

St. Columba's College

Stranorlar



School Tours Policy
2025

1. General Policy

This School Tour policy is informed by the Dept. of Education and Skills Circular Letter M 20 /04, and by the JMB's Financial Guidelines for schools.

The Board of Management of St Columba's College supports and encourages school tours. It concurs with Department of Education guidelines which state that

"The objective of educational tours for schools should be that they be of benefit in the intellectual, cultural and social development of the pupils taking part in them and any activity, in connection with the tour, which is in conflict with this objective is to be avoided".

School tours are categorised under two headings: those which are demanded by the particular curriculum subject, such as field trips and those which deepen the student's knowledge and understanding of the cultural, social and physical aspects of the areas or countries visited. Student tours to develop linguistic skills or knowledge of history are a good example of the latter.

To reflect a world which is developing and changing, current educational philosophy recommends that students have first-hand experience wherever possible. School tours allow learning to extend beyond the walls of the classroom and as such are an integral part of a balanced educational process. School tours require good preparation and organisation to optimise the learning experience for students.

The Board would hope that all school trips and tours would have a beneficial effect on pupils, enhancing both their academic prowess and their social skills.

1.1 Rules, Requirements and Student Conduct

Students and parents/guardians shall be informed, in advance of the tour, of rules, regulations and special requirements of that tour.

The conduct of all pupils on a tour or school trip shall be subject to the school code of behaviour and associated policies.

2. Procedures for Tours

To ensure that schools are compliant with legislation, the following will apply:

- All school tours travelling outside of the Republic of Ireland must be booked through a bonded licensed travel agent or tour operator from the approved list on www.aviationreg.ie and
- All monies are to be paid directly to the registered tour company. Parents are responsible for making regular payments to the tour company and it is essential to keep track of all monies paid. It is vital that parents store reference numbers for all transactions. All records of payment should be forwarded to the school.
- The school will not accept any cash from parents/guardians, nor will the school make any payments on behalf of any party travelling on the tour.
- Schools are free to select any of the bonded tour operators from the approved list on www.aviationreg.ie

2.1. Board of Management approval shall be required for each tour in advance.

2.2. It is for the Principal to decide which teachers will organise the tour and accompany the pupils. Prior to departure, one teacher/teachers shall be appointed as tour leader(s). It is recognised that the organisation of or participation in any school tour is voluntary on the part of teachers.

2.3. Once the Board of Management has been appraised of all the details of a tour and has given its approval, then the tour leader(s) is/are fully empowered to proceed with the tour.

2.4. Adequate arrangements for supervision of all students should be arranged as well as appropriate insurance. The ratio of members of staff to students shall be one to ten, for trips or tours in Ireland or to Great Britain and one to eight for tours to the rest of Europe or farther afield. This ratio may be increased at the discretion of the Principal.

2.5. Students and parents/guardians shall be acquainted in advance of the tour with rules, regulations and special requirements of that tour. Parents/guardians shall be given an outline of the purpose, itinerary, dates and costs of the tour before a deposit is sought. Each student and her parent(s)/guardian(s) will be asked to sign their agreement to abide by the rules, regulations and additional requirements outlined in advance of departure by the tour leader.

2.6. A list of all students traveling must be submitted to the Principal prior to booking. Permission to travel will be at the discretion of the school authorities.

2.7. Students and parent(s)/guardian(s) shall acquaint themselves with the school's Code of Behaviour and linked school policies.

The Board of Management specifically wishes to draw attention to the following:

(i) Students are expected to follow the instructions of staff in the interests of the smooth running of the tour and the health and safety and wellbeing of all.

(ii) Students must stay with the tour group. A student may not wander off anywhere alone: students are advised to be in groups of not less than three at any time.

(iii) Students must not purchase alcohol, drugs or tobacco products for any purpose at any stage of the tour, even if they have reached the legal age for purchasing same in the particular country.

(iv) The use of/possession of alcohol or other non-medically prescribed drugs by students on a tour is absolutely forbidden.

(v) In addition to the Code of Behaviour, students must adhere to the law of the country which they visit. In the event of a breach of this, due process of law will follow.

2.8. Parent(s)/guardian(s) shall be required to sign a consent form which will allow for medical treatment to be given in the event of injury/illness and where it is not possible to contact them in the time available. In the event of accident or injury, medical opinion will be sought immediately and best practice will be followed. Parent(s)/guardian(s) will be contacted as soon as is practically possible.

2.9 Student Medical History

Any information about a pupil which may be deemed relevant such as allergies, serious medical problems or special needs should be provided by parents / guardians and potential problems and responsibilities highlighted in advance of any school trip.

Arrangements regarding a student's attendance on a school trip must be in line with health and safety guidelines to ensure the safety and protection of both student and staff. In some circumstances it may be necessary for a parent to accompany their child.

Underlying medical conditions need to be notified to the insurance company by the parent/guardian as supplementary payments may be needed to obtain full insurance.

Any prescribed medication required by a student must be clearly labelled and stored securely with the tour leader unless alternative arrangements have been made with parental consent. A second spare set of medication should also be provided. All medical and medication issues should be discussed with the tour leader in advance of the trip.

In the event of an emergency, the parents/guardians will always be contacted at the earliest opportunity.

In the event of an accident or emergency, where it is not possible to contact parents, guardians or next of kin, tour leaders will act on medical advice presented on the ground and information shared by the parents prior to the tour. Details of emergency contacts are to be included in the student's information form.

Any/all medical costs (including transportation and prescription charges) paid by the tour leader are to be repaid by parents/guardians within a period of three weeks after the return of the trip. On occasion it may be necessary to request immediate payment from a parent

The school highly recommends that all students avail of the pupil personal insurance scheme provided at the start of the academic year.

2.10. Emergency Procedures

In the event of a serious incident/accident the school's procedures shall be followed. A report of the incident/accident and the decision(s) taken shall be put in writing as close to the event as is reasonable.

The tour leader will liaise with the Principal as necessary.

The school Code of Behaviour re use of mobile phones applies on all school trips. However, on foreign/overnight trips, students will be allowed use of their phones during the hours agreed in advance by the Principal, staff, students and parents.

Parent(s)/guardian(s) shall be required to give details of phone numbers for contact in the event of an emergency on a twenty-four-hour basis for the duration of the tour. The school mobile telephone will be supplied to the tour leaders for school tours. The number of the phone will be given to parent(s)/guardian(s) and students prior to departure for use in case of emergency.

2.11. Parent(s)/guardian(s) shall be requested to inform the tour leader in writing of any special dietary requirements, medical needs or medication required by their child while on the tour.

2.12. Students on tours within the European Union shall be required to have a completed E111 form and a valid passport.

2.13 Conduct of students and discipline

1. The school code of behaviour will apply at all times throughout any school trip. School sanctions as outlined in the code of behaviour will apply.
2. Students should treat people with respect throughout the trip. This includes peers/ teachers / organisers/ leaders / drivers / tour guides and anybody they may encounter. Students are expected to work together in the spirit of inclusion reflected in our school ethos and for the benefit of all attendees.
3. No smoking, vaping or inhalation of any substance, no alcohol or any other illegal substances are to be carried, purchased or used. This is in accordance with normal school policy. There will be no exceptions. These are deemed as serious breaches of the code of behaviour.
4. Students will be held responsible for the condition of their rooms. Each room will be checked upon entry and students will be liable for any subsequent damage.
5. Students must never leave their group without permission and must observe all curfews.
6. It is expected that students' use of mobile phones will be responsible and in line with the school's Acceptable Use Policy. Posting/sharing photos of others (students or staff members) without their consent is expressly forbidden. The tour group leader may have a specific mobile phone use policy depending on the location and nature of the trip.
7. Students should respect any cultural, environmental or social sensitivities or hazards that may be encountered when on tour.
8. Students take personal responsibility for their health and safety by making themselves aware of emergency exits, fire assembly points and firefighting equipment. Students must also wear seat belts when provided.
9. A meeting with the students, parents/guardians and the staff going on the tour must take place before the tour where expectations for the tour will be outlined. A meeting of the staff going on the tour should take place before the tour so that there is a clear understanding of the itinerary, expectations and roles. It is an expectation having accepted a place on this trip that parents and students will attend all meetings.

2.14 Consequences

1. Any student who does not follow the rules of the trip as per the school's code of behaviour and specific rules outlined at the information evening will be subject to a level of disciplinary action in line with the school's code of behaviour.

Parents of the students in question will be informed at the earliest opportunity and within a reasonable timeframe.

2. Should it be necessary that sanctions be applied by the tour leaders while travelling, the nature of these sanctions will be communicated to students and parents/guardians prior to commencement of the excursion

If additional sanctions are required upon return to school this will be imposed by school management/relevant year head in consultation with the tour leader.

3. Serious breaches of discipline may result in a student being sent home and parents/guardians will have to cover the expense. This will be done in consultation with the tour leader and the principal, the overall decision will rest with the principal.

The following is a list of activities that constitute serious misbehaviour. The list is not exhaustive and other behaviour/incidents may constitute unacceptable or serious misbehaviour.

- Use or possession of alcohol/illegal substances / cigarettes / vapes.
- Misuse of legal substances (solvents etc).
- Students in out of bounds areas at night.
- Serious and consistent disregard for the directions of the tour leaders.
- Disruptive behaviour on plane, boat, coach or in the hotel/hostel.
- Theft/criminal damage to property of others.
- Engagement in sexual activity.

4. Should a student be part of a group or a bystander in the group engaging in the above behaviours or have knowledge of same without sharing with the tour leaders this is also considered a serious violation of the rules and will be dealt with accordingly.

Please note:

All relevant school policies and Department circulars will apply to all trips and tours undertaken in the school's name including D.E.S. circular M20/04, Code of Behaviour, Anti-Bullying Policy, Substance Abuse Policy and Acceptable Use Policy

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed periodically by the Board of Management.

This Policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 12th March 2025.

Signed P. J. McGowan Date 12/3/25

Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed [Signature] Date 12/03/2025

Principal

Review Date: March 2027