

CAMPS AND EXCURSIONS POLICY

1. PURPOSE

To explain to the Mount Alexander College (the School) community the processes and procedures it will use when planning and conducting camps, tours, excursions, incursions and adventure activities for students.

2. DEFINITIONS

- **Camps** - are excursions involving at least one night's accommodation (including school sleepovers). The purpose of a school camp is primarily to foster personal and social growth. It provides opportunities for teamwork and social interaction. It must be accessible to most students in a year level. A subject-based camp forms part of the curriculum for one or more Key Learning Areas.
- **Tours** – involves travel overseas or interstate.
- **Excursions** - are activities organised by the school where the students:
 - are taken out of the school grounds (for example: day outings, school sports);
 - undertake adventure activities, regardless of whether they occur outside the school grounds.Local Excursions are excursions to locations within walking distance of the school and do not involve adventure activities.
- **Incursions** - are an activity organised by the school, whereby an outside body is employed to come into the school to run an educational activity for the students.
- **Adventure activities** - are activities that involve a greater than normal risk. Further information and examples of adventure activities are available on the DET's Excursions webpage.

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all camps, tours, excursions and incursions organised by the School. This policy also applies to adventure activities organised by the school regardless of whether they take place on or off school grounds, and to school sleepovers.

For incursions this policy specifies requirements for all extra-curricular activities held on school premises.

This policy is intended to complement the Department of Education and Training's (DET) policy and guidelines on excursions, camps and adventure activities which all Victorian government schools are required to follow. The school will follow both this policy, as well as the DET's policy and guidelines when planning for and conducting camps, tours, excursions, incursions and adventure activities.

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

4. 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.

The school provides a stimulating range of camps, tours, excursions, incursions and adventure activities as a means of complementing and enriching the learning that takes place in the classroom. In addition, they foster specific development associated with outdoor living and recreation, social skills, self-esteem, group cohesion, and leadership skills. Off-site activities can also improve student attitudes to school, to each other and to staff. These experiences can have a positive lifelong impact.

The School has zero tolerance for child abuse. Everyone working with students are responsible for the care and protection of the children within its care and reporting information about suspected child abuse. As such, this policy is to be read in conjunction with the School's Child Protection Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct which applies to DET employees, volunteers and contractors working with students including any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the School Council for use by a child during or outside regular school hours including on camps, tours, excursions, incursions and adventure activities. The Student Code of Conduct and the Staff Code of Conduct also apply on all camps, tours, excursions, incursions and adventure activities as do the range of policies listed at the end of this document.

For all camps and excursions, including adventure activities, our school will follow the Department's Policy and Advisory Library in relation to excursions.

Planning process for camps and excursions

All camps, tours, excursions, incursions and adventure activities 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, tour, excursion, incursion and adventure activity. The School's risk assessment will include consideration of arrangements for supervision of students and consideration of the risk of bushfire activity at the activity location. In the event of a Code Red Day being announced, any activities in affected locations will be cancelled or rescheduled. Planning will also cover arrangements for cancelling, recalling or altering the camp, tour, excursion, incursion and adventure activity for any other reason.

The School is committed to ensuring students with additional needs are provided with an inclusive camps, tours, excursions, incursions and adventure activities program and will work with families during the planning stage, as needed, to support all students' attendance and participation.

In cases where a camp, tour, excursion, incursion and adventure activity involves a particular class or year level group, the Organising Teacher will ensure that there is an alternative educational program available and appropriate supervision for those students not attending.

Implementation

- Every student will be given the opportunity to participate in at least three camps over a six-year period.
- The diversity of the School's population must be reflected in the activities offered by each camp.
- Subject-based camps will take place where required in the curriculum.
- DET procedures and requirements relating to the preparation, organisation, supervision and safety in the conduct of all camps, tours, excursions, incursions and adventure activities as outlined in the School Policy and Advisory Library (PAL) must be observed.
- All camps, tours, excursions, incursions and adventure activities will adhere to DET staff/student ratios as follows:
 - Day excursions not involving adventure activities 1:20.
 - Overnight excursions not involving adventure activities 1:10.
 - Base camps in residential premises or under canvas 1:10.
 - Study camps in residential premises, tours, including interstate tours 1:15.
 - Overseas tours 1:10.
 - Adventure activities - see DET Safety in Outdoor Adventure Activities for ratios applying to specific activities. For example, orienteering requires a ratio of 1:10 whereas rock climbing and abseiling - on the rock face - must be 1:1.
- Everyone working on camps, tours, excursions, incursions and adventure activities will have a Police Check and/or Working with Children Check (WWCC).
- For activities requiring School Council approval, the DET Approval Proforma must be completed.
- Approval Process - The following year's camps, tours and overnight excursions, will, as far as practicable be scheduled and approved by School Council in the final meeting of the preceding year. This will be presented by the Principal.
- Planning for camps, tours and overnight excursions should include:
 - Notice of intent, provided by the organiser or delegate to the principal at **least 20 weeks before the event**.
 - Approval of full documentation (including risk management planning, parent consent forms, itinerary, emergency procedures and staffing) by the organiser or delegate to the Principal and DET Emergency Management
 - School Council final approval is required at least **2 months** prior to departure with full documentation.

- The School Council requires **at least two months' notice** for the approval for overnight excursions and camps (or longer to accommodate the School Council meeting schedule). **At least three months' notice** is required for the approval of overseas tours. All final submissions to School Council must be endorsed by the School's Management Committee and the Principal.
- Camps, tours, excursions, incursions and adventure activities will only run if they are:
 - Associated with a clearly stated educational purpose or set of objectives, curriculum and student wellbeing linkages, and planned, structured experiences.
 - Cost neutral, including replacement staff. This will be assessed by the School's Business Manager.
 - Timed to avoid exams, assessments, reporting obligations and/or clashes with other college priorities.
 - Approval has been gained by the Assistant Principal, Business Manager, and relevant Key Learning Area Leader, relevant Head of House and Parent/Carers.
 - The correct procedures and timelines have been followed. This will be determined by the Assistant Principal and the Business Manager.
 - Approved by the School Council considering:
 - the contribution and appropriateness of the activity to the School's program;
 - the cost of the activity (budget);
 - the adequacy of planning and preparation;
 - the welfare and safety of students and staff; and
 - the application of staff/student ratios.
- The Assistant Principal, in consultation with the Management Committee, will minimise disruptions to normal routines caused by camps, tours, excursions, incursions and adventure activities by implementing procedures such as:
 - the amalgamation of classes. Any classes remaining at school with up to half the students may be collapsed and 'in-lieu' classes issued.
 - ensuring that any student remaining at the college because of the event is provided with teacher supervision and meaningful school work.
- The Assistant Principal and Camps Co-ordinator will ensure that the relevant details about School Council approved camps, tours, excursions and adventure activities are entered on the School Activity Locator (SAL).

Supervision

The school will follow the Department's guidelines in relation to supervision of students during camps, tours, excursions, incursions and adventure activities.

All staff (including Parent/Carer volunteers) involved in camps, tours, excursions, incursions and adventure activities will be familiar with supervision requirements and the specific procedures for dealing with emergencies.

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

Staffing

- Selection of staff (and back-up staff) will take place when planning for the excursion, camp, tour, incursion or adventure activity commences.
- For camps (only) organiser and a Leading Teacher, Head of House or KLA Leader (if not the organiser) will attend. All staff members will be invited to apply.

Note: generally, staff will attend no more than one camp per year. The camp organiser will select staff in consultation with a member of the principal team, which consists of the Principal and Assistant Principal, from the pool of applicants/volunteers - ES staff, Parents/Carers and qualified ex-students with a WWCC should be considered for selection.

Parent/Carer Volunteers

Parents/Carers may be invited to assist with camps, tours, excursions, incursions and adventure activities. School staff will notify Parent/Carers of any costs associated with attending. School staff will oversee camps, tours, excursions, incursions and adventure activities and Parent/Carer volunteers are expected to follow teachers' instructions. When deciding which Parent/Carers will attend, the Organising Teacher will take into account any valuable skills the Parent/Carers have to offer (e.g., bus drivers licence, first aid etc.) and the special needs of particular students.

Volunteer and External Provider Checks

The School requires all Parent/Carer, volunteers and all external providers working directly with our students on camps, tours, excursions, incursions and adventure activities to have a current Working with Children Check card.

Parent/Carer Consent

For all camps, tours and excursions (but not incursions and local excursions), the school will provide Parent/Carers with a specific consent form outlining the details of the proposed activity and use a platform such as Compass to inform Parent/Carers about the camp, tour or excursion to seek their consent. 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, tour or excursion.

For local excursions, the school will provide Parent/Carers with an annual Local Excursions consent form (or an online equivalent) at the start of each school year or upon enrolment if students enrol during the school year. The School will also provide advance notice to Parent/Carers of an upcoming local excursion through email/online Parent/Carer communication tool such as Compass. For local excursions that occur on a recurring basis (for example weekly outings to the local oval for sports lessons), the School need only notify Parent/Carers once only prior to the commencement of the recurring event.

Application and Implementation Process

Application for camps, tours, excursions, incursions and adventure activities must be submitted to the School's Operations Committee, which consists of the Assistant Principal, Leading Teacher Professional Growth and Daily Organiser, **six weeks before** the date of the activity on Compass.

- For all camps, tours, excursions and adventure activities the Approval Proforma for Activities Requiring School Council Approval must be submitted.
- Information will be provided to all Parent/Carer of non-English speaking families in a manner that allows them to provide an informed consent to their children attending excursions.
- Specific written consent must be obtained from a Parent/Carer granting permission for a child to take part in a camp, tour, excursion or adventure activity including the authorisation of medical treatment. This can be entered on Compass or provided in hard copy at least 3 days prior to the event.
- A Confidential Medical form must be completed on Compass or in hard copy by the Parent/Carer for each student attending a camp, tour or excursion.
- Compass will be used by teachers to generate and record event details, event participation/non-participation lists and, when applicable, to print permission/medical consent, emergency contact details and medical action plan details relevant to the cohort.
NOTE: Teachers are prohibited from entering event consent for any student. Compass may be used by Parent/Carers to provide written permission/medical consent, emergency contact details, medical action plan details.
- Where it is requested that a student be dismissed directly from the camp, tour or excursion, a written note signed by the Parent/Carer or email from the Parent/Carer must be provided to the School at least 3 days prior to the event. Verbal consent or text messages will not be accepted.
- The school will communicate with the community via the School newsletter and website about the DET Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund (CSEF), which supports families with payments for eligible students to attend camps, sports and excursions. Families holding a valid means-tested concession card or temporary foster parents are eligible to apply. \$225 per year is available for eligible secondary school students. A special consideration eligibility category also exists. Payments are made directly to the School and are tied to the student.
- All Parent/Carers will be given sufficient time to make payments for camps, tours, excursions and adventure activities. Students are only eligible to attend events if Parent/Carer consent has been given AND payment has been made by the due date(s). This includes the payment of deposits.

Cost of Camps and Excursions

The cost of a camp, tour and excursion will usually include food, accommodation, buses, activities, and replacement teachers. As a guide, the number of replacement teachers required will be 60% of the number of teachers attending the camp (e.g., 3 teachers attending require approximately 2 relief teachers per day.)

Camps, tours, excursions, incursions and adventure activities must be affordable for most students in the target group. This might necessitate fund raising and donations to lower the eventual cost to students. An account must be set up for each individual camp with the School's General Office.

The cost of all camps, tours and excursions are to be paid by Parent/Carers unless alternative arrangements have been agreed to by the principal prior to the activity. 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.

The School will make all efforts to ensure that students are not excluded for financial reasons.

Parent/Carers experiencing financial difficulty are invited to discuss alternative payment arrangements with the Business Manager / Principal / Organising Teacher. The Business Manager / Principal / Organising Teacher 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, tours and excursions. Applications for the CSEF are open to Parent/Carers holding a valid means-tested concession card or temporary foster Parent/Carers and are facilitated by the school. Further information about the CSEF and the application form are available at Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund.

Cancellation and Changes

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

Money Collection Process

- All payments collected from students must go through the General Office.
- Students may only give payments to the General Office before school, at recess, lunchtime and after school.
- The General Office will update students on Compass with "Consent Received" and "Payment Received" so the organising teacher can check the status of attendees.
- It is essential that teachers organising excursions, sporting teams, and camps inform the General Office at least two weeks in advance.
- Consent and payment for all excursions will close three days before the camp, tour and excursion. There will be no exceptions to this rule.
- Six days prior to the camp, tour and excursion date, organising teachers may open up the activity to other students if the excursion has an incurred cost for which the school has already paid. This is to ensure that the school does not run activities at a loss. Consent must still be provided 3 days before the activity.

Student Health

Parent/Carers need to ensure the school has up-to-date student health information prior to all camps, tours, excursions and adventure activities. A member of staff will be appointed with responsibility for the health needs of the students for each activity. Teachers will administer any medication provided according to our Administration of 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 activities.

It is the responsibility of Parent/Carers to ensure their child/children are in good health when attending camps, tours, excursions and adventure activities. If a student becomes ill during the activity 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, tour, excursion or adventure activity late, transport to the activity location is the Parent/Carer's responsibility.

A designated 'Teacher in Charge' will coordinate each camp, tour, excursion, incursion and adventure activity. That teacher will prior to the event:

- Ensure that Parent/Carers make informed consent by:
 - Communicating the details, in writing, of events including the types of activities and listing any potential hazards in which students will be engaged.
 - Convening Parent/Carer information sessions.
 - Providing multilingual copies to families of non-english speaking background
 - Ensure staff trained in anaphylaxis first aid management are present.
 - Ensure students with a risk of Anaphylaxis take their personal EpiPen, any required additional medication (e.g., antihistamines) and Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCIA) Action Plan, rather than using these items provided at the General Office.
- Ensure staff consult the parents of students with anaphylaxis prior to a camp, tour, excursion or adventure activity to ensure preventative strategies are in place. This includes alerting caterers and consideration of taking extra Epi-pens if the activity is remote or a considerable distance from emergency services.
- Ensure students with Diabetes supply a specific camp, tour and excursion action plan developed in consultation with their doctor.
- Along with the Assistant Principal, convene one or more meetings with staff involved to confirm all arrangements.
- Designate, provide in writing and explain the specific roles and responsibilities of each staff member (teachers, instructors, campsite staff, volunteers etc). All staff and students on the camp, tour, excursion or adventure activity are to be informed about which teacher is responsible for medical support and carrying the fully equipped first aid kit. This teacher will carry the ASCIA Action Plan and Epi-pens and must be with the relevant students at all times (i.e. on the same bus). In some instances, students may carry their own action plan, Epi-pen/antihistamines.
- Ensure that private vehicles are not used on school camps, tours, excursions and adventure activities without direct permission from the Principal or Assistant Principal. If permitted, the driver must have full comprehensive insurance for the vehicle used. Students travelling in private vehicles must have written consent from their Parent/Carer.
- Ensure that a charged mobile phone is taken.
- Download the Excursion Handbook from Compass
- Ensure the Events Handbook is taken on the camp, tour, excursion or adventure activity.
- Follow the procedures in the Event Request form and advise the Assistant Principal immediately of any variations.
- Contact the School immediately in the event of a problem.
- Monitor and manage student and staff conduct.
- Appropriate emergency and risk management planning will be undertaken for all camps, tours, excursions, incursions and adventure activities. The School's Emergency Management Plan and Critical Incident Response Plan will be referenced and followed when necessary. The Risk Register will be completed for every event.
- A students Parents/Carers and the School must be contacted as soon as possible in the event of an illness or accident.
- The school is guided by DET's decision making and advice where applicable, for example, in the case of bushfire warnings.
- VCE/VCAL/VET students are permitted to leave the School campus to conduct research unsupervised only if the Unsupervised Excursion form has been completed and Parent/Carer permission has been granted.

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.

Student Conduct

- The School's Code of Conduct Policy, and the Student Engagement and Inclusion, and Student Behaviour Policy apply on all camps, tours, excursions, incursions and adventure activities.
- Students are expected to give full co-operation to the teachers conducting the activity. They are expected to always behave in a responsible manner with due consideration for the safety, comfort and rights of everyone participating.
- Students must always promptly obey all instructions given by teachers.
- No student is to leave the camp, tour, excursion or adventure activity premises or group except under the supervision of a teacher or accompanied by their Parent/Carer. However, the student's Parent/Carer may give prior written authority to allow a relative or friend to escort a child from the group for a short time so long as the overall program is not inconvenienced.
- Smoking and vaping is not permitted.
- The consumption of alcohol or the use of drugs or other harmful substances is strictly forbidden.
- Parent/Carer will be responsible for checking their child's luggage for banned substances such as alcohol, illicit drugs, vaping and tobacco products.
- Students are responsible for the security and care of clothing and other personal property taken on camps, tours, excursions or adventure activities.
- The special rules or provisions (e.g. lists of clothing, limits on amount of pocket-money) set down by the organiser of each activity must be adhered to.
- The teacher in charge may arrange for a student to be sent home if a serious breach of camp, tour, excursion or adventure activity discipline occurs or if a matter of safety is involved. In such cases prior contact will be made with the Principal and the Parent/Carer of the student (either directly or through the Principal). Parent/Carers will be responsible for the costs involved for contact and transport (either by collecting the child in person or by paying the transport fare from the camp to home).
- Parent/Carers will be responsible for the cost of repair or replacement of any damage to property, equipment or fittings caused by students.

Staff Conduct and Duty of Care

- All teachers attending a camp are regarded as being always on duty from the time of departure from school until the group returns to school.
- The teacher in charge of the camp, tour, excursion or adventure activity may allocate staff so that all are not actively involved in every activity, but in such a way that the recommended and approved staff/student ratios are observed.
- Alcohol and illicit drugs are forbidden for the duration of the camp, tour, excursion or adventure activity.
- Students must always remain under the supervision of teachers.
- As is normal school practice, teachers must not smoke or vape in the presence of students.

NOTE: Sometimes a student's disability may manifest in challenging behaviour. Examples of disabilities that can present with challenging behaviour includes Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder and Autism Spectrum Disorder. In these cases, excluding a student from a camp or excursion may raise disability discrimination law issues. The School should contact DET's Legal Division for advice if it is considering excluding a student for failing to comply with behavioural standards, if their disability presents with challenging behaviour).

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

Electronic Devices

Students will not be permitted to bring electronic devices on camps, tours, excursions or adventure activities except with prior approval from the Principal. The Principal will only approve students bringing electronic devices to an activity in exceptional circumstances and when it is in the best interests of the student. The Principal may place conditions on device location and use during the activity.

Food

Students are not permitted to bring their own supply of food items to camps and excursions. Exceptions may occur only if:

- Specified by the activity organising teacher (e.g. lunch on the first day), or
- The items are 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 Parent/Carers unless the Department is liable in negligence (liability is not automatic).

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

5. COMMUNICATION

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

- Included in staff induction processes and staff training
- Available publicly on our school's website
- Available to parent, staff and students on the Compass portal – School Documentation
- Included in staff handbook/manual
- Discussed at staff briefings/meetings as required
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

6. FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

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

- DET Excursions Policy_
<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/excursions/policy>
- DET Excursions adventure activities guidance_
<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/excursions/guidance/adventure-activities>
- Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund (CSEF)_
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/Pages/csef.aspx>
- DET Child Safe Standards Policy_
<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/child-safe-standards/policy>
- School Policy and Advisory Library (PAL) - Excursions_
<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/excursions/policy>
- DET School Activity Locator_
<https://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/forms/school/sal/Default.aspx> (DET login required)

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

- Child Safety Code of Conduct Policy
- Anaphylaxis Management Policy
- Asthma Policy
- Student Safety Code of Conduct Policy
- Diabetes Policy
- Duty of Care
- Emergency Management Plan
- Critical Incident Response Plan
- First Aid Policy
- Student Behaviour Policy

- Volunteers Policy
- Digital Technologies (Internet, Social Media and Digital Devices)

7. REVIEW CYCLE

This policy is based on the DET Camps and Excursions Policy Template April 2019. It was last approved by School Council on August 10 2021, and is scheduled for review in 2024.