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POLICY ON EXCURSIONS

1. Introduction

School excursions form a very valuable part of the school programme. They provide learners with a variety of educational experiences outside the formal classroom setting. These opportunities, which encourage learning from the wider community, enrich their learning and broaden their worldview. Blessed Perfect Academy therefore supports the active involvement of staff and learners to participate in well planned off school site activities that are integrated with the learning programs. All activities conducted outside the relatively protective environment of the school site involve great risk. Therefore, particular attention must be given to ensure the safety and welfare off all excursion participants.

2. General Legal Considerations

Duty of care is the most important legal consideration when an excursion/trip is planned. Edducators are acting in the place of the parent (loco parentis) and are therefore expected to act like diligent and sensible parents. The duty of care owed to students applies whether the school excursion is held during school hours, after school, on the weekend or during school holidays. Thus edducators undertaking the responsibility for school excursions and educational visits are legally responsible for the learners in their care throughout the entire duration of the trip.

When an unofficial trip or, in other words, an activity not organised by the school, is undertaken voluntarily by a edducator, it should be made clear to the parents that the school can accept no responsibility for learners' safety. Edducators should therefore avoid unofficial trips and obtain the necessary approval from the school and educational authorities.

If a student is injured during an outing, it is firstly necessary to prove that there was a duty of care and that there was a *breach* in this duty by the edducator which did, in fact, cause the injury. A breach of duty of care is when one party fails to conform to the standard of care required by another.

Secondly negligence needs to be established through two important principles. The first principle, reasonable foresight, is the ability of the edducator to "reasonably foresee" dangers or risks which may cause harm or injury to the learners in their care. The second principle assumes that the edducator will take "reasonable precautions" to prevent harm and injury. However, edducators cannot anticipate every possible dangerous situation and therefore South African courts recognise that an injury can happen as a result of defective equipment or premises that were apparently safe and beyond the control of the school and edducators in charge.

3. Procedures

When excursions are planned the following steps must be followed:
Step 1: The principal must authorise a edducator to be in charge of an excursion.
Step 2: The edducator-in-charge must prepare the Excursion Information sheet, Annexure A for the proposed trip
Step 3: The principal must approve this information sheet.
Step 4: The edducator-in-charge must establish an excursion committee to be involved in the planning of the trip.
Step 5: The excursion committee must complete a checklist, Annexure B, which contains the following:

- Risk assessment
- Supervision strategies
- Information letter to parent and indemnity form
- Emergency response plan
- Briefing of learners and supervisory team members

Step 6: The edducator-in-charge must send out information letters, and indemnity forms, to parents.

3.1 Assessment of Risks

3.1.1. Assess the Environment:
The excursion committee must determine the suitability of the venue, relative to the learners' skills and experience, the planned activities, the supervision required and the necessary facilities needed (e.g. toilets; a suitable eating area etc.). The venue for an overnight stay must comply with health and safety standards.

3.1.2. Assess the Transport arrangements:
The excursion committee must ensure that:

- arrangements for the safe transportation of excursion participants have been made including allocating at least two educators and two parents to each bus;
- all arranged transport must be roadworthy and be fitted with safety belts
- the consent form indicates the details for transporting learners to and/or from the school/venue(s);
- a nominated member of the supervisory team must acknowledge the arrival and approve the departure of a learner where parents/guardians make their own transport arrangements to and/or from a venue;
- a nominated member of the supervisory team must be satisfied that appropriate arrangements are in place when a learner is required to leave an excursion prior to the scheduled time;
- the use of private and commercial vehicles must comply with the requirements of the current Road Traffic Act.

3.1.3. **Assess the learners' capacity**:
The excursion committee must:

- be satisfied that the excursion activities do not exceed the skill level of learners;
- be aware of learners' health care needs;

- reassess learners' capacity if any circumstances surrounding the excursion activity change. This includes any change in the condition of the environment, or in the medical fitness (e.g. conditions such as asthma or epilepsy) or capacity of the learners who are to undertake the activity;
- arrange alternative activities or extra support for those learners that do not have the prerequisite skills for the planned activity;
- consider cultural requirements; and
- make alternative arrangements for any learners not participating in an excursion.

3.1.4. Assess the skills of the trip supervisors:
Each excursion must have a supervisory team. There must be at least one edducator, parent or other adult for every 20 learners in primary schools. The trip/excursion committee must ensure that the supervisory team have appropriate experience, correct supervisor to learner ratio, knowledge and skills to identify and manage potential risks at any stage during an excursion.

Collectively, the supervisory team must have the skills to:
- identify a safe activity environment;
- render emergency care;
- monitor and respond to weather and environmental conditions before and during excursion activities
- monitor and assess the physical well being of the learners.

3.2 Establish Supervision Strategies
Supervision strategies determined by the supervisory team, must ensure that the safety and well being of learners is maintained at all times. It must address the circumstances where the learners are not in clear view of the supervisor(s).

Supervisory requirements for an excursion must be considered in accordance with the:
- age of the learners;
- experience and ability of the learners;
- learner's medical conditions or disabilities;
- type of activity to be undertaken;
- nature of environment

The edducator-in-charge must decide on a suitable system(s) of identification for excursion participants. Systems for identifying learners include the wearing of:
- school shirts
- uniforms
- school hats
- name tags

3.3 Provide information and seek consent
Parent/guardian consent is required for all excursions. Information must be provided to parents/guardians to enable them to make informed decisions about their children's participation in an excursion.
This information must include:

- the purpose of the excursion;
- date(s);
- time of departure and arrival, duration;
- activities to be undertaken;
- location of activity;
- learner contact arrangements during the excursion;
- transport arrangements;
- cost;
- supervision to be provided (staff/child ratio);
- staff action in case of an accident, injury or illness;
- special clothing or other items required.

This also provides them with the opportunity to exclude their children and helps to protect school personnel because parents have been made aware of the nature of the excursion. While written consent is necessary, it does not indemnify the school nor relieve supervisors of their duty of care responsibilities.

3.4 Emergency Response Planning

The trip/excursion committee must develop or obtain a response plan that will ensure the safety and welfare of the group or of a casualty during any emergency. Learners and supervisory team members must understand the emergency procedures, including emergency signals.
The response plan must include ready access to:

- the evacuation procedures of a building and, where appropriate, the location of emergency equipment;
- a communication method that will be employed (i.e. fixed telephone, mobile telephone, satellite phone or radio);
- a list of the names of participating learners and their parents/guardian contact telephone numbers;
- the health care forms of learners;
- relevant health information of supervisors; and
- a list of emergency numbers for appropriate medical care.

All excursions must be accompanied by a member of the staff who has undertaken first aid training. And an appropriately equipped first aid kit must be taken with on all excursions.

3.5 Brief Learners and Supervisory Team Members

All relevant information must be clearly communicated to learners and the supervisory team members prior to or during a trip/excursion. Topics that must be included are:

- emergency procedures;
- methods of communication;
- appropriate use of equipment;
- roles of supervisors
- the system for identifying learners and supervisors; and
- standards of acceptable behaviour.

4. Discipline

Students must behave appropriately at all times on excursions to ensure the safety of both learners and the supervisory team. The following must be taken in account:

- Edducators are responsible for learners (loco parentis) on excursions and have the usual authority to discipline learners.
- The school rules/ code of conduct are applicable 24 hours a day during a school trip.
- Additional rules that are specific to the excursion may be applied.
- The actions taken against learners who violate these rules must be acknowledged and understood.
- In the case of a learner committing a serious misdemeanour, the edducator-in-charge must call the principal immediately, so that a decision may be made as to what steps should be taken.

Annexure A: Checklist for excursion

Purpose of excursion:	
The educational purpose of the excursion is described:	
1. Assess the risks	
1.1 The environment	
The site has been assessed and is considered to be appropriate.	
1.2. The transport	
Arrangements have been made for safe transport of excursion participants	
1.3. The learners' capacity	
Excursion activities are suitable for the learners' capacity.	
Provision has been made for any learner with special needs.	
Up to date information regarding student health care.	
Alternative arrangements for any learners not participating in the excursion have been made.	
1.4. The skills of the supervisory team:	
Can identify and establish a safe activity environment.	
Can render emergency care.	
Can monitor the physical well being of the learners.	
Competence of external providers is established.	
2. Supervision strategies	
Supervision strategies have been established.	
Systems for identifying excursion participants have been established.	
3. Provide information and seek consent	
Parents/guardians of learners have been provided with full details of the excursion.	
Student participation is subject to receipt of the signed consent form.	
4. Emergency response plan	

An appropriate emergency response plan has been developed or obtained.	
Appropriate methods of communication, including emergency signals, have been developed.	
The edducator-in-charge has a list of names of participating learners, contact telephone numbers, medical information of learners and relevant health information of supervisors.	
5. Briefing of learners and supervisory team members	
Learners and supervisors have been fully briefed on responsibilities and obligations.	
6. Additional comments:	

This policy was adopted by the School Management on _____

This policy has been made available to school personnel and is readily accessible to parents and learners on request.

This policy will be reviewed and updated every year.

Signed_____ Date: _____
School Management

Signed_____ Date: _____
Principal

Signed_____ Date: _____
Educator Representative