

Introductory Statement

This Code of Behaviour has been devised by Scoil Mhuire in consultation with a PPDS Advisor, all staff members, the members of the Board of Management, the senior students and the parents committee. It was devised during the third term of the 2009/2010 school year.

Rationale

- The Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire decided to review the Behaviour Policy to ensure that it is in compliance with legal requirements and good practice as set out in *Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools, NEWB, 2008*.
- It is a requirement under the Education Welfare Act, 2000, Section 23 (1) which refers to *the obligation on schools to prepare a code of behaviour in respect of the students registered at the school. It details in Section 23(2), that the code of behaviour shall specify:*
 - A. *The standards of behaviour that shall be observed by each student attending the school;*
 - B. *The measures that shall be taken when a student fails or refuses to observe those standards;*
 - C. *The procedures to be followed before a student may be suspended or expelled from the school concerned;*
 - D. *The grounds for removing a suspension imposed in relation to a student; and*
 - E. *The procedures to be followed in relation to a child's absence from school.*

Relationship to Characteristic Ethos

Scoil Mhuire seeks to enable each child to develop his/her potential in a caring environment where the talents of each child are nurtured and valued. The school climate and atmosphere are created by the actions and behaviour of everyone in the school. The behaviour of adults in a child's life, including parents and teachers, is a significant influence on how a child acts. The code will be most effective where there is a high level of openness and co-operation between staff, parents and pupils. A clear understanding among all the partners of the standards of behaviour required and the procedures to be adopted where there are breaches of the code also helps ensure a harmonious environment where all can work effectively.

Aims

In devising this code, consideration has been given to the particular needs and circumstances of this school. The aim is to create an ordered and orderly environment in which pupils can, through developing self-discipline, feel secure and make progress in all aspects of their development. This code of behaviour describes the school's expectations about how each member of the school community will help to make the school a good place for teaching and learning. Every effort will be made by all members of staff to adopt a positive approach to the question of behaviour in the school and the over-riding aims will be –

- To ensure an educational environment that is guided by our vision statement;
- To promote positive behaviour and self-discipline recognising the differences between children and the need to accommodate these differences;
- To foster the development of a sense of responsibility and self-discipline in pupils based on respect, consideration and tolerance of others;

- To enhance the learning environment and allow the school to function in an orderly way where children can make progress in all aspects of their development;
- To ensure the safety and well being of all members of the school community;
- To assist the parents and children in understanding the systems and procedures that form part of the Code and to seek their co-operation in the application of these procedures;
- To ensure that the system of rules, rewards and sanctions are implemented in a fair and consistent manner throughout the school;
- To foster caring attitudes to one another and to the environment;
- To enable teachers to teach without disruption.

Guidelines for Behaviour in the School

The school recognises the variety of differences that exist between children and the need to tolerate these differences. It is agreed that a high standard of behaviour requires a strong sense of community within the school and a high level of co-operation among staff and between staff, parents and pupils. Every effort will be made to ensure that the code of behaviour is implemented in a reasonable, fair and consistent manner. The limits of behaviour are clearly defined and children become familiar with the consequences of behaviour beyond these limits. The over-riding principle governing this code is respect - respect for ourselves and others; our own and others' property and the environment.

The school expects the highest standard of behaviour from its pupils including the following:

- Each pupil is expected to be well behaved and show consideration for other children and adults;
- Each pupil is expected to show respect for the property of the school, other children's and their own belongings;
- Each pupil is expected to attend school on a regular basis and to be punctual;
- Each pupil is expected to do his/her best both in school and for homework.

While the school has expanded on these principles to outline the "school rules" (see Appendix 1), each class is required to draft their own class rules or charter, through consultation and discussion within the class and they will reflect the age and maturity levels of the students in the class. These rules will be kept to a minimum, they will be recorded in simple language and they will be stated positively, telling students what to do as well as what not to do. The rules will be referred to regularly and will form part of SPHE lessons.

Whole School Approach to Promoting Positive Behaviour

The Board of Management and the Principal have overall responsibility for the implementation and on-going monitoring of this policy. However, all staff members have responsibility for their own classes and for the general school population when on yard duty or on any organised out-of-school activity. Senior students have a role to play and parents or other members of the school community may make comments or suggestions through their representatives on the Board of Management or directly to the Principal. The school values the support and co-operation of parents in the promotion of this strategy. The policy shall apply to all students during all school related activities.

It is the policy of this school to actively promote good behaviour. Children learn best by being rewarded. It is more positive to praise a child doing the proper thing than to constantly scold the child who misbehaves. As part of our on-going efforts to promote positive behaviour, time will be allocated at some staff meetings for discussion regarding the implementation of the code. Staff will

be given opportunities to share their experience of both positive and negative behaviour and to learn from collective wisdom.

Praise

Praise may be given by means of any one of the following:

- A quiet word or gesture to show approval;
- A comment in a child's exercise book;
- A visit to another class, to another member of staff or to the Principal for commendation;
- A word of praise in front of a group or the class;
- A reward system – student of the week/occasional treats;
- Student of the Week / Student of the month
- Special mention at assembly;
- Delegating some special responsibility or privilege;
- A mention to parents - either written or verbal communication;
- End of year awards ceremony.
- Teachers will use various strategies to promote good behaviour including "Golden Time", star/reward charts, stickers, homework passes, weekly lottery, group competition

To facilitate new members of staff become familiar with practices within the school, discussion regarding the implementation of the code will always form part of the first staff meeting held each September. A copy of the code will be included in all teachers' documents. The code will also be given to parents whenever they enrol a child in the school.

APPLYING SANCTIONS

The Following strategies will be used by all teachers:

Disapproval

The purpose of sanctions and other strategies is to promote positive behaviour and to discourage misbehaviour. Sanctions will be applied according to the gravity of the misbehaviour, with due regard to the age and emotional development of the child.

The following stages will be used to show disapproval of inappropriate behaviour – they are not always followed in the format listed.

- Reasoning with pupils including advising them about the consequences of their actions;
- Verbal reprimand (including advice on how to improve);
- Temporary removal from group (within the class or on the yard);
- Note in journal from class teacher to be signed by parent;
- Carrying out a useful task within the school;
- Reflection sheet (signed by parent and kept on file by teacher);
- Referral to another teacher/classroom (maximum stay one hour);
- Verbal communication with parents/guardians;
- Prescribing extra work (kept on file by teacher);

- Supervision during lunch break in designated area;
- Withdrawal of privileges;
- Recording instances of repeated misbehaviour and referral to the Principal;
- Formal written communication with parents/guardians;
- Referral to the Principal and the Chairperson or other member of the Board of Management;
- Formal meeting with parents/guardians;
- Suspension;
- Expulsion.

Pupils will not be deprived of engagement in a Curricular Area, except on the grounds of health and safety.

Occasionally, other prudent, unlisted steps may be taken.

Initially instances of misbehaviour will be dealt with by the class teacher. This will include children being advised about their behaviour and about how to improve. Discussion about behaviour and its consequences will form part of SPHE lessons at all class levels. Teachers will actively promote good behaviour and aim to “catch” repeated offenders at activities where they can give positive feedback, thus promoting better behaviour.

However, where these strategies have failed and where misbehaviour is more serious or persistent it will be necessary to involve others including the Principal, parents/guardians and the Board of Management. The Principal and staff may also seek assistance from NEPS, SESS, HSE or other agencies.

Classification of Misbehaviours

Misbehaviour falls into one of three categories – minor, serious or gross. Teachers and/or the Principal will make judgements based on a common sense approach having regard to the age or vulnerability of the child and the gravity and frequency of any misbehaviour as follows:

Minor Misbehaviour

The following are examples of possible minor misbehaviour:

- Interrupting class work
- Running in the school building
- Littering around the school
- Being discourteous or unmannerly
- Talking out of turn etc.

Teachers will take the following steps when dealing with Minor Misbehaviour

Phase 1

- Reasoning with the pupil;
- Verbal reprimand;
- Note in journal from class teacher to be signed by parent;
- Denial of participation in “Class jobs” rota;
- Carrying out a useful task within the school;
- Noting instances of yard misbehaviour in the incident book and informing class teacher.

Regular occurrences of Minor Misbehaviour will be dealt with as follows:

Phase 2

- Temporary separation from peers (within the classroom);
- Referral to another teacher/classroom (maximum stay one hour);

- Reflection sheet (describing incident) signed by parents/teacher/student (kept on file by teacher)
- Referral to the Principal;
- Discussion with parents about misbehaviour.

Phase 3

- Child will be sent to the Principal;
- Formal letter from school Principal informing parent of continuous misbehaviour;
- Denial of participation in some class activity e.g. trip to park, school tour;
- Class teacher and/or Principal will meet with one/both parents;
- Chairperson of the Board of Management informed and parents requested to meet with Chairperson or other designated Board member and the Principal.

Serious Misbehaviour

The following are examples of possible serious misbehaviour:

- Constantly disruptive in class
- Telling lies
- Damaging others' property
- Answering back a teacher

All incidents of bullying will be dealt with as outlined in the school's Anti-bullying policy. (See separate policy)

An account of all incidents of serious misbehaviour will be entered in the relevant Incident book. Teachers will take steps as outlined from Phase 2 above, but may proceed to the following steps when dealing with repeated, regular occurrences of Serious Misbehaviour

- Parents will be invited to meet class teacher, the principal and/or the chairperson to discuss repeated incidents of serious misbehaviour.
- Suspension will be used as a sanction where all attempts at reasoning with the pupil have failed and where all other efforts of the school in consultation with the parents or guardians of the pupil have failed to achieve a satisfactory conclusion. Following formal verbal discussions a letter outlining items discussed will be sent to parents. Communications to parents regarding the suspension of a pupil, or the possibility of considering suspension as a sanction, will be in writing. (Copies of all correspondence will be retained)

Gross Misbehaviour

- The following are examples of gross misbehaviour:
- Bringing weapons or dangerous substances to school
- Deliberately injuring any member of the school community
- Aggressive, threatening or violent behaviour towards a member of staff or a pupil; (e.g. physical violence, striking).
- Persistent incidents of serious misbehaviour will be classified as gross misbehaviour.

Teachers will take the following step when dealing with Gross Misbehaviour

- Principal and Chairperson are informed immediately and suspension sanctioned.

Procedures for Suspension and Expulsion

Before serious sanctions such as suspension or expulsion are used, the normal channels of communication between school and parents will be utilised. Communication with parents may be verbal or by letter depending on the circumstances.

For gross misbehaviour or repeated instances of serious misbehaviour, suspension may be considered. Parents concerned will be invited to come to the school to discuss their child's case.

Where there are repeated instances of serious misbehaviour, the Chairperson of the Board of Management will be informed and the parents will be requested in writing to attend at the school to meet the Chairperson, teacher and the principal. If the parents (and the pupil – depending on the age of the child) do not give an undertaking that the pupil will behave in an acceptable manner in the future the pupil may be suspended for a period. Prior to suspension, where possible, the Principal may review the case in consultation with teachers and other members of the school community involved, with due regard to records of previous misbehaviours, their pattern and context, sanctions and other interventions used and their outcomes and any relevant medical information. Suspension will be in accordance with the Rules for National Schools and the Education Welfare Act 2000.

In the case of gross misbehaviour, where it is necessary to ensure that order and discipline are maintained and to secure the health and safety of pupils and teachers, the Board has deferred responsibility to the Chairperson or the Principal to sanction an immediate suspension for a period not exceeding three school days, pending a discussion of the matter with the parents.

Further suspensions will require Board of Management approval. This approval may be obtained at a regular meeting of the Board or at an emergency meeting at which the Chairperson and Principal have outlined for the Board the reasons why they feel it is necessary to impose a further suspension. The maximum period of suspension that may be imposed is ten school days. In line with the requirements of the Education Welfare Act (2000), the Board of Management will inform the Education Welfare Board when any pupil's period of suspension equals or exceeds six school days.

- When a student is suspended, the parents will be requested to remove the student from the school. The Principal will meet with the parents to outline the decision to implement the suspension and will present the parents with a written statement of the terms, duration and date of the termination of the suspension.

Removal of Suspension (Reinstatement)

Following, or during a period of suspension, the parents may apply to have the pupil reinstated to the school. The parents (and pupil) must give a satisfactory undertaking that a suspended pupil will behave in accordance with the school code and the Principal must be satisfied that the pupil's reinstatement will not constitute a risk to the pupil's own safety or that of the other pupils or staff **and** will not have a seriously detrimental effect on the education of other pupils. The Principal in consultation with the parents, the class teacher and the pupil (if appropriate) will facilitate the preparation of a behaviour plan for the pupil, if required, and will re-admit the pupil formally to the class.

Where a satisfactory resolution of a problem is achieved, a pupil may be re-admitted to school within a suspension period at the discretion of the chairperson of the board and the principal.

Expulsion

The Board of Management has the authority to expel a pupil in an extreme case (see p.80/81/82, Developing a Code of Behaviour; Guidelines for Schools) e.g. where repeated incidents of serious misbehaviour interfere with the educational opportunities of fellow students or where there is a threat to the health and safety of either students or staff. Where expulsion is considered the school authorities will have tried a range of other interventions and will have formed the opinion that they have exhausted all possibilities for changing the pupil's behaviour. Where the Board of Management is of the opinion that a pupil should be expelled the Board will inform the National Education Welfare Board of its decision and the reasons in writing. The decision to expel will take effect 20 days after the NEWB has received notification in writing. Where the school has expelled a pupil and all appeals processes both internal and external have been exhausted, the student's expulsion will be reported on the student absence report form.

This sanction would be imposed under the terms of the Education Welfare Act (2000). Suspension/expulsion procedures are in accordance with the Education Act (1998).

Before/After School

Parents are reminded that the school does not accept responsibility for pupils before official opening time of 9.10a.m. or after the official closing time of 2.00p.m. (Junior Infants) or 3.00 p.m. (other classes) except where pupils are engaged in an extra-curricular activity organised by the school and approved by the Board of Management. Pupils involved in such activities are expected to behave in accordance with school behaviour policy during these times.

Misbehaviour on the Yard

Incidents of yard misbehaviour will be dealt with as follows:

The teacher on duty who notices misbehaviour will reason with the pupil/s misbehaving. If no improvement occurs the following procedure may be followed:

- Ask the pupil/s misbehaving to accompany the teacher on duty as they patrol the yard;
- Impose a period of "time out" – 5 to 15 minutes – where the student will be asked to remain in a specified place until told to return to play;
- Inform the class teacher (This will be by way of keeping the class teacher informed but generally will not mean the need for further sanction);
- In-class supervision where the student is not allowed on the yard for playtime until some punishment is completed.

Involving Parents in Managing Problem Behaviour

A high level of co-operation and open communication is seen as an important factor encouraging positive behaviour in the school. Structures and channels designed to maintain a high level of communication among staff and between staff, pupils and parents have been established and are reviewed regularly. Parents are encouraged to talk in confidence to teachers about any significant developments in a child's life, in the past or present, which may affect the child's behaviour. Parents should make appointments to meet with class teachers and/or the Principal at the earliest opportunity in an effort to prevent any escalation of inappropriate behaviour. The school will remind parents of the procedures for contacting the school at every opportunity.

Class teachers will refer to repeated episodes of minor misbehaviour in the pupil's Homework journal which parents are requested to sign each evening. Parents of infants will receive a short note from the teacher. In cases where pupils are required to complete some extra work as a sanction, parents will again be requested to sign the relevant work. Class teachers may occasionally request parents to visit them in school to discuss some aspect of a pupil's behaviour. The Principal will be informed of these meetings and may be invited to attend.

Where pupils are found to be involved in more serious misbehaviour the Principal may telephone or write to parents to request them to attend an informal/formal meeting at the school. Class teachers, teachers who witness misbehaviour while supervising on yard duty, the Principal and Chairperson of the Board of Management may also attend these meetings. The pupil may also attend all or part of these meetings, if deemed appropriate.

Managing aggressive or violent behaviour

The school recognises that occasionally students may not respond positively to the usual interventions and that they may require extra support in an effort to manage aggressive or violent behaviour. A small minority of students may show particular challenging behaviour. These students will need a sustained and systematic response involving the important adults in their lives, in school and at home. Where the school feels the need the support of outside agencies may be requested.

Appeals

Under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998, parents (or pupils who have reached the age of 18) are entitled to appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science against some decisions of the Board of Management, including (1) permanent exclusion from a school and (2) suspension for a period which would bring the cumulative period of suspension to 20 school days or longer in any one school year. Appeals must generally be made within 42 calendar days from the date the decision of the school was notified to the parent or student. (See Circular 22/02)

Keeping records

In line with the school's policy on record keeping, and data protection legislation, formal records in relation to pupils' behaviour are kept in a secure filing cabinet. Copies of all communications with parents will be retained in the school. Records of more serious incidents are recorded in a specific journal. All such records are retained until students reach 21 years. Class teachers shred personal records at the end of each year.

Procedures for notification of pupil absences from school

Parents must notify the school in writing of a student's absence and the reason for this absence.

Roles and Responsibilities

Board of Management's Responsibilities

The Board of Management is expected to

- Provide a comfortable, safe environment;
- Support the Principal and staff in implementing the code;
- Ratify the code;
- Ensure the code is communicated to the whole school community.

Principal's Responsibilities

The Principal is expected to

- Promote a positive climate in the school;
- Ensure that the Code of Behaviour is implemented in a fair and consistent manner;
- Arrange for review of the Code, as outlined in the timetable for review.

Teachers' Responsibilities

Teachers are expected to:

- Teach the code;
- Support and implement the school's code of behaviour having regard to decisions made on a whole school basis;
- Be cognisant of their duty of care;
- Create a safe and welcoming working environment for each pupil;
- Praise desirable behaviour;
- Listen, at appropriate times, to pupils' explanations for behaviour;
- Be consistent and fair;
- Deal appropriately with misbehaviour;
- Keep a record of instances of serious misbehaviour or repeated instances of misbehaviour;
- Provide support for colleagues;
- Communicate with parents when necessary and
- Provide reports on matters of mutual concern.

Pupils' Responsibilities

Pupils are expected to

- Attend school regularly and punctually;
- Listen to their teachers and act on instructions/advice;
- Show respect for all members of the school community;
- Respect all school property and the property of other pupils;
- Avoid behaving in any way which would endanger others;
- Avoid all nasty remarks, swearing and name-calling;
- Include other pupils in games and activities;
- Bring correct materials/books to school;
- Follow school and class rules.

Parents' Responsibilities

Parents are expected to

- Encourage children to have a sense of respect for themselves and for their own and other people's property;
- Ensure that children attend school regularly and punctually;
- Be interested in, support and encourage their children's school work;
- Be familiar with the code of behaviour and support its implementation;
- Co-operate with teachers in instances where their child's behaviour is causing difficulties for others;
- Communicate to the school the reasons for children's absences;
- Communicate with the school in relation to any problems which may affect child's progress/behaviour.

Reference to other Policies

Other school policies that have a bearing on the code of behaviour include

- o SPHE plan
- o Anti-bullying
- o Enrolment
- o Record keeping
- o Tours
- o Mobile phones
- o Health & Safety
- o Equality
- o Special Educational Needs

Success Criteria

This policy will be deemed to be successful when the following are observed:

- *Positive behaviour in class rooms, playground and school environment*
- *Practices and procedures listed in this policy being consistently implemented by teachers*
- *Positive feedback from teachers, parents and pupils.*

Implementation Date:

The Code of Behaviour was reviewed and updated in February 2012

Review

The code will be discussed at staff meetings and reviewed periodically.

Communication:

A copy of the Code of Behaviour will be distributed to all parents and parents will receive a copy on the enrolment of a pupil.

Ratified by Board of Management on _____

Date

Signed

Chairperson, Board of Management