

# METNS

## Tours/Excursions Policy

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# METNS Tours/Excursions Policy<sup>1</sup>

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## Overview

There are five key sections to this policy that capture the school ethos and provide guidelines and explanation for the undertaking and management of METNS tours and excursions.

This policy is written so that each stakeholder (children, parents/guardians, management and teachers) may clearly see the process and be informed of their role therein.

The purpose of this document is to provide a clear overview of the way in which our school (METNS) ethos is embodied in the consideration, design and facilitation of our tours and excursions. Communication between the stakeholders is a key element in this process.

Please note the school *Tours/Excursions Policy* works in tandem with many other school policies and documents, such as the: *METNS Ethos; the Positive Behaviour Policy; Critical Illness Policy; Communication Policy; Health and Safety Policy* etc. Please consult these as needs require.

## Acknowledgments

This policy document has been composed by a collaborative working group from within the METNS community, including: parents, teachers, PTA representatives, Ethos Committee members, and BoM representatives

We would like to sincerely thank them for their time and commitment.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this policy the term “Tours/Excursions” shall include events that take place within a school day, for the duration of a day or one that involves an over night stay.

## Tours/excursions ethos statement

School tours are an important educational and social opportunity to live the *Educate Together* ethos at METNS. We deeply value the space school tours provide for all children to undergo experiences not available in the classroom and to develop their independence and confidence.

When children feel a sense of belonging and a sense of pride in each level of their community, “they can be emotionally strong, self-assured, and able to deal with challenges and difficulties, this creates an important foundation for learning and development” (*National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2009, pg 25*). School tours act as a vehicle to both enhance learning and to allow children to interact with their peers and the wider community in meaningful ways.

We aim to provide a scaffolded approach (providing additional supports/interventions, as current school resources allow at the time) to tours and excursions, which will enable every child to participate to the best of their ability. We must acknowledge that some events may not be suitable for some children. Every effort will be made to bolster inclusion through interventions such as, investigating an alternative event or tour, adaptation of tour, attendance of parents/guardians and deployment of extra personnel, where feasible.

## Planning and organisation

Tours will be arranged at the discretion of the teacher and with the approval of the Principal and the Board of Management.

Particular attention will be paid by management to proposed overnight trips; the feasibility of these will be discussed early in each academic year.

The duty of care under which the teacher operates at the school premises, will also apply when off-site. The *School Health and Safety policy* will inform decisions undertaken.

The school will ensure that all transport supplied is of the highest quality and suitable for our children.

As part of our *Green School ethos* teachers and children will strive to leave the tour locations and transport facilities as they found them and will remove all their waste. Where feasible, planning of school tours will take into account environmentally friendly transport options.

A group leader (teacher) approved by the Principal, will have overall responsibility for the supervision and conduct of the excursion. They in turn will identify a Deputy for the duration of the tour/excursion.

The group leader/teacher will ensure that a kit containing basic first aid materials: tissues, illness bags, accident report forms, and other provisions will be prepared and brought in cases of emergency.

The group leader/teacher will take note of pertinent phone numbers such as of the parents and emergency contacts, and will have access to a mobile phone.

When parent/guardian volunteers come to help out, they will work under the direction of the group Leader/teacher. The group leader/teacher will bring to the volunteers' attention relevant aspects of the *Health & Safety* and any other relevant policies.

There will always be the recommended minimum pupil - teacher/volunteer ratio of 15:1.

The group leader/teacher will review regularly undertaken tours/excursions/activities and advise the Principal where adjustments may be necessary.

Children's behaviour will live up to with the standard set down by our schools *Positive Behaviour policy and the Class Charter*.

For day trips and overnight trips, parents will submit signed permission slips without which the children will not be allowed to leave the school. General permission slips will be signed in September for local field trips i.e. those within walking distance from the school.

### **Suitability of tour/excursion**

Tours/Excursions will support the curricular, ethical, cultural and sporting development of the children. A strong emphasis will be placed on these as an opportunity to develop and nurture friendships.

METNS endeavours to ensure that all students can participate as fully as possible.

METNS will endeavour to provide appropriate support and adjustments to facilitate this participation<sup>2</sup>. Relevant teachers, parents and the principal will establish the level of appropriate support.

It must be acknowledged that all trips may not be suitable for specific classes, groups or individuals.

Trips will be modified in duration, scale and distance from home in order to ensure maximum participation.

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<sup>2</sup> Emergency situations at METNS are covered by the *Critical Incident Policy* in addition to the *Management of Chronic Illness Policy*.

## Risk assessment

Risk and conditions are considered by METNS prior to any out-of-school visit.

Considerations may include how students will access the activities proposed with regard to relevant health and safety issues, and where local help can be obtained in the case of an emergency.

Staff will ensure that the location is indemnified and that individual organisations provide adequate, trained support.

METNS understands that there may be additional risks to consider when the child has a diagnosed special need. These risks will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

We rely on the goodwill of all stakeholders to engage in the decision-making process.

A parent/guardian of the child may be asked to be on call, in the vicinity of the excursion, or to be physically present, in order to facilitate their child's participation.

## Communication

In line with the *Communication Policy*, METNS undertakes to promote and support good communication structures. METNS recognises that good communication reflects the spirit of the school.

METNS will communicate with the parents about all tours and excursions and requires a 'signature response' (i.e. a signed permission slip) to allow the child to participate.

In the event that there should be any concern about a child's participation on a tour/excursion, from either the parents or the school, good communication practice, as outlined in the *Communication Policy* will enable both sides to reach an informed decision.

Class teachers will ensure early communication on any concerns or issues arising to: parents/guardians, the Support Team (e.g. class teachers, resource teachers, S.N.A.s), and where necessary the Principal.

In the event of a difficulty in achieving a mutual agreement, the process of consultation will extend to involving input from the I.S.M. (the In School Management team).

If a decision/agreement is still unable to be agreed by all parties, all pertinent information will be presented to the Principal for consideration. In this event a final decision of an individual pupil's participation will lie with the Principal

The communication period will vary depending on the nature of the tour/excursion, its length and whether it involves an overnight stay or not.

- ~ METNS endeavours to work to a timeline of 1 or 2 weeks for shorter tours/excursions, and 3 or 4 months if an overnight stay is involved.
- ~ Sporting events may necessitate shorter notice periods, in line with the nature of fixtures.

*Please note* that in some circumstances, such as the gross misdemeanour offences as outlined in the *Positive Behaviour Policy* (7.3.1, page 12), or an escalation of behavioural difficulties, the communication timeframe may be contracted.

In order to protect the privacy of the child and his/her family, and the integrity of the decision-making process, METNS respectfully requests that confidentiality is maintained by all parties involved.

#### **General tour information to be communicated**

In line with the METNS *Communications Policy*, and the planning and organisation section (as above) information on any up-coming Tour/Excursions shall be provided in advance, and may include the following;

- Tour/excursions venue details, activity lists, details of timings etc.
- Type of travel involved to get to destination (e.g. bus, by foot etc.)
- Appropriate clothing required
- Web link for further information (on venue, activity etc.)
- Leaving and return times.

In addition, there may be an information board in the classroom or school.

As always, parents/guardians may arrange to talk to a teacher if required.

The need to follow the instructions of the group leader/teacher as well as other identified supervisors at the specific venue, will be made clear.



## Positive Behaviour

In accordance with the Positive Behaviour Policy and the Class Charter<sup>3</sup>, prior to each Tour/Outing children will be reminded of safety issues, in particular the 'safe cross code', and to act in accordance with the *Positive Behaviour Policy*.

It will be made clear to all children the necessity to follow instructions of the group leader/teacher as well as other identified supervisors at the specific venue.

## Summary

METNS commits to fostering appropriate integration and inclusion for all children, in mainstream activities organised by the school where possible. This includes our school Tours and Excursions.

METNS works in partnership with parents/guardians in an effort to provide the supports required to allow, where possible, all children to take part in these organised tours and excursions.

Parents/Guardians should be assured that they can meet with teachers as required, to discuss any issues and supports that may arise, review needs and be updated around the supports in place for their child, in light of planned tours and excursions.

METNS is committed to this continued working partnership between school and home.

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<sup>3</sup> The class charter is a document drawn up by the children annually (each September) in line with our (METNS) behaviour policy, it is created within each class and is referred to regularly. It states clearly expected behaviours, both inside and outside of class.