

EDUCATIONAL TOURS AND FIELD TRIP POLICY 2022

Ardgillan College

Date for review: On an ongoing basis



Gerry McGuire

Chairperson

Board of Management

5-10-2022

Date ratified by the Board of Management

MISSION STATEMENT

Ardgillan Community College promotes a happy and caring community where students are encouraged and supported to reach their full potential. Teamwork, respect and the pursuit of excellence form cornerstones of the college philosophy. The ethos of the college is based on respect, tolerance and understanding while appreciating the diversity of our changing world. The college aims to provide a broad education for all students and to nurture their individual abilities and talents.

Ardgillan College's motto is 'Mol an Óige agus Tíocfaidh Sí' (Praise the young and they will flourish).

INTRODUCTION

Ardgillan College delivers a six-year cycle from first year to sixth year.

1.1 Rationale

Ardgillan College believes that students can derive a great deal of educational benefit from participating in well-planned school tours and field trips. Such activities give students the opportunity to engage in experiences not available in the classroom, help develop a student's imaginative skills, encourage greater independence and enhance the student's social and cultural development. Educational tours allow the students to engage with the broader curriculum in a very meaningful and active way and help foster positive interactions with peers, SNAs and teachers.

Ardgillan College strives to provide an effective education for all its students and is committed to the holistic education of all students who attend the college. Ardgillan provides an education, which also recognises that exposure to a variety of experiences and cultures, is part of a child's holistic education. It is in this spirit and in line with the spirit of improving 'Learner Experiences' as set out in 'Looking at our Schools' 2016, that Ardgillan College has, on occasion in the past, brought students to China, Poland, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States. It is our wish and desire to continue to offer our students the opportunity to travel to unique destinations, broadening their knowledge and enriching themselves in this manner.

This policy seeks to assist staff in the planning of trips and outings, so that they are aware of all necessary planning and precautions, which must be observed to provide for the health and ensure the safety of staff and students. It also ensures that trips and outings run efficiently and smoothly.

Furthermore, it seeks to clarify expectations of behaviour and requirements from students, staff and parents for all trips, and to outline the conditions whereby a student may be refused permission to be included on a trip.

1.2 Application and Scope

This policy applies to all members of staff from Ardgillan College who take students off site. It is applicable to the students participating in such trips and to their parents/guardians. While routine extra-curricular activities are touched upon under this policy, its main thrust is directed at events that entail a great deal of structured organisation such as field and adventure trips as well as national and international tours.

1.3 General

All education trips must be consistent with the rationale as specified by the Department of Education & Skills in Circular Letter M20/04. All reasonable efforts will be made to satisfy the criteria contained in this circular. Educational tours of more than one day's duration should be arranged to coincide with normal school holidays as set out in CL M20/04. If an educational tour/field trip is an integral part of a school programme the Board of Management of the school may grant permission for the tour/field trip to be held during term time and as per the requirements of CL M20/04.

The Ardgillan College Code of Positive Behaviour applies to students participating in 'any school related activity', including national and international trips and outings and extracurricular activities. Any staff who wish to organise school trips should read this policy in conjunction with other relevant school policies ratified by the BOM.

Ardgillan College expects that all tours and field trips will be thoroughly planned. Reasonable care must be exercised in the nature of the trip that is chosen, the venue, the means of transport, cost, the level of supervision, the demands on the physical resources of the students, having regard to their age and capacity and the potential obstacles to which they may be exposed.

In the event of unforeseen circumstances (e.g. the spread of infectious disease) companies generally should issue a partial refund only following the advice of the Department of Foreign Affairs not to travel.

The Principal has the right to cancel any school trip at any time.

1.4 GDPR

Data is defined as 'any information, including documents, that identifies an individual'. Data protection is about safeguarding the privacy of data subjects. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came into force across the EU on 25

May 2018. This regulation significantly increases our obligations and responsibilities in relation to how we collect, use and protect personal data. Staff must understand their responsibilities under data protection law and be cognisant of data protection at all times. ETBI have devised a GDPR Training Tool and Test to assist ETB staff to understand their responsibilities under the new regulations. It is expected all staff undertaking a school trip complete the test to demonstrate their compliance with the new regulations.

Any prospective teacher wishing to organise a tour must do so in conjunction and consultation with the schools 'Data Protection Policy'. Adherence to high standards of ethics and professionalism in all data collection and retention for the purposes of educational tours is paramount.

To organise trips and educational tours it will often be necessary for the organising teacher to collect extra information on students, passport information being one example. All such data must be treated in accordance with the Data Protection Acts and the terms of the school's 'Data Protection Policy'. Data relating to individuals travelling will only be processed in a manner consistent with the purposes for which it was gathered. Information will be only disclosed to tour company, airline, hotel or embassy (if applicable) on a need to know basis and access to it will be strictly controlled. Any teacher charged with handling sensitive personal data for the purposes of booking students' flights, hotel, tours or assisting parents in applying for visas must at all times keep personal data safe and secure.

2. DAY TRIPS PROCEDURE

STAFF

2.1 General

Day trips may take place during the school day or may extend beyond normal school hours. Day trips must have the approval of the deputy principal. Members of staff who wish to take students on a day trip must make their request to the Deputy Principal so permission can be granted and teacher cover (if necessary) arranged. As much notice as possible should be given.

Day trips may involve a financial cost to the student. For example, an entrance fee may be involved. The Deputy Principal must approve this, and all fees are to be paid in advance of the trip. If the nature of the trip being organised requires non-refundable deposits, then it is the duty of the organising teacher to communicate this clearly to parents involved.

2.2 Permission

Specific parental permission is required for any trip. Members of staff must follow the protocol for taking students out on extra-curricular activities. Information about the trip, itinerary, associated cost, activities or gear needed, must be communicated clearly to parents. A permission slip should be given to all students involved and must be returned, signed by the parent/guardian, for their child to embark on the tour.

Students who have a history of not adhering to the Ardgillan Code of Behaviour may, at the school's discretion, be excluded from trips on behavioural grounds.

Once the Principal has approved a trip and all permission slips have been returned, the organiser should communicate to other teachers a list of any students who are missing class activities to attend the trip.

2.3 Supervising trips

On all trips there must be an appropriate ratio between the number of students and the number of staff travelling. This ratio will vary depending on the nature of the trip and the age of the students travelling. Management will determine the ratio of staff to students. All organising teachers should direct any queries on supervision ratios to management.

An Accident/Incident Report Form must be completed for any serious accidents or incidents which occur on tour. Examples of reportable incidents include accident/injury or a serious breach of college rules, particularly in relation to alleged or proven alcohol or substance abuse.

The College will always have the mobile/contact numbers of the Coach Company or staff involved in case of delays or any other unforeseen occurrences.

It is the responsibility of the individual organising or supervising teacher to ensure they ask the coach driver for the day, for his/her contact number. This allows for better communication in the arrangement of a rendezvous point.

PARENTS

2.4 Parental responsibilities

It is the duty and responsibility of all parents/guardians to read over and closely study any documentation regarding the trip.

All permission slips should be filled out promptly and returned to the organising teacher as instructed.

If fees are involved parents/guardians must meet all payment deadlines or risk their child's place on the trip being revoked. Due to the nature of some trips, there is a possibility that some deposits may be non-refundable.

If money is needed for lunch while on tour, then this should be given to students by parents/guardians.

For trips that extend beyond normal College hours, it is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure that arrangements are in place for their son/daughter's journey to/from the College.

It is every parent/guardian's responsibility to ensure their child is aware of the school's code of behaviour while on tour. Students on tour are ambassadors for their school and should behave in a way that reflects the school's ethos of 'Teamwork, Respect and Excellence'.

STUDENTS

2.5 Student responsibilities

Students of Ardgillan College are always expected to observe the Code of Positive Behaviour while travelling to or from an activity and for the whole duration of tours.

Students must be punctual for all buses and rendezvous points. In the case of serious punctuality problems while on tour, parents may be notified, and sanctions taken. Students are expected to behave in a polite manner toward supervising staff and any tour guides or activity organisers. Students are expected to take direction and follow instruction from all staff members and those in a position of leadership while on school tours

It is essential that students maintain a high standard of personal appearance while on tour. Some tours will require school uniform while others may require specialist weather resistant clothes (such as Geography trips).

Instructions will be given by organising teacher on whether mobile devices are permitted on tour.

Students are responsible for their personal property and not leaving any possessions behind them on the bus. The school, tour company and bus company cannot take any responsibility for lost property.

Students must always travel in groups and should not for any reason separate from their peers while on tour.

3. INTERNATIONAL, OVERSEAS AND OVERNIGHT TRIP PROCEDURE

STAFF

3.1 Approval

The principal must receive approval from head office for all foreign trips. Members of staff, who wish to take students on an overnight or overseas trip, must submit their request for approval to the Principal. Trip organisers should ensure that their proposed dates and/or cohort of students are not in conflict with any other trips already underway. Included in the proposal to the Principal should be the rationale and educational or wellbeing benefits that the students will derive from the trip. Upon approval, they should liaise with the post-holder responsible for trips and outings for further instruction.

3.2 Allocation of places

The number of students participating will vary depending on the nature of the trip, coach size and availability of plane seats (if applicable). The staff/student ratio will be appropriate to the age group and as recommended by the travel agency and approved by school management. In the case of trips being oversubscribed, priority is given to those students who are studying the relevant subject and/or have a good behavioural record.

The College reserves the right to refuse students it deems unsuitable for the trip. Those considered unsuitable might include: students who in the past have proved unruly or undisciplined on trips or in school and also those students who have a history of defying the Code of Positive Behaviour.

Before a student with a medical condition is accepted to participate in a trip the College must be confident that they can manage their needs without compromising the health & safety of the student/other students participating or altering the itinerary of the trip. Each case shall be considered on an individual basis in consultation with parents, organisers and management. A doctor's letter may be required in such instances.

3.3 Choosing an operator

The organising teacher should quote multiple tour operators to ensure students have access to the best available itinerary, price and most suitable flights. The merits of each operator must be discussed with management before any decisions are made on selecting a provider.

Companies the school has travelled with to date include the following providers:

- The School Tour Company (China, Russia, Germany, U.S.A, Italy, Derry and Belfast)
- NST (Poland, United Kingdom)
- GTI (Spain)

An agreed graduated payment plan should be put in place with the successful tour operator and this should be clearly communicated to parents early on, so they are aware of all upcoming payment deadlines before they commit to the trip. Good practice is to select a tour company that can process online payments. All payments are between parent/guardian and the company. **No payments are to be made through the school.**

3.4 Communication to/from parents

3.4.1 Expression of Interest forms

Before any places are formally offered, an 'Expression of Interest' form must be filled in by parents. It must be emphasised to parents at this stage that receipt of a completed 'Expression of Interest' form in no way equates to an offer of a place. 'Expression of Interest' forms are necessary to gauge sufficient interest in the trip. The trip may only go ahead if enough interest has been generated as tour suppliers have a minimum requirement of students needed to run trips.

3.4.2 Returned interest

Parents should return their 'Expression of Interest' forms promptly by the date set out by the organising teacher.

3.4.3 Documentation issued to successful applicants

Once sufficient interest has been established and the minimum requirement of students has been met, the organising teacher will be in a position to offer places. Accompanying the 'Offer of Place' letter should be a cover letter explaining any visa/passport requirements. This documentation pack should also contain a draft itinerary, payment plan and deadline for payment of a **non-refundable** deposit. It is at this stage that the organiser must also issue 'Parental Consent & Terms and Conditions' forms. Under no circumstances should a deposit be accepted until a completed parental consent form is returned to the organising teacher. It is best practice to issue parental consent forms before releasing instructions on how to pay.

Payment instructions must only be issued to parents/guardians of students who have already returned a completed parental consent form. It is the duty of the trip organiser at this stage to impress upon parents that all deposits are non-refundable and that payment contracts are between the parent and the tour company.

No payments will be made through the school. Parents should retain proof of payment. This may be in the form of an emailed receipt from the tour company if it was paid online, or a receipt from the post office if paid by postal order. The method of payment will depend on the tour operator selected by the organising teacher.

In the case of overseas destinations, three colour passport photocopies should be returned to the organising teacher along with proof of payment of the non-refundable deposit. If a passport is required, parents/guardians should ensure that

passports are valid for at least six months following the trip. It is the responsibility of the organising teacher to ensure all passports are in date/or have the required **six month** validity after the date of return. This is particularly important when travelling outside the EU.

Parents must be made aware that the organiser reserves the right to make minor changes to the itinerary. They should also be informed in good time if there are any mandatory or recommended vaccinations for the destination.

Students must have their European Health Insurance Card for travel to countries in the EU. It is important to impress upon parents/guardians that the onus is on them to ensure that their son/daughter has all necessary up-to-date documentation well in advance of the trip.

Visas may be necessary for the destination and some countries require them to be processed together. There may be an additional cost to secure a visa. If such a cost is necessary, parents/guardians should be informed by the organising teacher from the onset. Parents/guardians should be informed that students travelling with non-EU passports may need visas for EU or non-EU countries.

It is good practice for the organising teacher to create a list of students travelling on VShare. This is convenient for texting SMS reminders to parents about upcoming meetings or payment deadlines.

It is the duty and responsibility of the organising teacher to arrange a 'Parents Night' for the parents/guardians of those students travelling with the school. A PowerPoint covering the following tour basics should be made and shown to parents/guardians:

- Rationale for trip
- Electrical socket type
- Vaccinations (if needed)
- Baggage allowance
- Mobile phone charges and data roaming
- Flight number and times
- Visa advice (if applicable)
- Protocol for journey to/from the airport
- Spending money and currency exchange
- Packing list
- Accommodation details
- Itinerary contents
- Insurance cover
- Code of Conduct
- Laws/relevant information for the country being visited
- Check that parents contact details correct/have not changed on vshare

3.5 Protocol for staff while on tour

3.5.1 Communication with students

Mobile phone communication between staff and students on the trip may be necessary. A list should be made of participants' mobile phone numbers and students will be given the school mobile phone number – to be carried with them while on the trip. A mobile phone is available from the College, as staff members are not advised to give their personal mobile phone numbers to students. The trip organiser should have two emergency contact numbers; usually this will be the principal and the Deputy Principal. The tour company should also provide the organising teacher with an emergency contact number in case of any hiccups with flights or the tour itinerary.

3.5.2 Inspection of rooms

On overnight trips, students will be informed of a curfew time, by which they should retire to their allocated rooms for the night. Before bed, staff will go around each room and announce themselves by knocking on the door. Students should report to the door so the organising teachers can check them off on the roll call to make sure they are in the correct room. Once the teacher is satisfied that the occupants of each room are present and correct the teachers may retire to their own room. Any student caught out of their room after this point is in serious breach of the school's Code of Positive Behaviour and appropriate sanctions will be taken accordingly.

If necessary two members of staff should carry out an inspection of rooms with the student present. This will only be done for good reasons based on reasonable grounds, such as concern for physical safety, suspected possession or use of a banned substance or other concerns. Any student found to be in possession of a banned substance or item will be in serious breach of the school's Code of Positive Behaviour and appropriate sanctions will be taken accordingly.

3.5.3 Contingency

All monies used for contingency must be receipted and any surplus funds are to be rolled over to the next trip

PARENTS

3.6 Parental responsibilities for overnight and overseas trips:

3.6.1 Documentation

It is the duty and responsibility of all parents/guardians to read over and closely study any documentation regarding the overnight/overseas trip.

All 'Expression of Interest', 'Parental Consent', 'Terms and Conditions' and 'Medical and Dietary Requirements' forms should be read closely and filled out with due care. Incomplete application forms will not be considered. All questions on the forms must be fully completed by the parents/guardians applying for a position for their child on the trip. Parents/guardians must use their child's name as per passport when filling in any documentation.

3.6.2 Payments

Parents/guardians must meet all payment deadlines or risk their child's place on the trip being revoked. Monies paid in advance will be forfeited if a student withdraws from the tour, except where such funds are recoupable through the insurance policy.

3.6.3 Passports

It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to ensure their child's passport has enough validity to enter the country required. Some countries (such as China and Russia for example) require an extra six months passport validity AFTER the date of return to Ireland. It is strictly the parents' responsibility to ensure that their child meets the required criteria for entry to the country concerned in terms of passport, visa and documentation. Students travelling on non-Irish passports may be required to submit extra documentation depending on the countries' entry requirements.

3.6.4 Visas

It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to ensure that they correctly apply for any visas required if applicable. Requirements for travel visas vary widely depending on your nationality and your destination. Some destinations require visa forms to be completed online and some require hard copy forms to be filled in and returned to the embassy. Some destinations may even require a visit to the embassy in person. Although we are unable to fill in visa paperwork on your behalf, we will try to assist and give some guidelines on how to fill in applications on the parents' night. Such assistance will be limited, and guidance will be advisory as the visa application process may vary widely for each passenger.

A visa if applicable, may involve a necessary additional financial cost to the parent. Visa documentation is ultimately the parents' responsibility. Neither the school nor the tour operator will be held responsible for any visa applications declined or indeed tour deposits forfeit due to incomplete or inaccurately filled out visa forms on behalf of the parent.

3.6.5 Code of Positive Behaviour

It is every parent/guardian's responsibility to ensure their child is aware of the school's code of behaviour while on tour. Students on tour are ambassadors for their

school and should behave in a way that reflects the school's ethos of 'Teamwork, Respect and Excellence'.

If a child is seriously in breach of the code of conduct while on tour, parents may be contacted. The matter will first, be referred to principal/deputy principal before parents are contacted.

Parents must understand that it is their responsibility to impress upon their child (even if over 18), the seriousness of any breach of college rules while on tour. It is a particularly serious breach if any student is found out of their rooms after curfew. Any such breaches will be dealt with in the most serious manner.

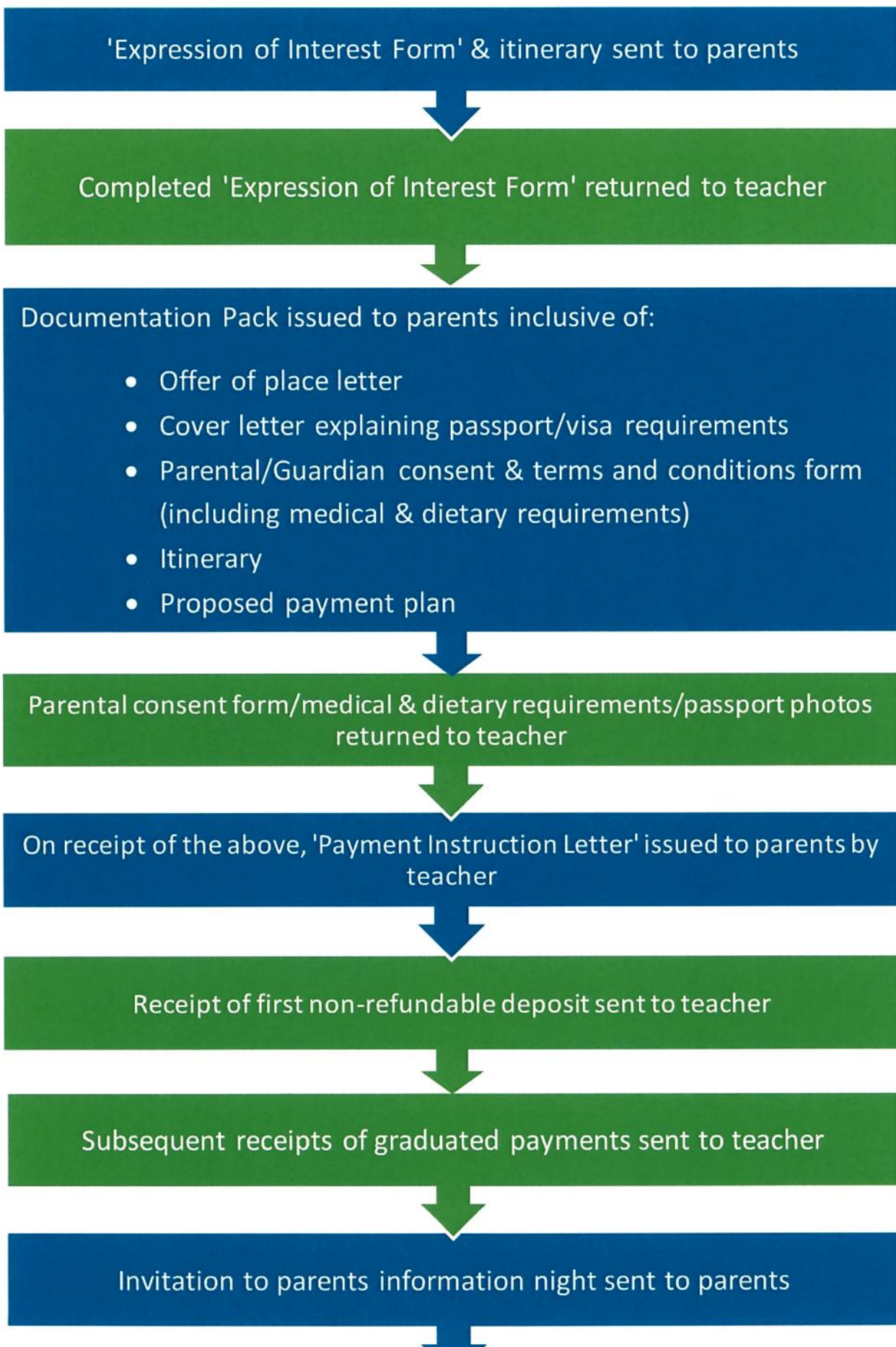
3.6.7 Spending Money

Parents/guardians must ensure they provide their child with spending money in local currency and money for extras such as meals and excursions if required.

3.6.8 Parents Night

It is essential that all parents arrange to attend the trip 'Parents' Night' prior to departure. Important information is often communicated at such meetings and the presence of the parent/guardian is desired at such events.

Summary of communication between organising teacher and parent/guardian:



STUDENTS

3.7. Student responsibilities prior to and during school trip/outing

3.7.1 Student responsibilities prior to departure

Students must attend all information meetings and co-operate with all requests pertaining to the trip. They should act as prompt couriers of all essential documentation between parents/guardians and organising teacher.

Students must endeavour towards the school motto of 'Teamwork, Respect and Excellence' as their position on a school tour is conditional on a good behavioural record in Ardgillan. In the case of a serious breach of the school's Code of Positive Behaviour AFTER the student has secured a place on the tour, the school reserves the right to reconsider or revoke the offer of a place. In such circumstances where a place is revoked due to a serious breach of school rules, the student will lose their non-refundable deposits and subsequent payments.

Students must make sure to pack appropriately and within the baggage limits. The school will not be responsible for any fees incurred on overweight baggage.

3.7.2 Student responsibilities while on tour

Students of Ardgillan College are expected to observe the Code of Positive Behaviour at all times while travelling on overnight and overseas trips, to or from an activity and for the whole duration of tours. Students are ambassadors for their school.

Students must be punctual for all busses and rendezvous points. This is particularly important while abroad and while travelling or transiting through airports. Students are expected to behave in a polite manner toward supervising staff and any tour guides or activity organisers. Students are expected to take direction and follow instruction from all staff members and those in a position of leadership while on tour.

Students are expected to look out for each other while travelling and always travel in pairs or groups.

Students are required to look after their own property at all times while travelling with the school. The school or the tour company will not be held responsible for any lost property. Students must pay particular attention carrying their money and travel documents responsibly.

Students must abide by set curfew at all times. Students are not permitted out of their rooms after curfew for any reason. Failure to abide by set curfew will be considered a serious breach of the college code of conduct and will result in appropriate measures and sanctions being taken. Under no circumstances may a student leave the hotel/hostel/B&B unauthorised at any time. Unauthorised

excursions out of hotel will result in serious disciplinary action being taken by supervising staff.

Alcohol or substance abuse is banned under all circumstances regardless of the legal age for consumption of alcohol and or legality of the substances which are illegal in Ireland. This is also true for those of our students aged 18+ while on tour.