



Circular
Letter M 20 /04

To the Management Authorities of all Post Primary Schools

Educational Tours by School Groups (both inside and outside the State)

The objective of an educational tour should be that it should provide a significant benefit in the educational, intellectual, cultural and social development of the maximum number of pupils in the particular grade(s) taking part in the tour and which benefit cannot be provided by in-school activities alone. Where a Board of Management is satisfied that a school tour meets the above criteria, such a tour may be undertaken **without seeking prior approval from the Department**. However, the template attached as appendix 1 should be completed by the Principal in the planning of a school tour and should be retained in the school for examination by a Departmental Inspector in the course of normal school inspection.

Authorisation to grant approval for educational tours by school groups both inside and outside the State is hereby devolved to the school board of management subject to the following criteria ...

- School tours should be an extension and reinforcement of classroom activities and should be designed to include the maximum number of pupils in a class. The tour should, accordingly, enhance the learning process of as many pupils as possible by providing educational experiences which the classroom alone cannot provide.
- Tours should be planned, in consultation with parents, well in advance of tour dates and preferably before the start of the school year. The full cost of the tour should be communicated to parents at the planning stage. This will have the added advantage of facilitating financial preparation with a view to allowing maximum pupil participation. Every effort should be made to ensure that the cost involved does not prevent any pupil or group of pupils from participating in the tour.
- By international standards, the school year in Ireland has long holiday periods. Educational tours of more than one days duration should be arranged to coincide with normal school holiday periods.
- Schools should ensure that adequate insurance cover is in place and that written parental approval is obtained for each pupil to take part in the tour. Such written approval must not seek to devolve any liability to the parent for any aspect of the tour. (Boards of Management of Comprehensive and Community schools should refer to appendix 2 of this circular regarding State Indemnity cover for out-of-school educational activities)
- The Board of Management must ensure that pupils who are not participating in the tour (including pupils from other classes who will be affected by their subject teachers

absence) are adequately catered for while their teachers are away on the tour. Appropriate arrangements should be made for the conduct of those teachers' classes in their absence in accordance with [Circular PPT 01/03](#). Schools should on all occasions take into account the effect that the absence of accompanying teachers will have on the normal work in the school and numbers absent should be kept to the minimum level required.

Where school tours impinge upon the standard school year, the following guidelines are put forward as to the type of educational visit envisaged by the Department as acceptable for the purposes of regarding absence on such visits as school days:

- (a) Educational visit involving an exchange of groups of students with another school.
- (b) Educational visit involving attendance at a course of instruction.
- (c) Educational visit involving active participation in a music or drama festival.
- (d) Educational visit to a conference or exhibition of clear educational value (e.g. Young Scientist Exhibition, Higher Options Conference or Exhibition on Careers and Guidance Counselling)
- (e) An educational visit should be appropriate to the age group/grade concerned (e.g. The Higher Options Conference would be more appropriate for senior cycle students than for junior cycle students)
- (f) Educational visits (inside or outside the State) involving significant linguistic or cultural benefit to the maximum number of pupils.

This list is given by way of example and is not intended to be exhaustive.

This circular supersedes and replaces Circulars [M87/78](#), M62/83, 12/79 and Circular Letter to the Boards of Comprehensive and Community schools entitled "Out of School Educational Activities within the State" and dated 19 February 1987.

Mathew Ryan
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Post Primary Administration.

Appendix 1: Tour Template

Details of School Tour		
Name of School	Address	Roll No.
Tour Dates		
From	To	Number of School Days
__/__/__	__/__/__	
Brief Outline of Tour		
Number of Students Participating	Total number of students in relevant grade	
If some students are not participating, outline the reasons why		
Expected benefit to accrue from the tour		

Why is the tour deemed to be necessary

Adults accompanying the students

Class Teacher	Number of other teachers	Number of other adults

Confirmations

That appropriate arrangements are made in accordance with Circular PPT 01/03 for those classes whose teachers are absent with the tour	Yes:	No:
That adequate insurance is in place to cover all risks while on tour	Yes:	No:
That parental permission has been secured for each student who is to participate on the tour.	Yes:	No:

Signature of Principal:

Date:

Appendix 2.

School Tours by pupils of Comprehensive and Community schools

In the case of school tours outside of the island of Ireland by pupils and teachers from Comprehensive and Community schools, the Board of Management should not rely on the State Indemnity for insurance purposes. Appropriate travel insurance should be taken out to cover those embarking on the tour.

In the case of school tours within Ireland (including Northern Ireland) by pupils and teachers from Comprehensive and Community schools Boards of Management may, with one exception, convey formal approval for indemnity provided the tour is adequately supervised by employees of the Board. (The Board may delegate its authority in this matter to the Principal but responsibility at all times shall rest with the Board.)

The exception is where the tour involves an activity of a specialist nature (such as to an Outdoor Education Centre) which requires supervision by trained professionals. In this instance the Board of Management may not rely on the State Indemnity for insurance purposes. Appropriate insurance should be taken out to cover those embarking on the tour.

Subject to the foregoing, the question of the degree of supervision required in each case would be a matter for reasonable consideration and determination by the Board having regard to all the surrounding circumstances.

The normal State Indemnity provisions will continue to apply in respect of actions claims or demands taken or made against the Board of Management and the teaching and non-teaching staff arising out of the discharge of their duties whether in respect of pupils or otherwise.