular value on off-site learning experiences as they often are the most effective way to meet some learning objectives in a real-world environment. Teachers are encouraged to plan for regular, curriculum-based learning experiences outside of the classroom. Tours and excursions for schools should be of benefit in the intellectual, cultural and social development of the pupils taking part in them. The school seeks to achieve this while simultaneously keeping costs for parents as low as possible. This is a revision of the original policy ratified by the Board of Management in 2017.

## **Aims and Objectives:**

- To clarify the connection between regular out-of-the-classroom and curriculum objectives.
- To provide clear procedures for all off-site learning experiences that prioritise safety and pupil engagement.

## **Procedures:**

### ***General Practices***

- The Principal is informed of any excursions outside of those within walking distance of the school, and this is reported to the Board as part of the Principal's Report.
- The school's custodial insurance policy covers all approved school tours and excursions.
- For excursions that require a bus journey, specific permission must be granted. This is to ensure that in case of emergency parents are aware that children will be away from the school vicinity.
- The level of supervision is dependent on activity and age of pupils. At a minimum, 2 staff members will be present.
- A first aid kit is brought on journeys as well as any medication children require such as inhalers.
- Staff members must have prior knowledge of and, when possible, visit a venue in advance to assess the area, plan for safe crossings, locate toilets and ensure ease of access for the bus.
- Children will walk in pairs, and adults will assist with safe crossing. Staff members are strongly encouraged to use designated crossings only.
- Staff members will take a phone with them as well as a laminated phone list in case of emergency.
- Parents are welcome to come on off-site learning experiences at the discretion of the teacher. Their role is mainly supervisory and always teacher-directed. Parents are kindly asked not bring younger siblings except to family events such as end-of-term assemblies and sports day.
- Arrangements are made by the teacher (in consultation with staff) re venue, transport, money & payments. The School Secretary will help with organisational matters.
- The Code of Behaviour applies during all excursions and tours.
- Any arrangements required for children with special needs will be made to ensure participation.
- Children who do not have permission to participate will remain at the school with another class unless all children will be attending and special arrangements will be agreed with parents.
- Normally, school tours and excursions for children in infants to second class will take place during school hours. For older classes, parents will be informed of the approximate return time. Staff members will arrange to contact parent(s)/guardian(s) if there are delays.
- If there is a cost involved, parents may speak in confidence with the principal either to make an arrangement for staged payment or to seek financial assistance. No child should be precluded from participating due to financial constraints.

***Excursions within Walking Distance of the School***

- Visits to local parks and places in the community will take place on a regular basis as well as impromptu walks in the school vicinity.
- A permission form that covers all walking excursions is signed when a child is enrolled and is sufficient for all future outings near the school.

***Visits to Places within the Wider Community***

- Regular visits to the libraries, museums, theatres, galleries and other venues will take place on a regular basis to support many aspects of the curriculum. Specific permission is sought when the excursion requires a bus journey.

***Swimming and Other Sports Events***

- Swimming lessons take place for 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> classes. A bus is hired to take children to and from the pool. Parents grant permission on an annual basis for all the swimming sessions that school year.
- For other sporting events, buses are organized and permission is sought, as required.

***Visits to Nature Settings***

- On a regular basis, each class will visit local nature areas such as a woodland, wetland or beach.
- Additional supervision for such events is generally required. This can be additional staff members as well as parents. Children are in the presence of an adult at all times and remain within pre-defined boundaries.
- Staff members may set expectations regarding safety in response to potential hazards.
- Children will not swim unless sufficient certified lifeguards are present.
- Staff, children and parents ensure that no rubbish is left behind and that nothing is unnecessarily removed from these natural settings.
- Children may bring water on such outings, and if it is a full-day excursion, lunches will be brought.

***Summer School Tours***

- Each class will take one special summer school tour during the third term. This may be done in class pairings (infants, first and second class, etc.).
- Expenses will be kept as low as possible. Usually the day will involve a variety of activities that are both educational and physical.
- Children will bring a lunch or a meal will be arranged. All special dietary requirements will be met.
- All costs should be the same for all children. Therefore, additional spending money is not required for any school tour.

**Ratification and Communication:**

This policy was ratified on the date below. The policy will be distributed to all teachers and will be available electronically for access at any time. It will be reviewed as necessary but no later than 2024.

Paul Adams, chairperson

Date of ratification: 13/01/2021