



## ***URSULINE COLLEGE SLIGO SCHOOL TOUR POLICY***

### ***Mission Statement –***

***The Ursuline College is a school where students are educated, in partnership with parents, in a Catholic and caring community, where each individual is respected as unique, where every aspect of the person is developed, and where they are prepared to take their place in society as responsible citizens***

### **INTRODUCTION AND AIMS**

Ursuline 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. They should promote the mission statement of the school and form an integral part of a student's journey through school. 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 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.

Below is an outline of advised procedures regarding the effective organisation of a tour. All points are valid for international tours. For Irish tours including overnight stays emphasis is primarily on points D and E and relates to parent meeting and expected behaviour.

### **A) DESTINATION/DATE**

It is recommended that one teacher be nominated as Director or Tour Leader who will be expected to ensure that it is conducted in accordance with agreed standards. The nominated school tour leader (who should then appoint a deputy leader) will in advance of application to the board/publicity to students 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) Staff Availability/Interest
- e) Safety of Location/Established structure in place to cope with school groups.

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. A definite commitment from all participating teachers will be required eight weeks before the trip to facilitate airline ticket/rooming arrangements and a special meeting will take place for all teachers involved to discuss and plan such issues. Selection of teachers to accompany students will be at the discretion of Tour leader and Principal.

The recommended ratio of teachers to students is 1:8. though different circumstances may influence the actual ratio.

At this stage, an application to operate 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.

### **B) 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. As part of their application a student and parent/guardian agreed and signs the form which agrees that priority will be given to students with an excellent record of behaviour (since enrolling into Ursuline College)

The 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 and Year Head (s) (of a particular year group) to discuss the behavioural record of the relevant group. Other staff members of the school will have no say into which students are or are not allowed to go on the school tour. At this stage some students may be excluded due to behavioural record.

A list of names will be put up or a letter sent out to their home addresses will be given offering a place on the tour. Those students are then given a specific time and place to take in their non-refundable deposit (usually between €100 - €150) to the school tour leader or the deputy leader. **A student will not secure a place on the tour if the deposit is not paid.** All students will be given a receipt, acknowledging the deposit paid. The passport name of the student must also be given and both the deposits and names will then be forwarded to the travel company. 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.

### **C) PAYMENT**

After paying the deposit students pay instalments over the remaining months. Students can either pay in cash or cheque (payable to the Ursuline College) and will always receive a receipt upon payment, which they are to retain as proof of record of payment.

All monies will be lodged to the School Tour Account (in NIB Sligo ASAP and subsequently paid to tour operator/bus company at relevant times. Balance of cost is usually due 8 weeks in advance of school tour. All monies paid out for the tour will be subject to approval by the School Tour Leader and School Principal.

### **D) PRE – TOUR MEETING FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS**

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 Principal, the School Tour Leader, the Deputy Leader and the other teachers involved. The following issues will be examined and discussed:

- a) Detailed Itinerary
- b) Extra Costs (e.g. lunch not included, recommended spending money etc.)
- c) Contact Numbers
- d) Expected Standard of Behaviour (see below).
- e) Rooming arrangements.
- f) Supervision (see below).
- g) Insurance (see below)

### **E) EXPECTED STANDARD OF BEHAVIOUR**

We at Ursuline College 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.

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

- a) Students should 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 bags/rooms may be made. In such a case, students will be asked to empty contents themselves while a teacher observes.
- b) 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 pupil's property.
- c) Students are expected to treat each other with respect. Fighting or abusive language will not be tolerated. Pupils must show respect to all property that will be used over the school tour e.g. hotel property, the tour bus, etc.
- d). Students should obey without question, instruction given by the tour leader or any of the accompanying teachers of for the duration of the trip.
- e). 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.
- f). Respect for and compliance with local customs and laws, particularly when travelling abroad.

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 a teacher will accompany the student, and the parent/guardian will be liable for the potentially substantial costs involved. Sanctions may also be implemented on return to school regarding such offences. For less serious breaches of rules, parents may be contacted by phone where details will be given and full support requested.

### **F) 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.

### **G) SUPERVISION**

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

It is necessary to divide this section into two.

**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.

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) 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. 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 after which time teachers who have had an exhausting day will retire for the night. The hotel will contact teacher's rooms in the event that our students are causing a disturbance.

### **H) HOTEL POLICY**

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. In the case of a particular room that is causing disturbance to adjacent (non school-group rooms), this room's deposit could be forfeited.

### **I) INSURANCE**

Standard travel insurance is included in the tour price. Copies of this are available to parents at the pre tour meeting. Details of private health insurance will also be taken where available. All students will be given an EHIC form to complete and must take responsibility for processing this form and ensuring that they 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.

### **J). 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 four weeks before the departure date. The passports will be distributed and collected at the airport and should be kept in the hotel safe while on the tour.

### **K). AFTER THE SCHOOL 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, a financial statement 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 of the school tour should be put up on the school noticeboard and/or an account of the school tour with pictures submitted to the local newspapers. Pictures could also be put up on the school website.

### **L). 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...*

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