

CAMPS AND EXCURSIONS



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact Virtual School Victoria.

PURPOSE

To explain to our school community the processes and procedures Virtual School Victoria will use when planning and conducting camps, excursions and adventure activities for students.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all camps and excursions organised by Virtual School Victoria. This policy also applies to adventure activities organised by Virtual School Victoria, regardless of whether or not they take place on or off school grounds.

This policy is intended to complement the Department's policy and guidelines on excursions, camps and adventure activities which all Victorian government schools are required to follow. Virtual School Victoria will follow both this policy, as well as the Department's policy and guidelines when planning for and conducting camps and excursions.

This policy does not apply to student workplace learning or intercampus travel.

DEFINITIONS

Excursions:

For the purpose of this policy, excursions are activities organised by the school where the students:

- are taken out of the school grounds (for example, a camp, day excursion, school sports);
- undertake adventure activities, regardless of whether or not they occur outside the school grounds;

Camps are excursions involving at least one night's accommodation.

Local excursions are excursions to locations within walking distance of the school and do not involve 'Adventure Activities'.

Adventure activities are activities that involve a greater than normal risk. Further information and examples of adventure activities are available on the Department's Policy and Advisory Library, at the following link:

<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/excursions/guidance/adventure-activities>

Note: workplace learning activities (such as work experience) and intercampus travel are not considered school excursions.

POLICY

Camps and excursions can provide a valuable educational experience for our students which are complementary to their learning, as they provide access to resources, environments and expertise that may not be available in the classroom and within our online courses.

For all camps and excursions, including adventure activities, our school will follow the Department's Policy and Advisory Library: [Excursions](#).

Planning process for camps and excursions

All camps and excursions will comply with Department planning requirements.

Part of this planning process includes conducting risk assessments, to ensure that reasonable steps are taken to minimise the risks associated with each proposed camp or excursion. Virtual School Victoria's risk assessment will include consideration of arrangements for supervision of students and consideration of the risk of bushfire or other natural disaster activity in the excursion location. In the event the Bureau of Meteorology forecasts a Catastrophic fire danger rating (FDR) day, excursions or camp activities in effected locations will be cancelled or rescheduled. Planning will also cover arrangements for cancelling, recalling or altering the camp or excursion for any other reason.

Virtual School Victoria is committed to ensuring students with additional needs are provided with an inclusive camps and excursions program and will work with families during the planning stage, as needed, to support all students' attendance and participation in camp and excursion activities.

Virtual School Victoria is committed to ensuring its policies, practices and activities relating to camps and excursions are inclusive and do not have the effect of treating any student adversely because of their sex, gender or sexuality. Virtual School Victoria is committed to taking positive action to eliminate discrimination or harassment of students on the basis of their sex, gender or sexuality.

Supervision

Virtual School Victoria follows the Department's guidelines in relation to supervision of students during excursions and camps.

All excursion staff (including parent volunteers) will be familiar with supervision requirements and the specific procedures for dealing with emergencies on each camp and excursion.

All school staff will be aware that they retain overall responsibility for the supervision and care of students throughout all camps and excursions (including adventure activities), regardless of whether or not external providers are managing the activity.

Parent volunteers

Parents may be invited to assist with camps and excursions. School staff will notify parents/carers of any costs associated with attending. School staff are in charge of camps and excursions and parent/carer volunteers are expected to follow teachers' instructions. When deciding which parents/carers will attend, the Organising Teacher will take into account: any valuable skills the parents/carers have to offer (e.g. bus licence, first aid etc.) and the special needs of particular students.

Volunteer and external provider checks

Virtual School Victoria may require all parent or carer camp or excursion volunteers and all external providers working directly with our students to have a current Working with Children Clearance.

Parent/carer consent

For all camps and excursions, Virtual School Victoria will provide parents/carers with a specific consent form outlining the details of the proposed activity. Virtual School Victoria uses email to inform parents/carers about camps and excursions and to seek their consent, asking parents/carers to return the consent form including a signature confirming they consent to their child's participation. Parents/carers are encouraged to contact the school to discuss any questions or concerns that they or their child may have with a proposed camp or excursion.

Cost of camps and excursions, refunds and support

The cost of all camps and excursions are to be paid by parents/carers unless alternative arrangements have been agreed to by the Principal prior to the excursion. All families will be given sufficient time to make payments for all activities. Consent forms will have clearly stated payment amounts and payment finalisation dates.

Students who have not finalised payment by the required date will not be allowed to attend unless the Principal determines exceptional circumstances apply.

Virtual School Victoria will make all efforts to ensure that students are not excluded for financial reasons. Families experiencing financial difficulty are invited to discuss alternative payment arrangements with the Organising Teacher and a member of Principal Class, which may include the Business Manager. They can also discuss family eligibility for the Department's Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund (CSEF), which provides payments for eligible students to attend school activities, including camps and excursions. Applications for the CSEF are open to families holding a valid means-tested concession card or temporary foster parents and are facilitated by the

school. Further information about the CSEF and the application form are available at [Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund](#).

If a camp or excursion is cancelled or altered by the school, or a student is no longer able to attend part or all of the camp or excursion, our school will consider requests for partial or full refunds of payments made by parents/carers on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the individual circumstances. Generally, we will not be able to refund payments made for costs that have already been paid where those funds have already been transferred or committed to a third party and no refund is available to the school. Where possible, we will provide information about refunds to parents/carers at the time of payment.

Student health

Parents and carers need to ensure the school has up-to-date student health information prior to camps and excursions. A member of staff will be appointed with responsibility for the health needs of the students for each camp/excursion. Teachers will administer any medication provided according to our *Medication* policy and the student's signed *Medication Authority Form*. To meet the school's obligations relating to safety, a first aid kit and mobile phone will be taken by teachers on all camps and excursions.

It is the responsibility of parents and carers to ensure their child/children are in good health when attending excursions and camps. If a student becomes ill during a camp and is not able to continue at camp it is the parent/carer's responsibility to collect them and cover any associated costs. If the Principal approves a student joining a camp late, transport to the camp is the parent/carer's responsibility.

Behaviour expectations

Students participating in camps and excursions are required to cooperate and display appropriate behaviour to ensure the camp or excursion is a safe, positive and educational experience for all students involved. Parents/carers will be notified if their child is in danger of losing the privilege to participate in an excursion or camp due to behaviour that does not meet the standards of behaviour set out in VSV's *Student Wellbeing Policy*, *Student Engagement Policy*, *Student Code of Conduct* and *Bullying Prevention Policy*. The decision to exclude a student will be made by the Principal or Assistant Principal, in consultation with the Organising Teacher. Both the parent/carer and the student will be informed of this decision prior to the camp or excursion.

If on a camp or excursion the Teacher in Charge considers an individual student's behaviour does not meet required standards, then the Principal or their nominee may determine that a student should return home during the camp or excursion. In these circumstances the parent/carer is responsible for the collection of the student and any costs associated with this.

Virtual School Victoria will make necessary allowances for any behaviours associated with any student's disability in accordance with relevant disability discrimination laws.

Disciplinary measures apply to students on camps and excursions consistent with our school's *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy*, *Student Code of Conduct* and *Bullying Prevention Policy*.

Electronic Devices

Students will be permitted to bring electronic devices (such as iPads, iPods, mobile phones) but these may only be used during times set by the Teacher in Charge. Students are responsible for the care of any personal electronic device brought to a camp or excursions and the school will not be responsible for lost or damaged devices.

Food

Students are not permitted to bring their own supply of food items to camps and excursions unless the item is medically indicated and discussed with the Organising Teacher, or included as an item on the clothing and equipment list for that camp or excursion.

Accident and Ambulance Cover

Any costs associated with student injury rest with parents/carers unless the Department is liable in negligence (liability is not automatic).

Unless otherwise indicated, Virtual School Victoria and the Department do not provide student accident or ambulance cover. Parents/carers may wish to obtain student accident insurance cover and/or ambulance cover, depending on their health insurance arrangements and any other personal considerations.

COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following way:

- Included in staff induction processes and staff training
- Discussed at staff briefings/meetings as required
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following Department policies and guidelines:

- [Excursions](#)
- <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/excursions/guidanceCamps, Sports and Excursions Fund>

The following school policies are also relevant to this Camps and Excursions Policy

- Statement of Values and School Philosophy
- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- Volunteer Policy
- Duty of Care Policy
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy

- Parent Payment Policy
- Student Code of Conduct
- Bullying Prevention Policy
- Medication Policy
- First Aid Policy
- Anaphylaxis Management Policy

CAMP AND EXCURSION APPROVAL PROCESS

Teachers will follow the approval process as outlined in Appendix A for Camps and Excursions that involve High Risk Outdoor Education Activities and Appendix B for all other Camps and Excursions.

EXCURSIONS AND CAMPS PLANNING CHECKLIST

Use the checklist below to ensure you address the Department's requirements for conducting day and overnight excursions. This is not a comprehensive list as each excursion is unique; rather this document is intended to assist schools in meeting the key requirements for conducting an excursion. This checklist does not cover the additional requirements for Overseas Excursions (please see the [Excursions Guidance: Overseas Travel](#) for additional requirements) .

Teacher in charge – (TIC)

Principal – (P)

Requirement	Person(s) Responsible	Completed ✓
PLANNING		
1. Establish the educational purpose of the program and relevance to the school's curriculum. Also take into consideration the location and environment, activities, people and equipment needed.	TIC	
2. Read the Excursions Policy and Guidelines on the Policy and Advisory Library.	P	
APPROVAL		
3. <u>For local and day excursions (not involving adventure activities):</u> Principal approval must be sought via the process determined by the school. <u>For excursions with an overnight component or involving adventure activities:</u> Complete the Principal Approval form and any attachments (including risk register and, if required, emergency management plan, communication plan etc.). Provide this to the principal with sufficient time to allow the principal to review the documentation. See: Excursions Guidelines – Approvals .	TIC/P	
4. Activities conducted on public lands, such as State Forest or National Parks, comply with current permit and access requirements. If planning an activity on Parks Victoria Land, schools must register their excursion with ParkConnect . See: Excursions Guidelines – Venue Selection .	TIC	

Requirement	Person(s) Responsible	Completed ✓
5. <u>For interstate excursions:</u> Confirm teachers or principals attending the excursion have received appropriate approval. See: Excursions Guidelines – Approvals and Travel for School Staff .	TIC/P	
STAFFING		
6. Determine the number of excursion staff required (and how many must be registered teachers). Staff must ensure that supervision ratios are correct for ALL aspects of excursion. If the excursion includes adventure activities, activity specific ratios apply. See: Excursion Guidelines – Supervision .	TIC/P	
7. Excursion staff comply with Department or the school's own policy in relation to the Child Safe Standards and having a Working with Children Check .	TIC	
8. Record the names of volunteer workers for the purposes of volunteer workers insurance. See: Volunteers in Schools .	TIC	
9. Designate a member of staff as being responsible for first aid, ensuring they have appropriate qualifications, and source relevant first aid kit. See: Excursions Guidelines – First Aid .	TIC	
10. Clarify the specific roles and responsibilities of each staff member (teachers, instructors, campsite staff, volunteers, etc) so they are understood by all staff and (where appropriate) students prior to the commencement of the excursion.	TIC	
11. <u>For excursions with an overnight component:</u> Ensure there is a dedicated school contact person in the event of an emergency, both during and outside of school hours.	P	
12. <u>For excursions with an overnight component:</u> If the overnight stay involves mixed gender groups, ensure there are excursions staff of each sex.	TIC	
TRANSPORTATION		
13. An appropriate mode of transport is selected and the use of private vehicles should be avoided unless necessary.	TIC	
14. Confirm that any bus or private vehicle has appropriate registration and the driver has an appropriate license and comprehensive insurance for the vehicle. See: Excursions Guidelines – Transport .	P	
EMERGENCY AND RISK MANAGEMENT		
15. <u>For local and day excursions (not involving adventure activities):</u> Complete the Risk assessment for Local and Day Excursions as evidence of consideration of the risks that may be encountered while on the excursion. See: Excursions Guidelines – Risk Management Planning . <u>For excursions with an overnight component or involving adventure activities:</u> Complete a Risk Register to identify, analyse, evaluate and address all student and staff health and safety risks during an excursion (including	TIC	

Requirement	Person(s) Responsible	Completed ✓
transportation, activities undertaken, excursion venues and staff or student illness) and any significant financial risks to the school and/or parents/carers (for example if an excursion needs to be cancelled). See: Excursions Guidelines – Risk Management Planning .		
16. <u>For excursions with an overnight component or involving adventure activities:</u> Develop an emergency management plan that covers responses to likely emergency situations (identified in the risk register) and arrangements if the excursion needs to be cancelled, recalled or altered. See: Excursions Guidelines – Emergency or Critical Incident Management .	TIC	
17. Emergency management procedures must include the effects of an emergency on student supervision in the event of excursion staff being required to assist injured students or to go for help.	TIC	
18. <u>For excursions involving adventure activities:</u> Ensure any requirements listed under the Adventure Activities Guidelines have been met. See Excursions Guidelines – Adventure Activities .	TIC/P	
19. <u>For excursions with an overnight component or involving adventure activities:</u> If conducting an activity in a remote location with limited access to technology and emergency services, a documented communication plan must be developed prior to the activity. See: Excursions Guidelines – Communication .	TIC	
USE OF EXTERNAL PROVIDERS		
20. Confirm that any residential campsite is accredited by a provider recognised by the Department. See: Excursions Guidelines – Venue Selection .	TIC	
21. Assess the safety and suitability of the venue (including the environment) for the activities proposed. It is recommended that venues are selected based on the recent and first-hand knowledge. See: Excursions Guidelines – Venue Selection and External Providers .	TIC	
22. Seek prior approval from the principal if planning to conduct an inspection either within or outside of normal school hours (if required/appropriate).	TIC/P	
23. Consult venue managers and activity providers about their risk management plans and processes. This can inform the school's own risk management assessment.	TIC	
24. Negotiate terms and conditions with third party providers. This includes refusing to sign any Waivers of liability on behalf of students. Students cannot be asked to sign waivers of liability. See: Insurance for Schools .	P	
25. Confirm that external providers (including specialist instructors) hold appropriate public liability insurance, and have the necessary skills or qualifications for the activity and appropriate experience for the age and skill level of the students. See: Insurance for Schools .	TIC	
COMMUNICATIONS WITH STUDENTS AND PARENTS/CARERS		
26. Obtain written or electronic consent from parents/carers for school excursions (including adventure activities). Parents/carers must be	TIC	

Requirement	Person(s) Responsible	Completed ✓
provided with sufficient information about each aspect of the excursion. See: Excursions Guidelines – Consent .		
27. Obtain specific authorisation from parents for any financial costs associated with the excursion using the Excursion Payment form.	TIC	
28. If relevant, parents/carers receive information about costs stemming from cancellations or alterations, including sending a student home and cancellation fees imposed by third parties where applicable.	TIC	
29. Inform staff and students about appropriate clothing and personal equipment.	TIC	
30. <u>For local and day excursions (not involving adventure activities):</u> Seek updated medical information. This can be a reminder to parents/carers to update the school with any new/relevant medical information. See: Excursions Guidelines – Student Medical Information . <u>For excursions with an overnight component or involving adventure activities:</u> Provide Medical Information forms to parents/carers for completion. These forms must be accessible during the activity, whilst copies of the forms must be kept at the school. See: Excursions Guidelines – Student Medical Information .	TIC	
32. Give students clear information about organisational and relevant safety arrangements, supervision roles, emergency procedures and expected standards of behaviour.	TIC	
33. For overnight excursions, provide parents/carers the telephone numbers for the designated school contact person in the event of an emergency.	TIC	
FINAL PREPARATIONS		
34. Complete the Student Activity Locator (SAL) online form (EduMail password required) at least three weeks prior to the excursion.	TIC	
35. Inform the regional director if an excursion leaves the school unoccupied.	P	
36. <u>For excursions with an overnight component:</u> Ensure that both the teacher-in-charge, principal and 24-hour contact person each have a copy of all the approval documentation. This includes detailed information that may be needed in an emergency such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the itinerary and supervision strategy, including the exact location of the excursion participants at all times, including during travel • the relevant telephone number/s through which excursion staff may be contacted in an emergency (for principals), or the school contact person (for the teacher-in-charge) • the names and family contacts for all students and staff • copies of the consent and medical advice forms of students • a copy of the program's emergency response plan (including contacts for police, ambulance, doctor, hospital, fire brigade, 24 hour school contact number to be held by staff on the excursion and by the nominated school contact person) • a copy of the completed approval proforma (including all attachments) submitted to the principal. 	TIC/P	

Requirement	Person(s) Responsible	Completed ✓
37. Review weather conditions ahead of planned excursions. This includes extreme weather (smoke, lightning, rain, wind, etc.) and significant fire risk or total fire ban days. Liaise with the region about whether the excursion should be cancelled or special precautions are required. See: Excursions Guidelines – Weather and Emergency Warnings .	TIC	
38. Ensure that there is a first aid kit appropriate to the excursion location and proposed activities available.	TIC	
39. Confirm that teachers on camp have left work for classes to be covered and continuous instruction will be provided for students remaining at the school during the absence of staff accompanying the excursion.	TIC	
40. All participating staff, including the school contact person, understand their specific roles and are familiar with the program itinerary, risk management plans and emergency response plan.	TIC	
41. Familiarise excursion staff with the medical histories of students, particularly with respect to epilepsy, diabetes, asthma and heart conditions. Also make staff aware of students with behavioural issues, or who may require additional support, and the support strategies for these students.	TIC/P	
DURING ACTIVITY		
42. Ensure you have the means to mark rolls, and a copy of all the approval documentation. This can be via an electronic device or paper copies.	TIC	
43. Clarify the responsibility for supervision of students and emergency procedures with all excursion staff and any external providers, including that teachers have overall responsibility for the safety and welfare of the students, even where the teachers do not directly provide the actual instruction.	TIC	
44. Upon arrival, check the excursion venue to assess apparent dangers and hazards and prepare contingency plans if required.	TIC	
45. Familiarise all excursion staff and students with emergency procedures. Explain emergency procedures as soon as practicable after arrival and conduct a trial evacuation exercise to ensure that procedures are appropriate and staff and students are familiar with them.	TIC	
46. Ensure any students who may have difficulty communicating in an emergency (such as because of age or disability) are readily identifiable.	TIC	
47. If an extreme incident occurs, seek approval of the principal to return a student home from the excursion early for illness, misbehaviour or other safety/wellbeing reasons.	TIC/P	
48. Monitor risks and be prepared to alter or cancel the excursion at any time.	TIC	
AFTER THE EXCURSION		
49. Record details of accidents or incidents on the injury management system.	TIC	
50. Store excursion documentation in accordance with the Department's Records Management Policy .	TIC	
51. Review the excursion, including planning process, to identify areas for improvement.	TIC	

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	28/02/2023
Consultation	Education Committee Advisory Board
Approved by	<i>Jana Webster</i>
Next scheduled review date	06/04/2025