



**Te Tāhuhu o
te Mātauranga**
Ministry of Education

Overseas school trips – supplementary guidance

Version 1.1

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Introduction

Guidance Purpose

This supplementary guidance provides more specific advice and best practice for schools taking overseas trips. The information should be used in conjunction with wider existing advice published, including but not limited to the following resources:

- [EOTC Safety Management – Education Outdoors NZ \(external link\)](#)
- [Guidelines for education outside the classroom - Ministry of Education](#)
- [Day-to-day financial management - Ministry of Education](#) (specifically the Financial Information for Schools Handbook)
- [Support your child's wellbeing and mental health - Ministry of Education](#)
- [Child protection in schools - Ministry of Education](#)
- [Health and safety responsibilities for schools - Ministry of Education](#)
- [School-to-school exchanges - Ministry of Education](#)

Overseas trip planning and communications

Overseas trip planning stages

Guidance and further information related to supporting schools' initial planning are published on [education.govt.nz](https://www.education.govt.nz). This guidance covers aspects related to policies and procedures, legal obligations, emergency planning, health and safety risks, understanding the travel destination, staff and supervision, travel insurance, passport and visa requirements, costs, and trip accessibility.

As part of initial planning, schools should identify the purpose of the trip to ensure the activities will add educational value.

The school should then identify and disclose the highest-risk components of the proposed trip. This may include homestays, water activities, remote or unfamiliar environments, complex transport, activities led by external providers, overnight stays, or activities where students may be away from direct school supervision. These components should be considered early so the school can decide whether the trip is appropriate, what additional controls are needed, and what information must be shared with parents/caregivers before they commit to the trip.

Before you leave

What to communicate

Make sure you are regularly communicating with parents/caregivers. You will need to clearly outline:

- details of the staff and adults who will be accompanying the trip
- what the payment schedule is and how much it is, including a clear indication if deposits are non-returnable (for example, for travel, accommodation, activities)
- details of what is and what is not covered by the cost
- decisions about insurance and what is included/excluded
- whether the travel agent is bonded, and the risks of a non-bonded agent
- advice on appropriate clothing and pocket money
- the purpose and itinerary, including departure and arrival details
- accommodation details
- any possible dangers and risks you have identified – including cancellations
- the school's emergency plan
- discipline and appropriate sanctions
- details of travel arrangements, including any enroute accommodation
- the date of the family information evening (if any)
- how you will provide receipts or cost breakdowns for payments made by parents/caregivers.

What information and documents to collect

You will need the following information and documentation from parents/caregivers and students:

- an emergency contact name and number both at home and away
- a consent form which details any special medical and diet information and gives permission to take appropriate emergency measures
- passport and visa details
- any medical and travel insurance requirements.

Involve staff and supervisors

Teamwork and leadership are vital ingredients for a successful trip.

- Have regular team meetings and ensure all staff are consulted about arrangements.
- If possible, include parents/caregivers in some of these conversations, particularly for longer or overseas trips.

Regularly update your risk assessment

Make sure you regularly update your risk assessment to meet individual students' needs.

Have a supervision plan in place relevant to each aspect of the trip that matches student's needs with appropriate supervisors. (see Supervision structures and plans on page 7 for further information).

Meet with relevant staff and parents/caregivers if you are concerned about a student. For example, an additional member of staff might be needed to assist with students with disabilities or other learning needs.

Find out more about supporting students with diverse needs on the learning support page - [Learning support - Ministry of Education](#)

During the trip

Supervision

- Ensure the supervision plan relevant to each aspect of the trip is implemented. Regularly do a headcount of students, particularly when getting on and off transport. Always get another member of staff to check.
- Always ensure reasonable supervision. Allocate groups of students to individual staff members and/or parent volunteers; this helps rapid communication of information.
- Refer to the Supervision Structures and Plans section (page 7) for more guidance on effective implementation of supervision.

General travel

- Ensure students understand and apply travel safety requirements, for example, using seat belts on coaches.
- Always keep students informed of reasons for delays or sudden changes of plan. This will help keep students calm if there are unexpected changes and they can update their guardians if necessary.
- Make sure students are aware of Customs and biosecurity requirements and the penalties that underpin them before departure and for the return trip to New Zealand.
- Ensure any safe travel advisories are monitored and applied.
- For specific travel advice see details below and refer to EONZ's Planning Overseas School Trips to access example Standard Operating Procedures for travel – [Planning Overseas School Trips – Education Outdoors NZ \(external link\)](#).

Air travel and airports

- For practical planning prompts and example controls for airports, stopovers, passport control, boarding, medication, luggage and supervision during flights, see EONZ's [Air Travel: EOTC Standard Operating Procedures - Education Outdoors NZ \(external link\)](#).

In-country transport

- For practical planning prompts and example controls for local transport, private vehicles, buses, trains, transfers, driver safety, delays and transport supervision, see EONZ's [In Country Transport: EOTC Standard Operating Procedures – Education Outdoors NZ \(external link\)](#).

Walking and public transport

- For practical planning prompts and example controls for moving through public spaces, walking as a group, public transport, regrouping points, buddy systems and communication, see EONZ's [In Country Transport: EOTC Standard Operating Procedures – Education Outdoors NZ \(external link\)](#).

Accommodation

- On arrival at the accommodation, update your risk assessment. Consider a fire practice if you can do so without disturbing other guests, and check entries and exits to rooms.
- Take care when allocating students to rooms. There needs to be a balance between students' preferences and the need to ensure good order and safety.
- Let students know who they can talk to privately if they have concerns or are feeling unsafe. Consider informing students and parents/caregivers about room allocations before the trip if possible.
- Take similar care in allocating staff members and other adults.
- Advise students to take care of their belongings and offer to lock valuables in staff rooms or in the hotel safe.
- Make sure rooms are checked for pre-existing damage and report it to the accommodation manager.

Homestays and hosted accommodation

- Where homestays or hosted accommodation are part of an overseas trip, schools should treat this as a higher-complexity arrangement because students may be away from direct school supervision for periods of time. Schools should consider this early in planning, clearly explain the arrangement and any limitations to parents/caregivers before they commit, and have a clear supervision plan for host selection, student matching, student check-ins, emergency contact, private ways for students to raise concerns, and what will happen if a student feels unsafe, unwell or needs to be moved.
- For further practical guidance, planning prompts and example controls see EONZ's [Accommodation: EOTC Standard Operating Procedures – Education Outdoors NZ \(external link\)](#).

Activities

- Arrange a meeting with students to reinforce the code of conduct, identify out-of-bounds areas, map out the programme, highlight the risks and identify what students need to do to keep safe, and what to do in an emergency.
- Let the tour reps or hotel managers know of any concerns you may have, particularly if you think they compromise student safety.
- Do not change the planned programme or accept enforced changes without good reason. If possible, communicate any changes to parents/caregivers.
- Consider the insurance implications of your liability as a party leader. For example, many insurance companies do not cover human error. This may be covered by school insurance for professional liability.
- If you are unsure of how to deal with a problem on the activity, consult your team or contact your school for advice. A school should ideally provide an emergency contact so that you can make contact in the event of an emergency.
- Where an external provider is used, schools must clarify what the provider is responsible for and what school staff remain responsible for, including student behaviour, wellbeing, medical needs and pastoral support.
- For further guidance on supervision of specific activities please refer to EONZ's [Activities: EOTC Standard Operating Procedures – Education Outdoors NZ \(external link\)](#). <https://eonz.org.nz/Resources/EOTC-Safety-Management/Planning-Overseas-School-Trips>

Returning home

- In the last stages of the journey home, ensure that students can contact home to provide an expected time of arrival.
- On arrival, staff must stay with students until they are collected.
- Contact parents/caregivers if they are late to pick up a student.

Insurance

Minimum insurance cover

Insurance should cover the following aspects at a minimum.

Health cover

- Medical expenses incurred for the treatment of illness and/or injury that requires surgery and/or hospitalisation – unlimited sum insured.
- Medical evacuation related to serious illness and injuries – unlimited sum insured, include emergency dental treatment.
- Costs for parents/caregivers and wider family members' travel in the event that the student suffers a serious illness or injury.

Repatriation, search and rescue

- Repatriation and expatriation in the event a student has to return home following an injury or illness.
- Return of mortal remains/funeral expenses - including travel costs for parents/caregivers and wider family members, repatriation of remains and funeral costs, search-and-rescue operation costs incurred to locate the insured.

Travel into and out of New Zealand

- Missed flights or delays for travel into and out of New Zealand.
- Medical expenses incurred for the treatment of an illness and injury incurred during the travel.

Personal liability

- Negligence causing bodily injury (including death) of another person or loss of or damage to property.

Party leader liability

Depending on the circumstances, party leader liability may not be covered by travel insurance but may be by Risk Management Scheme ([MOE RMS Summary 2024.pdf – Ministry of Education](#)) or private insurance programme for schools.

We recommend you check the insurance policy with your insurance providers to confirm you have suitable and reasonable cover in place for staff who are delivering school business whilst overseas. Situations may include but not limited to costs from missed flights and transport or misjudgements by a party leader.

Unforeseen circumstances

Depending on the nature, cost, and length of the trip, you might consider insurance to cover unforeseen circumstances such as natural disasters, event cancellation or global pandemic.

Unforeseen circumstances insurance is not essential, but you may want to consider it for trips with high costs, reliance on external bodies, tight timeframes or higher risks.

Supervision structures and plans

The practice of relying on required ratios is outdated because it can create a false sense of safety. Current Education Outside the Classroom (EOTC) good practice focuses on a planned supervision structure that shows how students will be supervised, supported, communicated with and accounted for throughout the trip.

EONZ's [Planning Overseas School Trips – Education Outdoors NZ \(external link\)](#) uses this approach across planning, transport, accommodation and activity supervision.

Schools should develop and record a supervision plan for the whole trip and for each significant part of the itinerary, including air travel, in-country transport, accommodation (including any homestays), activities, free time. These plans need to include any changes that might occur in an emergency.

The supervision plan should identify:

- the Person in Charge
- the role and responsibilities of each supervising adult
- the competence, experience, first aid and safety checking - required for each adult role
- how students will be grouped
- which adults are responsible for which students
- students who need additional support and how this will be provided
- boundaries, meeting points, timings and regrouping procedures
- communication systems for staff, students and the school
- how head counts, roll checks and cross-checks will be completed
- what students should do if they are lost, unsafe, unwell or separated from the group
- how the plan will change if conditions, behaviour, staffing, transport, accommodation or activity arrangements change.

The plan should be reviewed before departure, at the start of each day, and whenever there is a significant change. All supervising adults should be briefed on their roles, the student groupings, known student needs, emergency procedures and any activity-specific arrangements.

Students should receive clear briefings at key points. These should cover behaviour expectations, boundaries, buddy or group systems, meeting points, communication, what to do if plans change, and what will happen if instructions are not followed.

A trip, activity or movement should be paused, adapted, delayed or cancelled if the agreed supervision structure cannot be maintained, if student needs cannot be safely supported, or if staff are not confident that the situation can be managed safely.

For further guidance around effective supervision refer to Chapter 4 in the [Guidelines for education outside the classroom - Ministry of Education](#).

Temporary accommodation

When a student or group cannot stay at accommodation arranged by their school/trip organiser for any reason, they may need to stay somewhere else temporarily.

Reasons to need temporary accommodation include (but not limited to):

- booked flights/transport have been delayed/cancelled
- student(s) had urgent medical treatments
- trips have been disturbed by national disasters/civil unrest.

Trip organisers must take a robust approach to determine that temporary accommodation and accompanying supervision is suitable.

This includes but is not limited to:

- assessing the suitability
- ensuring the supervision structure is reviewed and continues to provide effective supervision of all students
- monitoring and managing any risks to the safety of students.

Safety management and emergencies

Safety and risk management will help to reduce the likelihood and severity of serious and adverse health and safety outcomes when hosting or taking a school trip.

Schools and trip leaders need to ensure that risks are known, assessed and managed.

Operational tools for safety management and emergencies should include:

- current risk assessment and supervision plan
- standard operating procedures for travel, activities and accommodation
- emergency response plan
- confirmed school emergency contact
- medical and contact information
- incident reporting process
- post-trip review process.

You can use the following resources to support all aspects of safety management. Your board should also have a set of health and safety guidelines for you to follow.

Resources including guidance, tools and resources to help schools with EOTC safety management:

- [EOTC Safety Management – Education Outdoors NZ \(external link\)](#)
- [Risk Assessment and Supervision Plan \(Overseas Trip\) – Education Outdoors NZ \(external link\)](#)
- [EOTC Safety Management Plan and Toolkit – Education Outdoors NZ \(external link\)](#)
- [Good Practice Guidelines – Education Outdoors NZ \(external link\)](#)
- [School Boards and EOTC Responsibilities -Education Outdoors NZ \(external link\)](#)

Responding after an emergency

If you have an extreme event while on a school trip it can affect students, staff, parents/caregivers, families and communities.

You can find resources about responses to extreme events on the Ministry website below.

- [Respond at school to an emergency or traumatic incident - Ministry of Education](#)

More information

Other related pages

- [Enrolling students from overseas - Ministry of Education](#)
- [School-to-school exchanges - Ministry of Education](#)
- [School costs and donations - Ministry of Education](#)

Resources

- [The Tertiary and International Learners Code of Practice - NZQA \(external link\)](#)
- [Education outside the classroom guidelines – Tātūrangi – New Zealand Curriculum – Ministry of Education](#)

Disclaimer

This guidance has been compiled for your information only. It should not be treated as an exhaustive statement on the subject, nor should it be considered as a substitute for legal or professional service.

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