

Policy & Procedure Document

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Drafted by	J. Claringbold	Approved by Board on	25/06/2024
Responsible person	Principal	Scheduled review date	25/06/2027
Policy Area	Student Welfare		

Title: Off-Site Activities, Excursions and Camps

Purpose:

Off-site activities, excursions or camps arranged by The Avenue School are undertaken with a learning or wellbeing purpose and are conducted in a way that protects the safety and welfare of participating staff and students.

The Avenue School is mindful that our students may take time to be confident about participating in excursions and/or camps and provide an 'opt-in' approach to attending.

Definitions in this policy:

- Local off-site activity – an activity arranged to be undertaken within a 5km radius of the school
- Excursion – an activity that involves travelling beyond a 5km radius of the school.
- Camp – an excursion that involves an overnight stay.

The Benefit of Excursions and Camps

Excursions and camps can provide important social and emotional opportunities for students not usually possible in the classroom. They enable students to connect with the environment, develop confidence and skills that promote independence and create situations where trust and teamwork can grow and be appreciated. Camps and excursions are not compulsory but are encouraged.

In the planning and execution of any off-site activity, excursion or camp, staff attending must be conscious of the safety and wellbeing needs of students at all times. They must take all reasonable steps to ensure that all activities are conducted safely and with consideration for individual student's needs.

The aims of excursions and camps include:

- To reinforce, complement and extend learning opportunities beyond the classroom.
- To develop an understanding that learning is not limited to school, and that valuable and powerful learning takes place beyond the classroom.
- To provide rich, hands-on learning experiences that cater for a range of learning styles and the development of specific skills that enable a young person to manage independently and confidently.
- To develop a range of social-emotional skills and capabilities, including dealing with risk and challenge, problem-solving, connecting with nature, creativity or self-expression
- To encourage shared group or class experiences that develop a sense of group cohesiveness.
- To provide opportunities that promote self-esteem, resourcefulness, independence, leadership, judgement, cooperation and tolerance.
- To support and encourage the pursuit of physical activity to contribute to health and wellbeing.
- To provide activities that deliver skills and knowledge that may lead to a lifelong learning and involvement in worthwhile pursuits.
- To take students 'out of the comfort zone' and to help build confidence.
- To develop and enhance interpersonal relationships with peers, staff and other adults.

Planning:

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An assigned 'staff member in charge' will have responsibility for planning and organising each particular off-site activity, excursion or camp. Initial planning must consider the following:

- Budget.
- Cost to students and/or the school.
- Timing and timeframe.
- Safety, health and well-being of students attending including arrangements for students who are highly anxious and students with disabilities and special needs.
- Number of students and supervision arrangements.
- Safe transport or walking routes.
- Bushfire risk and emergency risk at the proposed location.
- First aid arrangements.

Managing Risk

The staff-member-in-charge undertakes a risk assessment prior to implementing any off-site activity, excursion or camp which is submitted to the Principal. The risk assessment should consider all relevant issues to protect the students' physical and psychological safety.

The staff-member-in-charge must be familiar with any medical or other special needs relevant to a student's participation in an off-site activity, excursion or camp and must take all reasonable steps to ensure that risks associated with these needs are mitigated in the planning process. The Principal will review the risk management plans, consult with the Youth Worker and provide approval for the activity prior to it taking place.

Students participating in off-site activities, excursions or camps should be provided with clear details about what is involved with enough time made available to ask questions and understand how the activity will unfold to reduce feelings of anxiousness.

Students will be clearly instructed by the staff-member-in charge as to the requirements of the activity including safety and emergency arrangements, travel arrangements and expectations before leaving the school.

Note: Off-site activities and excursions will be cancelled on days of Catastrophic Fire Danger. On days rated as an Extreme or High risk of fire danger, the activity will be reviewed, and a judgement made as to the fire risk posed.

Local Off-site Activity

A "Local Off-site Activity" is an off-site activity undertaken away from the classroom environment but within the local area within a 5km radius of the school.

During Local Off-site Activities students are not permitted to undertake any "high-risk" activities.

Activities undertaken will include, for example:

- Walking (including walking with therapy dogs).
- Visiting local points of interest.
- Visiting the local library and shops.
- Visiting local parks and reserves.
- Low key sport activities and games.
- Researching features of the local area.
- Participating in community-based projects.

The blanket permission to participate in Local Off-site Activities, signed at enrolment is all that is required. However, a reminder to parents/guardians may be of use.

Excursion Planning

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The Principal must be advised of proposed excursions at the planning stage and be provided with a completed risk assessment form. The Principal must have granted approval for the activity prior to students or parents being notified and prior to notices being distributed.

Parents/guardians must be notified in writing of all details pertaining to an excursion and consent must be sought, at least a week prior to the excursion-taking place via the Excursion Information and Consent form, which will include place, date, times, lunch requirements, travel arrangements, supervising staff, reason for excursion etc.

The staff-member-in-charge must ensure consent forms, signed by parents/guardians, are received prior to students attending each excursion. In circumstances where consent for attendance at excursions is not easily obtained, students who are living in the care of persons other than nominated parents or guardians may obtain consent by informal relative carers through a Statutory Declaration, a copy of which is available on the shared drive.

Emergency contact details for each student and information relating to student medical conditions must remain securely with teachers/staff members throughout an excursion. The attendance rolls and a First Aid Kit must also be included in the excursion pack.

The staff-member-in-charge is responsible for organising appropriate travel arrangements. Medical information must be provided and updated prior to a student attending an excursion.

Prior to departure teachers/staff members must complete the Off-site Activity and Excursion Check List to assist in ensuring documentation is complete and procedures have been followed. Attendance rolls must be checked upon departure and upon return to the school.

If students are dismissed directly from an excursion, permission must have been obtained from parents/guardians prior to departure and details recorded on excursion permission form.

Selection of Attending Staff

The staff assigned to attend excursions and camps must be carefully considered according to a number of criteria:

1. Gender balance – If the group is mixed gender, then there must be at least one staff member of each gender assigned to supervise the event.
2. Relationship with the group –students should know and trust the staff members attending.
3. Experience – Responsibility should be allocated according to skills and experience.

Supervision and Staff/Student Ratios

1. A minimum of two staff members must be in attendance for all off-site activities and excursions so, in the event of an emergency, a second staff member is available to assist an injured student or go for help.
2. The involvement of students with higher levels of anxiety will require a higher ratio (ie. 3 staff members to attend).
3. Students engaged in an excursion should be accompanied at all times by an adult at a ratio of no more than 1:10.
4. Students engaged in high-risk activities such as canoeing, abseiling, go-carting, must be accompanied by a qualified instructor in the relevant field, with an adult/student ratio of no more than 1:6.
5. All off-site activities must be attended by at least one adult who holds a valid Level II First Aid Certificate.
6. The Avenue School must receive permission from a parent/guardian before the school will authorise a student to be dismissed during the hours of attendance.

7. Permission for early departure must be established prior to the student leaving the activity. If a student departs (following initial attendance) without authorisation, the parent/guardian will be informed immediately.

Student Behaviour and Wellbeing Needs

Students participating in off-site activities and excursions are required to adhere to the Student Code of Conduct. Any student in breach of the Code may be sent home from an excursion at the cost of the parent or student.

If a student is in need of wellbeing support (in the case of a panic attack or similar) they will be supported and cared for. If they elect to return to school or be collected from the excursion, arrangements will be made

In the event of this being necessary, the staff-member-in-charge of the excursion must:

1. Advise the Principal and seek authorisation before arranging for the student to go home, be collected or be brought back to the school. (Ratios must be adhered to.)
2. Advise the office where an alert to the parent /guardian will be issued to advise that the student is being sent home or is to be collected from the excursion.
3. Consider the age, maturity and psychological wellbeing of the student when making arrangements.

Approving an Excursion

The Principal must review planning and risk assessment documentation and submit them to the Board for approval in the case of:

1. Overnight excursions.
2. Camps.
3. Interstate/overseas excursions requiring sea or air travel.
4. Excursions involving weekend or public/school holidays.

Planning must take into consideration the welfare of staff attending and mitigating actions if staff are fatigued or unwell. This is particularly relevant if staff are required to drive a bus. Staff ratios must take account of the need for staff to be relieved if they are fatigued. In this circumstance an additional staff member must attend.

Local off-site activities and day excursions are to be approved by the Principal. The excursion approval process should consider the following:

1. The educational or wellbeing purpose of the excursion.
2. Submission and detail of all excursion paperwork including risk assessment.
3. The suitability of the environment or venue for the excursion including safety and risk management.
4. Procedures in the event of an emergency
5. Arrangements if the excursion needs to be cancelled
6. First aid requirements
7. Staffing and supervision
8. Informed consent from parents / guardians/ informal carers (as applicable)
9. Adequate medical information.
10. Student preparation relating to wellbeing and behaviour.
11. Special requirements for any activities.
12. Transportation requirements.
13. Communication requirements.
14. Budget requirements and costs.
15. Adequacy of insurance coverage.

As part of the approval process staffing requirements must also be considered taking into account:

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1. The experience, qualifications and skills of staff
2. Teacher/ staff to student/ratios
3. The age and maturity of students
4. The ability and experience of the students
5. The size of the group

Venues for overnight excursions must be assessed for their safety and suitability for the activities proposed. In approving an overnight excursion, the safety and suitability of the venue must be assessed according to the following:

1. Health and hygiene
2. Buildings and facilities
3. Activity equipment and the conduct of activities
4. Certification and qualifications of venue staff
5. Participant supervision provided
6. Emergency and risk management plans of venues
7. Fire precautions
8. First aid facilities
9. Relevant accreditations

The staff member-in-charge of the excursion must check the excursion venue on arrival to assess any apparent dangers or hazards and prepare contingency plans if required.

Bushfire Risk Planning and Preparation

1. The planning process must take into account the possibility of potential bushfire risk at the location and Catastrophic/Extreme Fire Day management plans.
2. The organising staff member will contact the excursion venue (if applicable) and access the venue's bushfire management plans.
3. The Principal must approve planned bushfire/emergency management strategies.
4. Planning staff must visit <https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/warnings-restrictions/about-fire-danger-ratings> to understand the fire danger rating system for Victoria.
5. All participating staff must visit the VicEmergency website. <http://www.emergency.vic.gov.au> familiarise themselves with warning icons and assess the current bushfire situation for the location prior to the excursion.
6. Attending staff members must have access to the Vic Emergency App on a functional phone taken on the excursion.
7. Off-site activities/excursions must be cancelled on Catastrophic fire warning days and will be reviewed on Extreme or High fire rating days.
8. If there is current bushfire activity within the region the excursion will be postponed or cancelled.
9. If there is no current bushfire activity within the region the staff must be prepared with strategies implementing emergency plans for potential threat of bushfire and Catastrophic/Extreme fire days.
10. Ensure all participating staff members have detailed maps with entry and exit roads highlighted in case of an emergency evacuation and Bushfire/Emergency contact information is immediately accessible at all times.
11. Attending staff members must take a battery powered radio in the case of an emergency to follow radio broadcasts or ensure emergency broadcaster apps are available on functional mobile phones.

Bushfire Protocols

Risk management strategies must include measures to ensure the safety of students when the risk of a bushfire is a consideration during off-site activities or excursions.

Measures may include:

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1. Evacuation procedures,
2. Knowledge of exit routes from buildings and location,
3. Protective gear including appropriate clothing and footwear, woollen blankets etc.
4. First Aid equipment,
5. Provision of sufficient water for first aid and hydration.
6. Instruction on how to remain safe under bushfire or other threat.
7. Assessment of sufficient staff to offer supervision and to provide or seek assistance in an emergency situation.

Supervision of students during a bushfire or emergency situation.

Risk management procedures must include consideration of staff to student ratios and the potential for additional staff to be in attendance when there is a risk of bushfire.

When bushfire risk is a consideration, the following supervision protocols apply:

1. Staff must ensure all students remain together as a group and are supervised at all times.
2. A minimum of two staff members must be in attendance, and ratios must be applied to ensure adequate supervision according to group size.
3. A minimum of two staff members must hold minimum Level II First Aid Qualifications in order to assist injured students.
4. An additional staff member must be in attendance if required to go for help.

Emergency Contact Information

Emergency	000	All emergencies	
Fire	1800 240 667	Bushfire information line	http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au http://www.emergency.vic.gov.au
Flood/Storm	132 500	State Emergency Services	http://www.ses.vic.gov.au

Refer to Fire Danger Ratings for information on the Victorian Fire Rating System prior to leaving for excursions.

Associated documents:

- Supervision of Students Policy