

Catholic University School

89 Lower Leeson Street, Dublin 2 D02 KC81

Telephone : 01 775 6800

Enquiries : office@cus.ie

Website : www.cus.ie



EXCURSION POLICY

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School Excursions Policy

CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY SCHOOL

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Rationale

Catholic University School is committed to incorporating educational visits into its curriculum, providing that they will enhance students' relevant understanding and experience and are a valuable addition to the regular school experience. They should promote the mission statement of the school and form an integral part of a student's journey through school. Such activities may include attendance at sporting events, visits to appropriate exhibitions, conferences, field trips and longer-term educational tours either in Ireland or abroad. The aim of school excursions is to provide an educational, cultural, social and personal experience for everyone involved.

Educational excursions and visits provide an excellent opportunity for the personal growth and development of students. They can have a positive effect on students' self-esteem and can significantly improve many skills including their ability to work with others, using their initiative, powers of investigation and improved understanding of their surroundings. Educational visits provide rich experiences that cannot be created in school and many students will cherish them for a long time to come.

The curriculum content of some subjects requires field studies/excursions/recreational activities, which take place off school grounds.

The organisation, particularly of school tours, requires a significant investment of staff time and energy. There are considerable implications in relation to the health and safety of pupils and the application of the school's Code of Behaviour in an out-of-school context.

All educational excursions must be consistent with the rationale as specified by the DES in Circular Letter M20/04. All reasonable efforts will be made to satisfy all the criteria contained in this circular.

The policy operates within a legislative framework and takes account of the following:

- The Education Act, 1998
- The Education Welfare Act, 2000
- Equal Status Act, 2000
- The Equality Act, 2004
- Circular Letter M 20/04 (DES)
- The Education for Persons with Special Needs, 2004
- Children First Act, 2015
- Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 2017

Objectives

- That the health, safety and welfare of our students is safeguarded by ensuring that reasonable care has been taken in the nature of the excursion chosen, the level of supervision provided, the venue, the means of transportation, the demands on the physical resources of the students, having regard to their age and capacity, and the dangers to which they may be exposed.
- That staff are aware that the degree of care required of them should be that of a “careful parent” which would vary with the circumstances and the age of the students.
- That students gain maximum educational benefit and enjoyment from all tours/outings.

Scope of School Excursions Policy

The term ‘school excursion’ covers all expeditions off the school premises excluding activities where students are off school premises without staff supervision. This policy is to be implemented by all members of staff who organize such excursions and is applicable to all students - and their parents/guardians - who are participating in these activities.

The Code of Behaviour of Catholic University School applies to all students of Catholic University School and relates to all school activities both during and outside of normal school hours; it applies both on and off the school grounds. The Code of Behaviour, therefore, in all its detail applies to all outings and excursions, whether or not they involve an overnight stay.

Junior and Senior Cup Matches are an exception as, although they are a school related activity, on these occasions the school closes. Students are expected to adhere to the Code of Behaviour whilst travelling to / from the venue and whilst attending the match.

Procedures to be followed by all Staff Organising School Excursions

School excursions have considerable educational value. However, they must be planned and organised in a way that causes least disruption to the day-to-day routine of the school.

Day Excursions

Day Excursions may take place during the school day or may extend beyond normal school hours.

Any teacher planning to organise a day excursion or any non-sporting outing during class time, must first inform the Principal and Deputy Principal of the

intended date, at the earliest possible convenience, in advance of the proposed date. The excursion must be approved by the principal.

As a courtesy to colleagues, full details, including date, time and names of participating students must be made available to staff by the organising teacher at least two days before the event.

Sporting activities that are scheduled during class times must be agreed with the Principal/Deputy Principal in advance and details of the students involved made available to staff by the organising teacher at least 2 days in advance of the event.

On all day excursions there must be an appropriate ratio between the number of students and the number of staff traveling. This ratio will vary depending on the nature of the excursion and the age of the students travelling.

Day excursions may involve a financial cost for the student. For example, a fee may be charged to cover the cost of transportation to/from sporting events.

All students going on any excursion which is expected to extend beyond normal school hours, excluding sports matches, must return permission forms signed by parents/guardians to the teacher in charge, before the outing takes place. Students who have not returned permission forms may not participate in the excursion. Supplies of the permission forms are available from the teacher in charge. Staff should inform parents / guardians of contact details in case of emergency.

Students engaging in school sports outside of school hours must return permission forms, that allow attendance at matches and training on an ongoing basis.

For excursions that extend beyond normal school hours, it is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure that arrangements are in place for their son's journey to/from the school.

The organising teacher must keep a record of the nature of the excursion and expenses and all monies collected. A careful note should be kept of any monies paid by students for the excursion. Cheques should be made out to the College and not to the organising teacher. Monies should be handed in to the school Bursary.

Students who have a history of inappropriate behaviour may be excluded from day excursions.

An Incident Report Form must be completed for all accidents or incidents which may have occurred on the excursion. Examples of reportable incidents include accidents, bullying, persistent lateness at the rendezvous point; not staying with the group; rudeness to teachers/staff; serious breach of school rules, particularly in relation to alleged or proven substance or alcohol abuse.

Sporting Outings

Each team manager is responsible for taking a properly equipped first-aid kit to his/her match. If a minor accident occurs the player will be treated on the spot. Anything deemed a major or potentially threatening injury will necessitate a doctor or an ambulance being called.

All accidents/injuries must be recorded in the Accident Report Book which is located in the Bursary and a copy attached to the student's file.

If a student is excused, with written permission, from all or part of a sporting outing the teacher must be informed in the normal manner. Where necessary the Head of Sport will organise transport to and from matches using a recognised bus/coach company.

At least two adults will travel with a team, unless due to exceptional circumstances this is not possible.

If a match happens to run into out of school hours or at the weekend, it is the responsibility of the parents/guardian to organize collection of their child from Catholic University School.

If parents/guardians want to bring their child home from a match they must inform the teacher in charge of the group.

Sports excursions which involve an overnight stay are compliant with the below section.

(C) Overnight Expeditions or excursions abroad

Other excursions may be over-night expeditions or of longer duration. These may be co-curricular activities organised by subject departments, or excursions arranged for Year Groups.

The staff/student ratio will be appropriate to the number of students participating, their age group and the nature of the excursion.

Parents/guardians will be notified, in advance, of all excursions and tours and they should sign the appropriate consent form. In this way parents, students and teachers enter into a partnership promoting good and appropriate behaviour at all times.

School Tour:

A school tour is defined as any group travel involving at least one overnight stay. The school will only use the services of licensed tour operators/travel agents

when organizing excursions outside the island of Ireland. In general, the ratio of teachers to students is 1:8 though different circumstances may influence the actual ratio.

1. Organisation and Approval:

The Tour Leader will be expected to ensure that the tour is conducted in accordance with agreed standards. The designated school tour will, in advance of application to the Board, discuss with the principal the proposed destination/dates. Factors involved in preliminary discussions include:

- a) Educational Value.
- b) Price and Overall Value for Money.
- c) Suggested Itinerary.
- d) Safety of Location/Established structure in place to cope with school groups.

At this stage, an application to proceed with the tour will be made to the Board of Management. In circular letter M20/04 the Department of Education and Science has devolved to Boards of Management the authorisation to grant approval for educational tours by school groups both inside and outside the State subject to a number of criteria. A general outline of the tour, including travel dates, tour company details, travel insurance, the total tour price and the general tour itinerary, should accompany the request for permission.

The Board of Management will consider the following when reaching its decision.

- The appropriateness of the proposed excursion in terms of DES Circular M20/04.

- The staffing arrangements for the excursion.
- The financial controls in place for the excursion.

The tour leader should put together a tour team as soon as possible. The tour team may include teaching staff, special needs assistants, or other staff. At this early stage, it is essential that a number of teachers commit to participation so that a core group may share the planning involved. Duties to be undertaken by the tour team may include the following: (a) Tour Finances (tour leader), (b) Passports, (c) EHIC Form (European Health Insurance Card), (d) Contact Details/Medical Conditions and (e) Room Allocation. A definite commitment from all participating teachers will be required in advance of finalising preparations for the excursion. Selection of teachers to accompany students will be at the discretion of Tour leader and Principal.

Once finalised the principal will furnish the tour leader with a letter of introduction for hotels, museums etc.

2. Selection of Students/Application Procedures:

A meeting will be held for the relevant students who may wish to go on the proposed school tour. A letter will be given to the students with brief details of

destination/itinerary/estimated price (dependent on ultimate uptake)/payment dates etc.

In addition, application forms will also be distributed to all those who are interested in applying for the tour. This letter aims to establish level of interest and does not in itself constitute an offer of a place on the tour.

The Tour Leader and Deputy Leader will now examine the application forms and decide which students are to be offered a position on the school tour. They will consult and meet with the principal to discuss the behavioural record of the relevant group. Other staff members of the school may be consulted on which students are or are not allowed to go on the school tour, but the tour leader and principal will have final say. At this stage some students may be excluded due to their behavioural record.

Where there is over-subscription of eligible students, the students to be offered a position will be decided by lottery.

A meeting of those students who have been granted permission to travel will be called where they will be given a letter outlining specific dates to pay non-refundable deposits. A student will not secure a place on the tour if the deposit is not paid.

The tour leader may require parents/ guardians to attend an information meeting prior to the excursion. If such a meeting is deemed necessary or desirable it may be stipulated that non-attendance without prior notification will result in permission to travel being revoked from the relevant student(s).

Students and parents/guardians will also be required to provide relevant personal and contact details, including passport details. Students and parents/guardians will be informed that any errors or subsequent changes to details will result in fees levied by the airline and are outside the control of the tour organiser or the travel company.

In accordance with Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Services (INIS) guidelines the parent(s)/guardian of each student who is to travel is required to submit a signed letter from the child's parent(s)/guardian giving consent for travel and providing his/her contact details.

3. Payment/Finance:

After paying the deposits students pay the remaining fees by dates and means outlined in the particular excursion's communications as drafted by the tour leader and approved by the principal.

All school tours travelling outside of the island of Ireland must be booked through a bonded licensed travel agent or tour operator from the approved list on

www.aviationreg.ie. Payments from students should be made out directly to the travel agent or tour operator.

A detailed record of all participating students and the amounts paid should be retained.

Parents should be informed as early as possible of the full cost associated with the excursion.

Any surplus remaining at the end of a tour will remain in the school tour account to be utilised in future tours.

4. Contact Information:

The tour leader must ensure that complete contact information is left with the principal/deputy principal during the tour for use in the event of an emergency. This should include:

- Names, addresses and home contact numbers of all those going on the tour.
- Full details of the itinerary, hotel addresses, phone numbers etc.
- A contact telephone number for each member of the tour team.

5. Expected Standard of Behaviour:

We at the Catholic University School have very high expectations of behaviour, and we expect such standards to be maintained during all extra-curricular activities.

Participation in a school tour is a huge vote of confidence in a student on behalf of the school and requires every student to act in a mature and responsible manner at all times.

The tour leader will meet with the students prior to departure and outline the Code of Behaviour.

School rules apply (except for uniform) and special emphasis is put on the following:

- Students must not smoke, drink alcohol or take illegal drugs. In the event that the tour leader suspects that a student possesses items deemed unsuitable, a search of rooms or personal property (bags, suitcases etc.) may be made. Two members the tour team should carry out inspections. They should not have any contact with a student's clothing.
- Each student is responsible for his / her own property, e.g., luggage, money, etc. All personal belongings should be clearly marked. The school cannot accept responsibility for students' property.

- Students are expected to treat each other with respect. Fighting or abusive language will not be tolerated.
- Students are expected to follow instruction given by the tour leader or any of the accompanying teachers/staff for the duration of the excursion.
- Students are expected to behave in a mannerly and punctual way at all times and are expected to attend all organised activities and may not leave the tour group at any time unless agreed by the teachers.

Additional rules, particular to an excursion, including dress code, may be stipulated by a tour leader. Any such rules will be clearly communicated to students and parents/guardians prior to travel. Acceptance of a place on a tour is deemed as acceptance of any such rules.

Sanctions for misbehaviour are the responsibility of the tour leader who may delegate the imposition of sanctions for minor misbehaviour to accompanying teachers / staff. Sanctions should be reasonable and appropriate to the nature and severity of the misbehaviour. The nature of these sanctions will be communicated to students and parents/guardians prior to commencement of the excursion.

If a sanction is being imposed it must be made clear to the student why it is being imposed. A student prevented from attending an activity must be supervised by a member of the tour team for the duration of the activity. Further sanctions may be imposed when the student returns to school.

If a student misbehaves in a serious manner where the health and safety of other students or teachers is jeopardised it may be felt appropriate to send a student home. In such a situation the student will be accompanied, and the parent/ guardian will be liable for the costs involved. Sanctions may also be implemented on return to school regarding such offences.

In the case of a serious/criminal incident (shop lifting, a violent attack etc.) the parents/guardians will be informed immediately and the matter will be handed over to the local police authorities. The principal/deputy principal must also be informed immediately of such incidents.

6. Exclusions subsequent to application:

Students who misbehave in a manner deemed serious by the school authorities may be deprived of their place on the tour. This is in the interest of safety to themselves and other students/staff. In such a case, refunds, depend entirely on the conditions of the travel company and depends on the actual date of cancellation of the place. In the case of a late exclusion and subsequent cancellation, a refund will not usually apply. It is important that the School Tour Leader highlights this point to students and parents/guardians before a student submits an application.

7. Supervision:

For the purpose of the smooth running of the tour the students may be divided into groups and a teacher leader will be appointed to each group.

DAY

Students will be accompanied by teachers throughout the excursion. However, it is usual that students are allowed free time for shopping, lunch etc. Students will only be left free in an area deemed suitable, and a prominent meeting place will be advised before the group breaks. All rules of the excursion apply during these free periods and students who misbehave will be sanctioned accordingly, as detailed above.

Mobile phone communication between the tour team and students will be done in accordance with the school's Student/Staff Communication Policy.

NIGHT

The tour leader should place teachers on a supervision rota for use in the various types of overnight accommodation used. Students will be made aware that corridors are being supervised. The travelling teachers will agree supervisions arrangements for corridors at night and wake up calls in the morning as required.

On return to the hotel each night students will go to their rooms. A check will then be made to ensure that everyone is in their designated room. A further check will be made after a reasonable duration. Any student found to be causing a nuisance and disturbing the sleep of others will be given a verbal warning. Persistent offenders may have sanctions imposed upon them.

8. Hotel Policy:

Hotels reserve the right to request a deposit from school groups. This is payable by students and is refundable on checkout. In the case of a particular room that is causing disturbance to adjacent (non-school-group) rooms, this room's deposit could be forfeited.

9. Insurance:

Comprehensive travel insurance is included in the tour price. Copies of this are available to parents.

All students will be required to ensure that they have a valid EHIC card prior to their departure.

10. Medical Care:

Parents will also be required to complete a form giving details of medical problems/medication being taken and will give authorisation to the tour leader or his/her nominee to act on their behalf in a medical emergency.

Each tour leader is responsible for taking a properly equipped first-aid kit on tour.

In the event of a medical emergency/dental emergency while on tour it may be necessary for a member of the tour team to act in *loco parentis*. In the event of an emergency parents/guardians will, if at all possible, be contacted first.

On return, all accidents/injuries must be recorded in the Accident Report Book which is located in the Bursary and a copy attached to the student's file. Where deemed necessary and in all cases of concussion the School Nurse must be informed.

11. Passport/Visa requirements:

The School Tour Leader will explain to the students that it is their responsibility to have their own valid passport ready prior to the departure date. The tour team will collect each student's passport once the international travel section of the outbound journey is complete. The passports will be re-distributed immediately prior to arrival at the airport for the return journey. Passports should be kept in the hotel safe while on the tour.

Visas may be necessary for the destination and some countries require them to be processed together. There may be an additional cost to secure a visa. Parents should be informed that students with non-EU passports may need visas for EU countries. It is important to impress upon parents that the onus is on them to ensure that their son has all the necessary up to date documentation well in advance of the tour.

The School Tour Leader will carry a list of all members in the group and a letter of consent for travel with the adult group leader from each minor's parent(s)/guardian(s), including contact details for the purpose of presentation to immigration officers.

12. Review and Evaluation:

On return to school, the School Tour Leader will give a general report on the tour to the school Principal.

On completion of any such excursion, records of dates, locations, lists of students participating, parental permission forms and staff involved will be retained by the school.

Pictures of the school tour should be displayed in the school building, put up on the school website and an account of the school tour with pictures submitted for publication in the school newsletter and annual.

Foreign Exchange Programmes

1. Organisation and approval

Foreign Exchange Programmes are primarily organised to enhance student fluency in Modern Foreign Languages. However, they can be initiated for other purposes, subject to approval by the Principal.

The teacher(s) organising the exchange will be expected to ensure that the programme is conducted in accordance with agreed standards. The proposed exchange will, in advance of application to the Board, be discussed with the Principal Factors involved in preliminary discussions include:

a) Destination and dates

- b) Educational Value.
- c) Price and Overall Value for Money.

2. Selection of Students / Application Procedures

Programmes should be open to all students of the relevant subject / language in a particular year group. Information meetings will be held for the relevant students and a letter will be given to the students with brief details of destination/programme/estimated price /payment dates etc. In addition, application forms will also be distributed to all those who are interested in applying for the programme. This letter aims to establish level of interest and does not in itself constitute an offer of a place on the programme.

If there is an oversubscription for a programme the selection of students may be chosen by lottery. Students' academic and behavioural record may also be taken into account. Where an oversubscription occurs, late applications will not be considered. The method of selection should be outlined in the letter to parents.

The facilitating teacher may require parents/ guardians to attend an information meeting prior to the exchange / homestay. If such a meeting is deemed necessary or desirable it may be stipulated that non-attendance without prior notification will result in admission to the programme being revoked from the relevant student(s).

Students and parents/guardians may also be required to provide relevant personal and contact details, including passport details. Where necessary, students and parents/ guardians will be informed that any errors or subsequent changes to details that result in additional costs will be the responsibility of the parents involved.

3. Payment / Finance

All costs and the payment of costs is the sole responsibility of the parents / guardians of the students participating in the programme. Payments may be made directly to a company or persons organising a programme. Alternatively, teacher(s) facilitating the programme may request that parents / guardians arrange travel and / or accommodation for their son. The decision on the payment process will be made by the teacher(s) facilitating the programme, in consultation with the Principal and the programme operator.

4. Contact Information

The facilitating teacher(s) will collect contact information from all parties involved and ensure that the contact information is communicated to relevant parties such as hosts, programme operators, parents etc.

5. Expected Standard of Behaviour

We at the Catholic University School have very high expectations of behaviour, and we expect such standards to be maintained during all extra-curricular activities.

Participation in an exchange / homestay programme is a huge vote of confidence in a student on behalf of the school and requires every student to act in a mature and responsible manner at all times.

The facilitating teacher(s) will meet with the students prior to departure and outline the high standard of behaviour expected.

The school's policies and procedures regarding behaviour and substance abuse apply, with due regard for the particular circumstance that exchange programmes present. In addition, students may be required by the facilitating teacher(s) to commit to engaging with the experience, activities positively. Programme organisers may stipulate their own rules and participation in the programme will be deemed acceptance of these rules. Students must also adhere to the rules of the family home they are staying in.

6. Safeguarding Measures

All individuals involved in the exchange must be compliant with the Child Safeguarding legislation and procedures of their jurisdiction. The organising teachers will ensure that confirmation is received from the host school that they are compliant with the child safeguarding legislation and procedures of their jurisdiction.

7. Insurance

Appropriate travel insurance must be arranged for programme participants. The exact nature of this arrangement may vary from programme to programme.

All students will be required to ensure that they have a valid EHIC card prior to their departure.

8. Medical Care

Parents will also be required to complete a form giving details of medical problems/medication being taken and will give authorisation to the host parents to act on their behalf in a medical emergency.