

Guidelines on Field Trips (Updated April 2025)

[Scottish government good practice guide on safety on school excursions.](#)

1. Alignment to guiding statements

ISA has a responsibility to care for all members of its community and to ensure the wellbeing of staff and students. The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure compliance with UK law and that incidents are reported, if needs be investigated and reviewed.

2. Scope

3. Relationship to external guidance, other policies and procedures

4. Elementary Field Trips

4.1 Day Trips

Field trips are considered an integral part of our school curriculum and we encourage all children to attend these. However, should a child not go on his/her class trip then provisions will be made for the child to work at school. Day field trips are undertaken in every elementary grade and 5th Grade students also take part in a residential field trip.

A school top is required for the safety of students during field trips; there is a choice of a polo shirt, T-shirt or sweatshirt. The shirt is ordered through the PTO and is known as Spirit Wear. Details are included on the Elementary School Supply List, and the order form is available on the PTO page of the School's website.

4.2 Overnight Stays

Nethy Bridge Outdoor Centre – 5th Grade

Nethy Bridge is a residential outdoor activity centre set on the south bank of Loch Tay in Scotland's Highland Perthshire. Part of the Abernethy Trust, Ardeonaig offers an exciting choice of activities, ranging from archery and orienteering to various outdoor adventure sports. 5th Grade students spend five days/four nights at Ardeonaig in September each year. An informational meeting about the Ardeonaig trip is held for 5th Grade parents prior to the field trip.

5. Middle and High School Field Trips

We offer a series of local and overnight field trips linked as much as possible to relevant curriculum, as we believe that learning does not just take place within the classroom. The same trips may not run every year. However, we do try to offer a variety in an effort to further international and cultural understanding. During the annual week-long trip, an Aberdeen-based series of activities will be offered as an alternative for students unable to travel for whatever reason.

Students have a significant role on field trips, not just as learners but also as ambassadors for our school and community. Together with the expectations set out in our **Student Code of Conduct**, the following **guidelines** apply to students on both local and overnight field trips. The student must:

- Accept that limitations may be more stringent than normal in order to ensure safety. The **Student Code of Conduct** and other ISA rules apply. Specifically, students agree that no sexual relationships will take place, and controlled substances (and/or associated paraphernalia) may not be used,

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possessed, distributed, purchased, or sold by any person whilst on school trips (regardless of the legal age of use of the country);

- Submit passports to the trip supervisor in advance of any trip abroad; parents should ensure that the passport is valid and the visas are valid for both the UK and any country to be visited;
- Bring appropriate clothing, supplies, money, passport, visas and any other items as noted by trip supervisors;
- Abide by curfew (no later than 10:00 pm unless set by the supervisors);
- Make sure he/she is never alone; always be in a group of no less than three students and always inform supervisors of where they are. Middle School students will be under direct supervision at all times;
- Remain in the areas designated by trip supervisors.

As representatives of ISA, we expect students to present a positive and courteous image.

It is understood that if the supervisors deem a student's behaviour to be unacceptable or unsafe, she/he will be sent home at the parents' expense. There may be additional school disciplinary consequences and/or limitation of future trips.

In order for each student to participate on ISA field trips, he/she must have accurate details on file. The necessary **Field Trip Annual Parental Consent** and the **Student's Role on ISA School Trips Forms** must be completed promptly at the beginning of each school year (available from the **Forms** page on the School's website). Any changes to these details are to be made known to the co-ordinator of the field trip and MS-HS secretary immediately.

6. Supervision Guidelines

When assessing supervision needs for school trips, relevant considerations need to include:

- age, gender and ability of the group
- pupils with special medical or educational needs
- nature of activities
- experience and competence of staff in off-site supervision and specific activities
- duration and nature of journey
- type of accommodation
- competence and behaviour of pupils
- pupils' previous experience away from home or school
- first aid cover

ISA guidelines on supervision levels are as follows:

1. Group leaders are responsible for assessing the risks and deciding on a safe supervision level for their group.
2. There should always be at least two adults supervising, of which one should be a teacher in charge (with the exception of small groups of senior students on short trips).
3. In addition to the teacher, there should be enough supervising adults to cope effectively with an emergency.
4. The group leader must advise the Principal and Head of School of the proposed levels, and seek their approval prior to the trip.
5. Parties of mixed gender pupils should normally be accompanied by teachers of both genders.
6. Parents/volunteers may be used to supplement the supervision ratio. They should be carefully selected and well known to the school and the pupil group.

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7. Anyone who has not had a criminal conviction check should never be left in sole charge of pupils.
8. For the protection of both adults and pupils, all adult supervisors should ensure that they are not alone with a pupil wherever possible.
9. All supervisors should be aware of any pupils who may require closer supervision.
10. For trips with older pupils, the group leader should establish whether the pupils are responsible enough for remote supervision (or unsupervised free time) and should ensure that parents are aware of this and have agreed to this.
11. The group leader remains responsible for pupils even when not in direct contact with them.
12. During remote supervision, the group leader must ensure that pupils are aware of the ground rules and are adequately equipped to be on their own in a group. The size of the group should be considered. A minimum of 3 pupils per group is recommended.
13. Where staff are taking their own children, supervision should be increased due to the possibility of there being a conflict between the parental and teacher role.

Adult : Student Ratio Guidelines	
Age of pupils in group	Lowest Recommended Ratio *
3 to 5 years	1 : 3
5 to 8 years	1 : 8
8 to 12 years	1 : 10
12 to 18 years	1 : 10

- * The trip leader must consider whether the ratio above is sufficient depending on the risks associated with the trip.
- For example, on trips involving large groups, overnight stays, overseas stays, hazardous activities, swimming, pupils with special needs etc, then the adult : student ratio should be increased appropriately.

Procedure should adult:student ratio fall below these levels during a trip

1. During the planning of the trip, if possible, a member of ISA staff (or substitute) should be asked to volunteer to be on 'standby' to join the trip as a supervisor should a drop in adult:student ratio occur.
2. If the ratio drop is due to a teacher having to supervise a sick or injured student, the parents should be invited to either:
 - a. collect the student from the school trip;
 - b. arrange for the student to be taken home from the trip;
 - c. care for the student at the school trip destination until the student is well enough to travel, and then chaperone the return journey.

If this is not possible, the designated ISA 'standby' should replace the parent in any of the 3 scenarios above (a to c).

Parents should be made aware of this possibility at the trip meeting.

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1. If the ratio drop is due to a trip supervisor being ill or injured, a suitable replacement chaperone should be sought immediately at the destination. This replacement could include a tour guide or a teacher or member of staff from the host school or activity centre. If this is not possible, the designated ISA 'standby' should travel immediately to the trip destination. Parents should be used as a trip chaperone only as a last resort if no members of ISA staff can assist.

7. Projects Outwith ISA

Students will often decide to work with the wider community when choosing activities and projects. These authentic experiences lay a strong foundation for life after Middle School and are to be encouraged. It is however impossible for the school to risk assess and supervise each individual's projects adequately. When an activity has not been arranged and sponsored by the school, participants will not be covered by our policies. It will therefore be important for the young people involved to speak with their families about potential risks and hazards.

2.

Emergency procedures are an essential part of planning a school trip.

Staff in charge of students on a trip have a duty of care to make sure that they are safe and healthy. They also have a common law duty to act as a reasonably prudent parent would. Staff should not hesitate to act in an emergency and to take life-saving action in an extreme situation providing they feel it does not jeopardise their own safety. This is also the case for bus drivers.

All those involved in the school trip, including supervisors, students and their parents, should be informed of who will take charge in an emergency, the named back up cover and what they are expected to do in an emergency.

The trip leader or bus driver would normally take charge in an emergency and would need to ensure that emergency procedures are in place and that back up cover is arranged if necessary.

• On the trip/journey

Trip leader/chaperones are expected to follow the steps set out in the [Trip Leader/Chaperone Emergency Checklist](#)

• At School

The trip leader/supervisors should have access to pre-arranged 24-hour emergency contact (a senior staff member from the school).

In the event of an emergency, the contact should:

1. Establish the nature, extent, time and location of the emergency.

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2. Establish the names of the casualties, and of others involved so that parents can be reassured.
3. Establish the action taken so far, and action yet to be taken (and by whom).
4. Make every effort to ensure that the group leader/supervisors are in control and are following the emergency procedures as outlined in the [Trip Leader/Chaperone Emergency Checklist](#)
5. Establish whether assistance is required from the school base.
6. Inform other senior staff (Head of School, Principals, Finance Manager etc) and anyone who needs to know.
7. Notify parents, providing as full a factual account of the incident as possible,, especially if medical assistance is required. Parents should be asked to wait for one hour before calling other parents of students in the group in order to give the school contact time to make all their official calls.
8. If abroad, consider that the services of an Interpreter is likely to be required.
9. All staff to be advised once the full facts are known particularly if siblings of those injured or involved are students at the school.
10. Inform the insurers (especially if medical assistance is required).
11. Notify the provider/tour operator/host school etc if necessary.
12. Make every effort to ensure that parents are kept as well informed as possible at all stages of the emergency. The police will notify parents of serious incidents.
13. Keep a written account of all relevant facts, events and contacts.
14. Inform Board Chairperson.
15. Inform Counsellor
16. Liaise with Media Contact without giving names of casualties.

In the case of a fatality

The police should be notified as soon as possible. In the UK, they will take all necessary statements and notify next of kin. In foreign countries, the procedures may well be different but local police should be able to advise.

No one should be allowed to see/interview any party member without an independent witness being present.

Police will interview children in the presence of their parents or other appropriate adult.

Students should be supported throughout the crisis.

Guidelines on Supervision Levels on School Trips

Last updated: May 2024

When assessing supervision needs for school trips, relevant considerations need to include:

- the number of students and their age, level of development, gender and ability
- the needs of the students (medical, emotional or educational)
- the competence and behaviour of students
- the experience and competence of staff (including previous experience of the destination)
- the consequence of a member of staff being indisposed
- first aid cover
- nature and duration of the visit and the planned activities
- proximity to ISA
- location and environment in which the activity is to take place
- duration and nature of journey
- type of accommodation
- whether the trip is a repeat visit or being undertaken for the first time

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ISA guidelines on supervision levels are as follows:

1. Group leaders are responsible for considering the above points and proposing a safe supervision level for their group. This must be included in the risk assessment and final approval must be given by the Head of School prior to the trip.
2. There should always be at least two adults supervising, of which one should be a teacher in charge. There should be enough supervising adults to cope effectively with an emergency.
3. Supervision considerations, especially for visits to remote locations or overseas, should take into account how the group will be supervised effectively given the possibility of a leader becoming indisposed or having to leave the group, for example to accompany a sick child to hospital.
4. In exceptional cases, one adult supervisor may be sufficient and acceptable (e.g. a small group of students on a short, local trip). If this is the case, students should be competent to manage in the event of the leader being taken ill or injured and should, as a minimum, know what to do to contact the school and get support.
5. Parties of mixed sex students should normally be accompanied by teachers of both sexes. If this is not to be the case then there should be a sound plan to manage the potential issues involved, including the needs for privacy, safeguarding and pastoral support.
6. Parents/volunteers may be used to supplement the supervision ratio. They should be carefully selected and well known to the school and the student group. Anyone who has not had a criminal conviction check should never be left in sole charge of students. The group leader must brief the parent/volunteer appropriately prior to the trip; on potential risks, expectations of behaviour, safety rules and procedures.
7. For the protection of both adults and students, all adult supervisors should ensure that they are not alone with a student wherever possible.
8. Supervisors should be made aware of any students who may require closer supervision or have specific medical or emotional needs (on a need to know basis).
9. For trips with older students, the group leader should establish whether the students are responsible enough for remote supervision (or unsupervised free time) and should ensure that parents have agreed to this.
10. The group leader remains responsible for students even when not in direct contact with them.
11. During remote supervision, the group leader must ensure that students are aware of the ground rules and are adequately equipped to be on their own in a group. The size of the group should be considered. A minimum of 3 students per group is recommended.
12. Where staff are taking their own children, supervision should be reviewed due to the possibility of there being a conflict between the parental and teacher role.
13. Transport:
Staff member's car - there must be a minimum of three people in the car. All documentation requirements and licence checks must be completed with the Health & Safety Officer.

Adult : Student Ratio Guidelines

The following ratios should be regarded as starting points for consideration rather than being definitive.

Age of students in group	Level 1 trip type *	Level 2 trip type**
3 to 5 years	1 : 3	Ratio will be determined relative to needs
5 to 8 years	1 : 8	1 : 8
8 to 12 years	1 : 12	1 : 10
12 to 18 years	1 : 15	1 : 10

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*Level 1 -

- excursions where the element of risk to be encountered is similar to that normally encountered in daily life, e.g. excursions to the theatre, museums, sites of historic interest, most field work, local walks etc;
- where the trip activity is relatively straightforward and the group has no special requirements
- local, repeat trips

**Level 2 -

- trips involving more hazardous activities or in remote locations
- overnight stays
- overseas trips
- groups including students with additional needs

Procedure should adult:student ratio fall below these levels during a trip

If the ratio drop is due to a teacher having to supervise a sick or injured student, the parents should be invited to either:

- A. collect the student from the school trip;
- B. arrange for the student to be taken home from the trip;
- C. care for the student at the school trip destination until the student is well enough to travel, and then chaperone the return journey.

If this is not possible, an ISA staff member should replace the parent in any of the 3 scenarios above (a to c).

Parents should be made aware of this possibility at the trip meeting.

If the ratio drop is due to a trip supervisor being ill or injured, a suitable replacement chaperone should be sought as soon as possible. This replacement could include a tour guide or a teacher or member of staff from the host school or activity centre. If this is not possible, an ISA staff member should travel immediately to the trip destination. Parents should be used as a trip chaperone only as a last resort if no members of ISA staff can assist.