



## **CAMPING/ OVERNIGHT EXCURSION POLICY**

### **Rationale:**

**The school's camping / overnight excursion program enables students to further their learning and social skills development in setting outside the regular classroom. Camps will have an educational purpose which may be; cultural, environmental, self-developmental, team and relationship building or recreational outdoor emphasis and are an important aspect of the educational programs offered at our school.**

### **Aims:**

- To provide all children with the opportunity to participate in a planned camping/overnight excursion program
- To provide opportunities for shared experiences to reinforce and develop relationships
- To reinforce and extend classroom learnings and to expose student to authentic learning experiences out of a regular classroom
- To provide a program that delivers skills and knowledge that may lead to a lifelong involvement in recreational pursuits
- To provide a program that promotes self-esteem, resourcefulness, independence, leadership, judgement, cooperation and tolerance.

### **Implementation:**

- A camp is defined as any activity involving at least one night's accommodation, including sleep overs at school.
- The whole school camping and overnight excursion program will be developed and planned by relevant leadership and curriculum based decision makers
- School Council will ensure that all school camps are maintained at a reasonable and affordable cost and comply with all DEECD requirements.
- Parents must be given adequate notice to help plan for the financial and organisational considerations involved in camps. Parents will be notified of the exact costs and other relevant details of individual camps as soon as practicable.
- Parents experiencing financial difficulty, who wish for their children to attend camp, will be required to discuss their individual situation with the Principal / Business Manager. Decisions relating to alternative payment arrangements will be made by the Principal / Business Manager on a case-by-case basis.
- All families will be given sufficient time to make payments for individual camps. Children whose Parents have not paid deposits by the due date, who do not make full payment by the due date, or who have not made alternative arrangements with the Principal will not be eligible to attend.
- Any family who has not met the required payment for any previous camp will be unable to participate in the camping program until the outstanding payment is finalised.

### **School camps are an outdoor education activity and as such, are subject to specific planning and approval guidelines.**

School Council is responsible for approval of all overnight excursions; camps; interstate and overseas visits; excursions requiring sea or air travel; excursions involving weekends or vacations; and adventure activities

At least 10 weeks prior to the commencement of any detailed planning relating to a proposed school camp, the Teacher in Charge must familiarise themselves with the Department's Safety Guidelines for Education Outdoors website.

At least 10 weeks prior to the proposed camp date, the teacher in charge must meet formally with the principal, to present the principal with a planning summary, to discuss the proposed camp. The Principal will then consult with Admin and Leadership groups before giving approval to proceed with planning.

If the principal's approval is granted, detailed planning should commence using the DEECD APPROVAL FORM. This must include research about the approved camps register, a risk assessment and may require a site visit.

When organising a camp or excursion the teacher in charge will consider and minimise bushfire risk. Merbein P-10 College will only allow students to travel to or through high risk bush fire areas after consultation with the CFA and weather authorities. Principals may need to cancel excursions at short notice on days of extreme fire danger or total fire ban. On such days, the DEECD Emergency Management Unit liaises with fire authorities to obtain up to date information for communication to schools that may be affected by wildfire, including schools that may have students attending camps or other venues in areas affected by wildfire.

Alternate camping / excursion arrangements may be made for a cancelled camp after consultation between schools, families, venues and activity providers (where applicable). Families may withdraw from the new camp and receive a refund when accommodation and activity providers refund the money paid by the school for the initial camp.

If an excursion is not cancelled, special fire safety precautions will be required.

The school only uses residential campsites accredited by the *'Australian Camps Association'* or the *'National Accommodation, Recreation & Tourism Accreditation Program (NARTA)'* for overnight camps.

At a time at least 4 weeks prior to the camp departure and prior to seeking School Council approval for the camp, organising staff are required to meet again with the principal and present him/her with all documentation, including the completed School Council approval proforma and all attachments, ensuring that time permits for the matter to be placed on a School Council agenda and, if approved, that the online Notification of School Activity form then be submitted three weeks prior to the activity.

When presenting information to School Council, the Teacher in Charge must be aware that Council will consider the following and should use this as a guide or checklist:-

- Have a clear purpose of the camp and its connection to student learning
- Updates of student numbers need to be made to leadership when changes from the original estimates are known
- A list of teachers attending is negotiated with the daily org and leadership
- Ensure staff members attending have the competence to provide the necessary supervision of students throughout the camp in the activities planned and the camp environment
- Ensure an appropriately trained member of staff is able to provide first aid
- Ensure there is appropriate gender representation with supervising teachers
- Ensure staff members who are not registered teachers have completed a Working with Children Check and been approved by school council

- Ensure the location of staff and students throughout the camp including during travel is documented. (Include maps and supervision plans)
- A record of telephone contacts for supervising staff accompanying the camp is taken and a copy left at school
- A record of the names and family contacts for all students and staff available is taken and a copy left at school
- Copies of the parental consent and confidential medical advice forms for those students on the camp available at the school and on Camp
- A copy of the completed School Council approval proforma (including all attachments) been submitted and approved 3 weeks prior to the camp so that the online Notification of School Activity form can be submitted
- School Council requires that students only travel on buses fitted with seatbelts
- The school will provide a mobile phone for all camps
- The Canteen staff must be informed at least one week in advance of the excursion of the number of students who will be absent from school on that day

• Adventure activities are those that involve greater than normal risk such as; base camping, bush-walking, canoeing, snow activities, orienteering, cycling, horse riding, rock climbing and abseiling, challenge ropes courses, swimming (other than school swimming programs), surf activities, sailboarding, and similar activities. School Councillors may not have detailed knowledge of adventure activities. In such instances organising staff should consult the adventure activities website, or seek advice from peak bodies or skilled and experienced staff with recent experience instructing the activity to satisfy Council's requirements.

Emergency management plans are to be developed when adventure activities are being undertaken

#### **Camp Leadership**

While school camps are a team activity requiring the cooperation and common-sense of all participants, it is the Teacher in Charge who oversees the operations of the camp, takes charge of events, makes key decisions and accepts ultimate responsibility for the camp.

#### **Student Behaviour / Sickness on Camp**

Only children who have displayed sensible, reliable behaviour at school will be invited to participate in the camping program. Parents will be notified if a child is in danger of losing their invitation to participate in a camping experience due to poor behaviour at school. If the unsatisfactory behaviour continues, the child will then be excluded from camp. The decision to exclude a student will be made by the Principal or delegate, in consultation with the Teacher in Charge.

If a child exhibits behaviour that is considered unacceptable or they become unwell while on camp parents will be contacted and consulted and may be requested to collect their child from camp. The Teacher in Charge will make this decision.

Costs incurred for the child to return home from the camp will be the responsibility of the parent.

- The primary references that must be consulted when considering all camps is the Safety Guidelines for Outdoor Education Activities website:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/schooloperations/edoutdoors/default.htm>

as well as the Vic Govt Schools Reference Guide 4.4.2.2 – Student Safety & Risk Management.

- To be read in conjunction with the "Excursions" policy.

#### **Evaluation:**

This policy will be reviewed annually at the conclusion of the school's camps program, and as part of the school's three-year review cycle.

**This policy is new in May 2015. To be reviewed in 2018**