



Northern School for Autism

"Learning for Life"

CAMPS AND EXCURSIONS (including local excursions) POLICY

PURPOSE

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

SCOPE

This policy applies to all camps and excursions organised by NSA. This policy also applies to adventure activities organised by NSA, 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. NSA 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 website under Adventure Activities, at the website below.

<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.

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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.

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. NSA'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 affected locations will be cancelled or rescheduled.

Planning will also cover arrangements for cancelling, recalling or altering the camp or excursion for any other reason. Staff will check weather forecasts and emergency warnings for the location in the days leading up to the excursion and on the day the excursion commences. If the activity extends overnight, staff must access weather forecasts and warnings daily and monitor and assess the weather throughout, and be prepared to cancel, modify or relocate at any time.

NSA 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.

In cases where a camp or excursion 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 the camp or excursion.

Staffing and supervision

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

All excursion staff (including parent/carer 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.

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The specific roles and responsibilities of each staff member (teachers, instructors, campsite staff, volunteers, etc.) will be clarified and understood by all staff prior to the commencement of the excursion.

School staff participating in an excursion will:

- understand the purpose of the program and its connection to student learning
- be aware of their supervisory responsibilities throughout the excursion
- know which member of staff will provide first aid if required
- know the exact location of students they are responsible for at all times including during travel

In addition, the nominated Teacher-in-Charge must:

- ensure risk assessments have been completed and treatments are communicated to all staff involved in the excursion and/or activity
- have the correct ratio of staff to students (or additional staff if required)
- know the exact location of students at all times including during travel
- maintain a record of telephone contacts for the supervising staff accompanying the excursion
- know who the school contact person is and their phone number
- have immediate access to the names of family contacts for all students and staff on the excursion
- have immediate access to copies of medical advice forms for those students on the excursion
- maintain a copy of the completed [Excursion — Principal Approval Form](#) (including all attachments) submitted to the principal for approval and school council for noting
- have submitted, three weeks prior to the excursion, a notification of school activity using the [Student Activity Locator](#).

Parent/Carer volunteers

Parents/carers 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/carers 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

NSA requires all parent or carer camp or excursion volunteers and all external providers working directly with our students to have a current Working with Children Check card.

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Parent/carer consent

For all camps and excursions, other than local excursions, NSA will provide parents/carers with a specific consent form outlining the details of the proposed activity. NSA uses Compass to inform parents/carers about school camps and excursions and 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 or excursion.

For local excursions, NSA may provide parents/carers with an annual Local Excursions consent form at the start of each school year or upon enrolment if students enrol during the school year. NSA may also provide advance notice to parents/carers of an upcoming local excursion via Compass. For local excursions that occur on a recurring basis (for example weekly outings to the local walks around the neighbourhood), the school will notify parents/carers once only prior to the commencement of the recurring event.

Parent Payments for camps and excursions

Most camps and excursions provided by NSA enhance and broaden the schooling experience of our students but are not a mandatory component of our curriculum. These activities are provided on a user-pays basis in accordance with the Department's Parent Payments Policy.

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. Consent forms will have clearly stated payment amounts and payment finalisation dates, and families will be given sufficient time to make payments for all activities.

Students who have not finalised payment by the required date for camps and excursions provided on a user pays basis will not be able to attend unless the Principal determines exceptional circumstances apply.

Where a camp or excursion is provided as part of the standard curriculum requirements, parents may be invited to make a voluntary contribution but all students will be able to attend regardless of whether their parents contribute.

Financial Help for Families

NSA 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 Business Manager, Principal or Organising Teacher. The Business Manager, Principal or 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 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](#).

Refunds

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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, the 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/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/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 and any costs to get to the camp is the parent/carer's responsibility.

The school will:

- ensure that the teacher-in-charge has immediate access to either hard copy or electronic versions of the medical information forms on the excursion
- ensure these forms are available to other excursion staff in emergency situations
- keep copies of the forms at the school.

The school may require additional medical information depending on the nature of the activities undertaken.

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 the school's *Student Wellbeing & Engagement Policy* as well as the *Bullying Prevention & Response 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.

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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 immediate collection of the student and any costs associated with this.

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. Reasonable adjustments will be made for students with disabilities, including students with medical or health conditions that may have an impact on the student's ability to meet expected standards of behaviour disciplinary measures that apply to students on camps and excursions.

Disciplinary measures apply to students on camps and excursions consistent with our school's *Student Wellbeing & Engagement Policy* and *Bullying Prevention & Response Policy*.

Electronic Devices

Students will not be permitted to bring electronic devices to camps or excursions except with prior approval from the Principal. The Principal will only approve students bringing electronic devices to a camp or excursion in exceptional circumstances and when it is in the best interests of the student eg. Personal Communication Devices, and may place conditions on its location and use during the camp or excursion.

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, NSA 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.

NOTE: If applicable, the school may wish to consider obtaining travel insurance for excursions that they consider involve a greater than normal risk, for example interstate or overseas trips.

Please note: All planning documentation must be approved by the Principal prior to the excursion starting.

COMMUNICATION

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

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- Included in staff induction processes and staff training
- Available publicly on our school's website
- 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](#)
- [Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund](#)
- [Parent Payments Policy](#)

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

- Statement of Values and School Philosophy
- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- Bullying Prevention and Response Policy
- Volunteer Policy
- Duty of Care Policy
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- Parent Payment Policy

Also refer to the *Risk Assessment – Reservoir* and *Risk Assessment – Lalor* documents.

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	Aug 2024
Consultation	School Council consultation 31 st Oct 2024
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	Aug 2027 – <i>noting that the recommended review cycle for this policy is every 3 years</i>

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