

# SCHOOLS' RISK CHECKLIST OVERSEAS EXCURSIONS

Overseas trips are offered by schools to enable students to participate in learning experiences outside of the usual classroom environment. As a consequence of not being in the classroom, new and unusual risks may be encountered and will need to be managed in order that students and staff remain safe.

This Risk Checklist is intended to assist schools in identifying risks and in establishing safe procedures for conducting overseas trips.

## **Planning**

- Has formal planning (including budget) for the trip been undertaken? Does planning comply with school requirements?
- Have trip objectives (educational or otherwise) been articulated?
- Does research of the intended destination confirm trip objectives can be met?
- Do you understand cultural norms for the destination(s) to be visited?
- Have you researched protocols relating to photography at the trip destination (e.g. permission to photograph minors, sensitive defence installations etc.)?
- Has checking included reference to the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade (DFAT) travel advisory site (<http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/>) ?
- Has the excursion been approved by appropriate school authorities?
- Determine the capabilities of students and their capacity to undertake planned activities.
- What external service providers will be required to enable successful completion of the trip? Have you checked:
  - Working With Children status of contractor staff;
  - Liability insurance coverage of contractors;
  - Service contractual arrangements (refer to school legal advisor, pay particular attention to any indemnity clauses)?

## **Application Process**

- Does the design of excursion application forms include sections for:
  - parental consent (attendance, transport arrangements, cancellation conditions);
  - medical advice forms to provide details of special medical needs of traveller (including medications and treatment options);
  - indemnity clauses (accepting responsibility for meeting medical costs)?
- Have parents and students been advised that the school reserves the right to approve or decline student attendance on the trip?
- Have student application forms been distributed and have they been received back within the nominated timeframes?
- Has responsibility been assigned for compilation of the role of students and staff (with colour photos) including their emergency contact details?
- Does the application form include provision for student agreement to comply with behavioural expectations?

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## Staffing

- In considering which staff should participate in the trip, has their relevant experience been taken into account (e.g. experience in travelling to the specific location, travelling with students etc.)?
- Do you have sufficient staff attending the trip for the number of students attending?  
Consider:
  - Minimum staff to student ratio of 1:10
  - Staff gender mix appropriate to the gender mix of the students
  - Sufficient staff to cater for the group being split for any reason, e.g. student being sent home
- Have all adults accompanying the trip been subject to Working With Children and/or Police checks?
- Have all supervising adults at the overseas location been subject to similar checks in their local country? Do we have evidence of those checks?

## Communication

- Has a communication plan for the trip been developed?
- What advance notice has been provided to parents and students so that they can plan their participation?
- Have parents been informed of:
  - trip objectives;
  - destination;
  - itinerary;
  - planned activities;
  - risks and proposed controls;
  - behavioural expectations;
  - cancellation conditions;
  - passport and visa requirements (plus copies of same and extra passport photos);
  - uniform and equipment requirements;
  - financial and other implications of withdrawing from the trip;
  - expected costs
- What are the expected methods of communicating while overseas:
  - staff to parents;
  - staff to school;
  - parents to students;
  - in an emergency;
  - mobile phones;
  - satellite phones?
- Do we have overseas contact details and have they been communicated to all stakeholders?

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## Risk Management

- Have you completed a comprehensive Risk Assessment of expected excursion risks (and associated controls), including (but not limited to):
  - specific “adventure” type activities;
  - travel and transport arrangements (including missed flights or trains);
  - communication;
  - child protection;
  - pastoral care;
  - accommodation;
  - medical emergency;
  - environment;
  - political environment (including civil emergency);
  - financial;
  - natural disasters (earthquake, extreme weather events)?

## Behavioural Expectations

- Have students been informed of behavioural expectations, including:
  - attire;
  - culture;
  - security;
  - photography protocols;
  - implications of breaches?
- Have staff members been informed of their behavioural expectations?

## Accommodation

- Have suitable sleeping arrangements been organised for students and staff? Factors to be considered include:
  - single gender;
  - private bathrooms;
  - homestay arrangements (suitable hosts, privacy, monitoring by accompanying teachers, emergency arrangements)

## Travel Arrangements

- Has a travel agent been engaged to help with the travel and accommodation bookings?
- Have passport and visa requirements been determined?
- Have overseas airfares been booked?
- Has in-country ground travel been booked, e.g. train, coach, private car?
- Do we have evidence that all travellers have current passports with appropriate visas for the trip?
- Where ground travel includes motor vehicles, what have we done to ensure that:

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- drivers are licenced;
- drivers are experienced in transporting students;
- drivers are familiar with the area being visited;
- vehicles are roadworthy;
- vehicles are insured (comprehensive and 3<sup>rd</sup> party equivalents);
- numbers of passengers per vehicle are appropriate?

### **Medical**

- Have we been provided with medical details by all travellers (both students and staff), e.g. asthma, anaphylaxis, food intolerances?
- Have we obtained professional advice of vaccinations, etc. required for the destination country(ies)? Have these requirements been communicated? Do we have documentary evidence of vaccinations obtained by all travellers?
- Have we prepared medical plans for all travellers with special needs as advised by means of medical advice forms?
- Do we have trained first aid staff on the trip?
- Do we have adequate first aid kits to take on the trip?

### **Money Matters**

- Has the cost of the trip been communicated with sufficient notice for family budgeting?
- Have travellers been advised to ensure that they have appropriate travel insurance in place? Do you have evidence that travel insurance has been purchased?
- Have travellers been advised what funds to take on the trip and the form in which it should be taken, e.g. foreign cash, credit/debit cards etc.
- What advice has been provided to travellers in relation to valuable equipment that they might wish to take, e.g. phones, iPads, cameras, computers, etc.?

### **Equipment**

- What uniform (if any) is required to be worn by participants?
- Has a clothing supplier been contracted to provide uniforms?
- Has equipment for the trip been identified and sourced? Examples may include:
  - mobile phones;
  - satellite phones;
  - cameras (movie and/or still);
  - medical / first aid kits;
  - computers;
  - GPS units and compasses;
  - sports equipment;
  - emergency beacons.

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## Emergency Management

- Have we completed planning of actions to be taken in an emergency, including:
  - medical;
  - civil disturbance;
  - student sent home for disciplinary reason;
  - staff or student returning home due to home based emergency?
- Have emergency arrangements (including contact details) been communicated to:
  - responsible school authorities;
  - parents;
  - students;
  - accompanying staff?

## Just Prior To Departure

- Confirm that up to date travel advice has been obtained from DFAT or some other reliable source (e.g. International SOS)
- Has the trip been registered with DFAT and the local embassy?
- Do we have colour copies of travellers' passports, visas and tickets?
- Do we have copies of medical and contact data for all travellers?
- Have the first aid kits been packed?
- Has equipment been packed?

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### **Other relevant material may be found at:**

BIS publications ([www.baptistinsurance.com.au](http://www.baptistinsurance.com.au)):

- Risk Information – Schools Overseas Trips
- Risk information – Schools Parental Permission Forms

State Education Authority websites

Christian Schools Australia website

Christian Education National website

Australian Association of Christian Schools website

Association of Independent Schools of Australia state websites

Catholic Education state websites