**School Tour Policy St Declan’s College**

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***Roll No 60491L***

***INTRODUCTION AND AIMS***

St Declan’s College is committed to incorporating educational visits into its curriculum, providing that they will enhance student’s relevant understanding and experience and are seen as a valuable addition to the regular school experience. The aim of a school tour is to provide an educational, cultural, social and personal experience for everyone involved.

Educational trips 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 social skills. Tours also enhance the collaborative relationships between staff and students and foster positive communication across classes and year groups. Educational visits provide rich experiences that cannot be created in school and many students will cherish them for a long time to come.

**Rationale**

Tours must be consistent with the rationale as specified by the Department of Education and Science in Circular Letter M 20/04. All reasonable efforts will be made to satisfy the criteria contained in this circular.

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.

St Declan’s College exists to provide an effective and broad education to its students. It provides an academic education while also recognising that exposure toa variety of experiences and cultures is part of a holistic education.

**Objectives**

* To assist staff in the planning of tours so that they are aware of all necessary precautions to provide for the health and safety of staff and students.
* To ensure that tours are organised efficiently and that the standard of supervision is within the guidelines and standards set by the Department of Education and Science.
* To clarify expectations of behaviour and to outline the conditions whereby a student may be refused permission to be included on a trip.
* To involve all members of the school community in ratifying this policy.

**Proposal Stages:**

It is recommended that one teacher be nominated as Tour Leader who will be expected to ensure that it is conducted in accordance with agreed standards. He / She will approach the Principal with the tour proposal.

Factors involved in preliminary discussions may include:

a)                Destination

b)                Educational Value

c)                 Price and Overall Value for Money

d)                Suggested Itinerary

e)                Staff Availability/Interest:  Selection of teachers to accompany students will be at the discretion of Tour leader and Principal. We always endeavour to have a teacher student ratio of 1:10.

**Advertising Places:**

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.

The Tour Leader will examine the application forms and decide which students are to be offered a position on the school tour. If necessary they will consult and meet with the Principal, Year Head (s) and Tutors to discuss the behavioural record of a specific student.

If the number of students applying to go on the trip exceeds the number of places available, each application form will be numbered and the successful candidates will be selected through random number selection.

It is the policy of St Declan’s College, not to discriminate against any student. Every application will be given due consideration and the following criteria will apply when considering an application –

* Previous behavioural record
* Health and Safety of each individual student
* Health and Safety of the group of students.
* Health and Safety of the accompanying staff.
* When a student requires special considerations re accommodation or transport a reasonable effort will be made to provide these.
* When a student requires individual supports a reasonable effort will be made to provide these.
* If it is not possible to meet these special requirements it will be necessary to refuse an application.
* Successful students will be informed on how and when to pay their **non-refundable** deposit online (between €100 – €150). A student will not secure a place on the tour until the deposit is paid. Receipts will be issued by the tour company as payments are made.
* A photocopy of each student’s passport must be given to the group leader
* **Students will also be informed that any subsequent name change will result in fees levied by the airline, and are outside the control of the tour organiser or the travel company.**
* **Should a student decide to withdraw from the tour they will be subject to financial penalties as per the tour operator’s policy. The Tour Leader has no control over this.**

**Subsequent Payments:**

Students will receive a letter from the tour organiser with a suggested payment schedule. They will be expected to pay on or before each assigned date. The online payment system allows for flexibility in this regard and payments can be made as and when it best suits parents.

All monies will therefore be paid directly to the School Tour Company. The balance of cost is usually due 6 weeks in advance of school tour.

**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.**

**Criteria for exclusion**may include: persistent minor breaches of the school’s Code of Behaviour; suspensions arising from major breaches of the school’s Code of Behaviour; any drugs/alcohol/smoking related suspensions; students who have shown themselves to be unwilling or unable to take instruction. In all cases the frequency, seriousness and how recently breaches of the Code of Behaviour took place will be factors.

**Pre-Tour Meeting**

A meeting will be held in advance of the tour at which a parent/guardian of each participant must attend. Attendance at this meeting is extremely important, as the main emphasis of the meeting is health and safety. At this meeting a presentation on all aspects of the tour will be made to the parents/guardians and the parents/guardians will get an opportunity to meet with the School Tour Leader and the other teachers involved. The following issues will be examined and discussed:

* Detailed Itinerary
* Extra Costs
* Contact Numbers
* Medical Issues- full disclosure of conditions and medications
* Expected Standard of Behaviour
* Rooming arrangements.
* Supervision

**Supervision**

**Behaviour**

Teachers and other designated adults supervising the trip are in loco parentis and therefore have the responsibilities and rights of a prudent parent. Health and Safety, Child Protection and Extracurricular policies also apply to supervision on trips. Teachers give up their free time voluntarily and students should show their appreciation of this by co-operating fully with those teachers.

Students are expected to behave in a courteous, co-operative and considerate manner. They must abide by the teacher’s decisions and directions in all matters. The school’s code of behaviour applies on any school trip in addition to the particular code of behaviour to any trip. The full penalties for breaching either code will apply on the trip and/or upon return to school depending on which is most applicable and practical

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

* **DAY** – Students will be accompanied by teachers throughout the trip.  However, it is usual that students are allowed free time for shopping, lunch etc.  These free periods cannot be predicted in advance on a general basis as each tour’s components will vary.  Students will only be left free in an area deemed suitable, and a prominent meeting place will be advised before the group breaks. Students, who misbehave, deviate from the recommended area, purchase or consume alcohol, cigarettes or drugs, do so entirely at their own risk and will face full rigour of school rules/laws of the destination country.
* Should a teacher suspect breach of regulations he/she has the right to ask the student to empty pockets/ baggage /containers/items of clothing to ascertain if illicit articles/substances are present. Staff may carry out an inspection of rooms or personal property with the student present if there are reasonable grounds for concern for safety or use/possession of a banned substance etc.
* Students must at all times carry the number of the school mobile phone in case they get lost, need help etc.  They should also carry their own (switched on and with sufficient credit) phone during free time in case teachers need to contact them.

**NIGHT** –

* On return to the hotel each night students will go to their rooms.  They will be given a specific curfew. A check will then be made to ensure that everyone is in their designated room.
* A number of further checks will be made throughout the night. However students will be expected to follow tour rules and remain in their rooms.
* Any breaches will be dealt with at the discretion of the tour coordinator. Parents/ Guardians will be contacted if necessary.

**Hotel Deposit**

Hotels reserve the right to request a deposit from school groups (usually €20 per person). This is payable by students and is refundable on checkout if their rooms pass inspection. Students are asked to report any damage in their rooms on arrival so as to avoid issues on checkout.

***Insurance***

Standard travel insurance is included in the tour price. All parents/guardians will be given information on the EHIC form and they must take responsibility for processing this form and ensuring that students have a valid EHIC card prior to their departure which is always requested when seeking medical care in EU countries. 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.

**Collection of Passport**

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 leader and the deputy leader will collect each student’s passport prior to departure. The passports will be distributed and collected at the airport and should be kept in the hotel safe while on the tour.

**After the Tour**

On return to school, the School Tour Leader will give a written report on the tour to the school Principal, outlining the achievements of the tour and any difficulties or problems which arose during the course of the tour. A written evaluation may also have to be completed for the tour operating company.

Pictures and student account of the school tour will be put up on the school website.

**Contact Information:**

The tour leader must ensure that complete contract information is left available in the school during the tour for use in the event of an emergency. This should include

1. A listing of all those taking part together with home contact details.
2. The itinerary to be followed and contact details.
3. A contact telephone number for the tour leader.

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

* Ø **The Education Act ,1998**
* Ø **The Education Welfare Act , 2000**
* Ø **Equal Status Act, 2000**
* Ø **The Equality Act, 2004**
* Ø **Circular Letter M 20/04 (DES)**
* Ø **Child Protection Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools, 2004**
* Ø **The Education for Persons with Special Needs, 2004**

***Policy Review:***

This Statement of Strategy was ratified by the Board of Management on:

Date: *8 March 2016*

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Ken Duggan

*(Chairperson)*

Review Date: May 2018