

St. Mary's N.S. Code of Behaviour

Rationale

This Code of Behaviour has been prepared in accordance with the guidelines "Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools" published by the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB, 2008). The Code of Behaviour also conforms to legislation as required by Section 23 of the Education Welfare Act (2000). Parents, staff and members of the school community have read this Code and have given feedback.

- 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.

Our School Philosophy

Our school motto; 'Mol an Óige agus tiocfaidh sí' –'praise our youth and they will flourish' is the core of our school philosophy. We acknowledge the potential of each individual, spiritual, emotional, intellectual and physical, and strive to develop and nurture all aspects of the personality to complement the work which parents, as primary educators, are striving to do. We feel that the child can best grow to be a responsible citizen in a warm, caring and just environment where every child is valued; such an environment we endeavour to create.

Aims

The aim of this code is to:

- Ensure an educational environment that is guided by our vision statement
- Create a positive and safe environment for teaching and learning.
- Create an atmosphere of mutual respect, tolerance and consideration for others
- Promote positive behaviour and self-discipline, recognising the differences between children and the need to accommodate these differences
- Ensure the safety and well being of all members of the school community
- Ensure that St. Mary's high expectations for the behaviour of all the members of the school community are widely known and understood.
- Ensure that the system of rules, rewards, and sanctions are implemented in a fair and consistent manner throughout the school.
- Provide guidance for pupils, staff and parents/guardians on behavioural expectations

Content of policy

The policy is addressed under the following headings.

1. Guidelines for behaviour in the school
2. Whole school approach to promoting positive behaviour
 - Staff
 - Board of Management
 - Parents
 - Pupils
3. Positive strategies for managing behaviour
 - Classroom
 - Playground
 - Other areas in the school
4. Rewards and sanctions
 - Rewards and acknowledgement of good behaviour
 - Strategies for dealing with unacceptable behaviour
 - Involving parents in management of problem behaviour
 - Managing aggressive or violent behaviour
5. Suspension / Expulsion
 - Suspension
 - Expulsion
 - Appeals
6. Procedure for notification of a pupil's absence from school
7. Reference to other policies

1. Guidelines for behaviour in the school

The Education Welfare Act, Section 23, states that the code of behaviour shall specify *"the standards of behaviour that shall be observed by each student attending the school"*.

At St. Mary's N.S., these are the standards of behaviour that the school wishes to promote and expects from the pupils:

- Each pupil is expected to be well behaved, courteous and to 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 speak in a respectful manner to others, never using bad language.
- Each pupil is expected to listen to the class teacher, to work hard and to do his/her best both in school and for homework

All pupils are required to comply with the Code of Behaviour. However, the school recognises that some pupils with special educational needs may need more active intervention to help them to manage their behaviour and additional help to ensure that they understand what is expected of them.

Section 23 (4) of the Act states that, prior to registering a pupil, the principal teacher shall provide the parents of the child with a copy of the school's code of behaviour and that the principal *'may, as a condition of so registering such child, require his or her parents to confirm in writing that the code of behaviour so provided is acceptable to them and that they shall make all reasonable efforts to ensure compliance with such code by the child'*.

2. Whole school approach in promoting positive behaviour

In keeping with our school motto "Mol an óige agus tiocfaidh sí", The Board of Management (B.O.M.) and the staff at St. Mary's N.S. actively foster a school ethos, policies and practices that promote positive behaviour and aim to prevent inappropriate behaviour. The following measures are in place to promote a whole school approach to behaviour:

Staff

Each teacher is provided with a copy of the Code of Behaviour.

The elements of a whole school approach to behaviour include:

- An ethos, policies and practices that are in harmony
- A teamwork approach to behaviour
- A whole school approach to curriculum and classroom management
- An inclusive and involved school community.
- The principal teacher promoting a positive environment, ensuring that the code of behaviour is implemented in a fair and consistent manner

The school's Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum is used to support the code of behaviour. It aims to help our children develop communication skills, appropriate ways of interacting and behaving, and conflict resolution skills. It also aims to foster self-esteem and to help children accommodate differences and develop citizenship.

Board of Management

- The B.O.M. will encourage the parents/guardians of pupils attending the school to become involved in any review of the code.
- The B.O.M will play an important role in the maintenance of desirable standards of behaviour in a school by being supportive of the Principal Teacher and staff in the application of a fair code of behaviour and discipline within the school.
- It will further play a positive role in fostering understanding and co-operation between teachers, parents/guardians and pupils.
- The Chairperson of the B.O.M. visits the school regularly and satisfies himself that the code of behaviour is being implemented effectively and that the Rules for National Schools are being followed.
- The B.O.M. facilitates the attendance of staff members at in-service courses and other opportunities/seminars for staff development in relevant areas.
- The B.O.M. has put in place procedures to deal with serious breaches of behaviour as outlined in sections 4 & 5 of this policy.

Parents

'Evidence seems to indicate that schools which succeed in achieving and maintaining high standards of behaviour and discipline tend to be those with the best relationships with parents.'

'Schools need the support of parents in order to meet legitimate expectations with regard to good behaviour and discipline.' (Circular 20/90).

In order to strengthen understanding and support for the code and to provide information for parents we:

- Give each parent/guardian a copy of the Code of Behaviour and ask them to support the promotion of positive behaviour and maintenance of high standards of behaviour by:
 - Co-operating with the school's system of rewards and sanctions
 - Attending meetings at the school if requested
 - Ensuring their children are at school in time
 - Helping their children with homework
 - Ensuring their children have the necessary books and materials for school
- Discuss school standards, expectations of pupils and parents/guardians role in supporting positive behaviour during the introductory meeting, held each year for new parents
- Have clear channels through which parents/guardians can communicate any concerns they may have about a pupil
- Encourage parents/guardians to share information about anything that might affect behaviour in school
- Ask parents/guardians to follow the school's grievance procedure, should the need arise.

Pupils

Pupils' roles in the ongoing implementation of the code of behaviour:

- They model good behaviour for other children by adhering to the rules, encouraging and helping them to do likewise
- They are actively involved in drawing up their classroom rules
- During assemblies they acknowledge the positive behaviour of others

Applying the code to pupils who present with behavioural difficulties arising from their special education needs.

- Specialised behaviour plans will be put in place in consultation with parents and the class teacher, learning support teacher and/or Principal who will work closely with the home to ensure that optimal support is given. Cognitive development will be taken into account at all times. The school's National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) psychologist and/or the Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) multidisciplinary team may also be consulted about interventions and assessment. Professional advice from other outside agencies may be sought where appropriate and available.

3. Positive strategies for managing behaviour

'The most effective methodology that teachers develop in attempting to manage challenging behaviour is to prevent it occurring in the first place'. (Managing Challenging Behaviour, Guidelines for teachers INTO 2004: 5).

Classroom

Strategies used to encourage and affirm positive behaviour:

- Ensuring that pupils are treated fairly and equally
- Positive everyday interactions between teachers and pupils
- Recognising and giving positive feedback about behaviour
- A quiet word or gesture to show approval
- Matching work with pupil's abilities; a prize/reward carefully noted by the teacher to ensure that **all** children at regular stages during the school year are rewarded for effort/behaviour/skill etc. *Teachers creating moments of success and then acknowledging them.*
- A comment in a pupil's exercise book
- A visit to another member of staff or the Principal for commendation
- A word of praise in front of a group or class or assembly
- Entry of a record of good behaviour in the *Congratulations Assembly Book*;
- Delegating some responsibility or privilege
- A mention to a parent/guardian – written or verbal;
- Teacher records improvement in the behaviour of a disruptive pupil

- Implementation of Programmes such as **Circle Time** to promote positive behaviour

Positive strategies used by the staff to effectively manage behaviour include:

- Ground rules/ behavioural expectations in each class that are consistent with the ethos as expressed in the code of behaviour and which set a positive atmosphere for learning
- Good school and class routines
- Pupil input in devising the class rules
- Teachers ensuring that pupils understand and are frequently reminded of how they are expected to behave
- Exploring with children how people should treat each other
- A clear system of acknowledging and rewarding good behaviour and sanctions for misbehaviour
- Classroom management techniques that ensure a variety of activities and methodologies to sustain pupil interest and motivation
- Timetabling.

Playground.

Positive strategies are implemented by the staff to promote good behaviour, to prevent behavioural difficulties and to deal with incidences of unacceptable behaviour in the playground

- St. Mary's N.S. has a concise set of playground rules, which emphasise positive behaviour and make it clear what activities are permitted. Pupils are encouraged to seek assistance, as soon as possible, from an adult in the playground if they have any concerns re behaviour. Their class teachers regularly remind the pupils in class about the playground rules. The principal regularly praises pupils for their good behaviour and encourages pupils to follow the rules so that the playground is a happy and safe place for all.
- There are three teachers on playground duty for each break. All the SNAs are also in attendance in the playground.
- Zones have been created within the playground, providing sections for specific class groups.
- Pupils are aware that they must ask permission from a teacher on duty if they need to leave the playground.
- Teachers collect their classes from the playground after each break and accompany them back to the classrooms.
- On wet days, provision is made for pupils to make use of the hall at designated times.

Other areas in the school

Pupils are encouraged to adhere to school rules in all areas of the school. They are regularly reminded of the need to follow the rules so that the school is a safe place for everyone. They are expected to walk in the corridors at all times.

School related activities

The code not only applies on the school premises but also applies at any school related activity.

4. Rewards and Sanctions

Rewards and acknowledgement of good behaviour

Good behaviour is publicly recognised and acknowledged in the school. There are many special occasions when pupil achievement is acknowledged as referred to in Section 3. *Positive strategies for managing behaviour*

Reward systems may be part of an overall school or class strategy, or may form part of a planned intervention to help an individual student to manage their own behaviour

Strategies for dealing with unacceptable behaviour

The Education (Welfare) Act 2000, Section 23, states that a school must outline '*the measures that may be taken if a student fails to observe the standards of behaviour that the school has outlined*'.

A problem-solving approach

An important element of the approach to a student's inappropriate behaviour is a problem-solving approach one where the teacher and the school respond to the unwanted behaviour using these steps.

- Gather information. Understand the context and the factors that may be affecting behaviour.
- Generate ideas about possible solutions that take account of the reasons why it may be happening.
- Decide and agree on specific strategies.
- Implement the agreed strategy consistently.
- Review progress: evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the intervention.
- Parents/guardians may be involved in this process.

Whole School Strategies:

Whole School Approach to the Use of Sanctions

- The purpose of a sanction is to bring about a change in behaviour by:
 - Helping students to learn that their behaviour is unacceptable
 - Helping them to recognise the effect of their actions and behaviour on others
 - Helping students (in ways appropriate to their age and development) to understand that they have choices about their own behaviour and that all choices have consequences
 - Helping them to learn to take responsibility for their behaviour.
- A sanction may also:
 - reinforce the boundaries set out in the code of behaviour
 - signal to other students and to staff that their wellbeing is being protected.
- In instances of more serious breaches of school standards sanctions may be needed to
 - Prevent serious disruption of teaching and learning
 - Keep the student, or other students or adults, safe.

Good practice in the use of sanctions:

- Sanctions should be used in a way that ensures that:
 - They are part of a plan to change behaviour
 - They are proportionate and appropriate to the age and developmental stage of the pupil.

Strategies used in response to unacceptable behaviour

Drawing on the professional judgement and knowledge of the particular context of the student and the behaviour, teachers will decide which sanctions to use:

- Verbal reprimand (including advice on how to improve and change inappropriate behaviour)
- Loss of privileges
- Removal from the group
- Withdrawal from the particular lesson or activity
- Prescribing additional work
- Carrying out a useful task
- Referral to Principal Teacher/Deputy Principal
- Communication with parents/guardians
- Formal report to B.O.M.
- Suspension

Agreed ways of describing behaviour

Behaviours are categorised in the school into minor, serious or gross misdemeanours. The degree of misdemeanours i.e. minor, serious or gross, will be judged by the teachers and/or Principal based on a common sense approach with regard to the gravity/frequency of such misdemeanours

It should be noted that these lists consist of examples only: it is not meant to be a totally comprehensive list of misdemeanours.

Examples of Minor Misdemeanours:

- Interrupting class work/ arriving late for class/ running in school building/not listening and speaking out of turn / leaving litter around school / being discourteous or unmannerly/ not completing homework without good reason/

Examples of Serious Misdemeanours:

- Name calling or taunting/ Constantly disruptive in class/ telling lies/stealing/damaging or interfering with another person's property or school property or equipment/back answering a teacher/leaving school premises during school day without appropriate permission/ using or writing unacceptable language/ deliberately injuring a fellow pupil or partaking in any activity which would put themselves or others in danger/not complying with school directive on mobile phones

Examples of Gross Misdemeanours:

- Bullying/Deliberately vandalizing school property/ aggressive, insulting, threatening or violent behaviour towards any person /any type of assault/ bringing alcohol, drugs, cigarettes or matches to school.

Disciplinary Actions and Sanctions to deal with Bullying:

This document must be read in association with our Anti-Bullying policy.

In St. Mary's bullying is considered to be a serious or even gross misdemeanour. The matter will be investigated and dealt with as outlined in the Anti-Bullying policy.

The school adopts a staged approach in response to misbehaviour.

- Minor misbehaviour, e.g. minor misdemeanours, will generally be dealt with by the classroom teacher.

- However, if the misbehaviour is more serious or persistent, the parents/guardians will be informed and the Principal or Deputy Principal may become involved. Class teachers will keep a record of serious and gross misdemeanours.
- When dealing with gross misdemeanours, the Principal/Deputy Principal will be involved. Parents/Guardians will be called to a meeting in the school. The B.O.M. will be informed and a record kept of the incident. Suspension or expulsion may be considered.

Managing aggressive or violent misbehaviour

Strategies used for dealing with serious emotional and behavioural problems

- Systematic approach to responding to behaviour including
 - Teacher attention and praise
 - Planned ignoring of minor non-disruptive and attention seeking behaviour
 - Using incentives and rewards to encourage positive behaviour and motivation
 - A stepwise approach to responding to misbehaviour
- Appropriate support may be sought from services available e.g. Special Education Needs Organiser, Health Service Executive, NEPS, ASD multidisciplinary team
- Behaviour is tracked and recorded.
- Individual Behaviour Plans
- Problem solving approach and analysis of behaviour using the Antecedent - Behaviour – Consequences approach
- Adapting the environment and changing triggers

When faced with a potentially violent situation the following steps may prove useful in de-escalating the situation:

- Where possible the child should be isolated. This may involve the child being exited from the classroom, perhaps with a special needs assistant, or with the assistance of another teacher (2 members of staff to be involved) . An alternative is that the rest of the class is removed from a potentially violent situation.
- The child should be spoken to calmly, assertively and respectfully.
- The teacher should stay at a safe distance.
- Distract the child
- Redirect the pupil, stating clearly the desired behaviour
- It should be made clear that you are listening to the child. In this way it may be possible to find out how the situation has developed, or how it may be resolved.
- The child should be asked to consider possible positive outcomes and behaviours.
- The child should be given space and time to cool off and to respond to requests.

In the event of seriously violent or threatening behaviour causing a risk to the safety of the pupil himself/herself or the safety of other pupils or staff, parent/guardian may be requested to collect their child at the earliest opportunity.

Physical intervention in such circumstances may be regarded as reasonable and appropriate to ensure the safety of the pupil and others .e.g. blocking a pupil's path, shepherding a pupil.

5. Suspension / Expulsion Procedures

The Education Welfare Act, 2000, stipulates that a code of behaviour shall specify... *'the procedures to be followed before a student may be suspended or expelled from the school concerned'* and *"the grounds for removing a suspension imposed in relation to a student."*(Sections 23(2) c, d)

Authority to suspend

While the Board of Management has the authority to suspend, the Board of Management of St. Mary's has delegated this authority to the principal, for periods of up to three days. The B.O.M. has also authorised the Principal, with the approval of the Chairperson of the Board, to impose a suspension of up to five days in circumstances where a meeting of the Board cannot be convened in a timely fashion. The B.O.M has placed a ceiling of ten days on any one period of suspension imposed by it.

The grounds for suspension

In St Mary's N.S. suspension is used as a proportionate response to the behaviour that is causing concern. Normally, other interventions will have been tried before suspension, and the staff will have reviewed the reasons why these have not worked. The decision to suspend a student requires serious grounds such as that:

- The student's behaviour has had a seriously detrimental effect on the education and/or welfare and safety of other students or staff.
- The student's continued presence in the school at this time constitutes a threat to safety
- The student is responsible for serious damage to property.

A single incident of serious misconduct may be grounds for suspension.

The following procedure will be followed in St. Mary's

- An investigation of the facts to confirm serious misbehaviour.
- Parents/guardians will be informed by phone or in writing about the incident.
- Parents/guardians and student should be given an opportunity to respond before a decision is made and before any sanction is imposed.
- A meeting will be arranged with the pupil and their parents.

If suspension is still decided upon:

The principal will notify the parent/guardian in writing of the decision to suspend and the letter will confirm:

- The period of the suspension and the dates on which the suspension will begin and end.
- The reasons for the suspension.
- The provision for appeal to the Board of Management
- The provision for appeal to the Secretary General of the DES. (Only where the total number of days for which the student has been suspended in the current school year reaches 20 days.)
- Where the cumulative total of days reached 6, the NEWB will be notified

The period of suspension

A student should not be suspended for more than three days, except in exceptional circumstance. If a suspension longer than three days is being proposed by the Principal, the matter should be

referred to the B.O.M. for consideration and approval, giving the circumstances and the expected outcomes.

Immediate Suspension:

Where an immediate suspension is considered by the Principal to be warranted for reasons of the safety of the student, other students, staff or others,

- A preliminary investigation should be conducted to establish the case for the imposition of the suspension.
- The formal investigation should immediately follow the imposition of the suspension.
- Parents must be notified, and arrangements made with them for the student to be collected

Records and Reports.

Formal written records will be kept of:

- The investigation (including notes of all interviews held)
- The decision and rationale for the decision.
- The duration of the suspension and any conditions attached to the suspension

The Principal will report all suspensions to the B.O.M., with the reasons for and the duration of each suspension

Grounds for removing a suspension

A suspension may be removed if the Board of Management decides to remove the suspension for

any reason or if the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science directs that it be removed following an appeal under section 29 of the *Education Act 1998*.

Expulsion (permanent exclusion)

Under the Education Welfare Act, 2000, 'A student shall not be expelled from a school before the passing of twenty school days following the receipt of a notification under this section by an educational welfare officer' (Section 24(4)) It is the right of a Board of Management to take '...such other reasonable measures as it considers appropriate to ensure that good order and discipline are maintained in the school concerned and that the safety of students is secured.' (Section 24(5))

Authority to expel

The B.O.M. of St. Mary's has the authority to expel a student.

The grounds for expulsion

Expulsion should be a proportionate response to the student's behaviour. Expulsion of a student is a very serious step, and one that will only be taken by the B.O.M in extreme cases of unacceptable behaviour.

A proposal to expel a student requires serious grounds such as that:

- The student's behaviour is a persistent cause of significant disruption to the learning of others or to the teaching process
- The student's continued presence in the school constitutes a real and significant threat to safety
- The student is responsible for serious damage to property.

Procedures in respect of expulsion.

- A detailed investigation carried out under the direction of the principal.

- A recommendation to the BOM by the principal
- Consideration by the BOM of the principal's recommendations and the holding of a hearing.
- BOM deliberations and actions following the hearing.
- If BOM is of the opinion that the student will be expelled, the Board must notify the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) in writing of its opinion and the reasons for this opinion. The intention to expel a student does not take effect until 20 school days have elapsed after NEWB have received written notification. The NEWB will be notified using a **Notice of Intention to Expel form**, which is available on www.schoolreturn.ie or from the helpline (1890 36 3666). This form will be completed and sent to **School Return Section, National Educational Welfare Board, 16-22 Green St, Dublin 7**.
- Consultations arranged by the EWO.
- Confirmation of the decision to expel
- A formal record will be made of the decision to expel.

Appeals

- The B.O.M. will advise parents/guardians of their right of appeal against the decision under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998.

6. Procedures for notification of pupil absences from school

The Education Welfare Act, 2000, Section 23 (2)(e) states that the code of behaviour must specify, *"the procedures to be followed in relation to a child's absence from school."* Section 18 stipulates that parents/guardians must notify the school of a student's absence and the reason for this absence.

Strategies that are used to encourage school attendance include:

- Creating a stimulating and attractive school environment
- Adapting curriculum content and methodologies to maximise relevance to pupils
- Adapting the class and school timetables to make it more attractive to attend and to be on time
- Making parents aware of the terms of the Education Welfare Act and its implications.
- System for acknowledging/rewarding good or improved attendance

We ask parents/guardians to send in a note informing teachers in writing of their child's absence from school and the reason for this absence. While a telephone call to the office is appreciated, a written note must follow. This information is used when reporting pupil absences to the National Welfare Educational Board

7. Reference to other Policies

The following school policies have a bearing on the code of behaviour e.g.

- SPHE plan
- Anti-bullying
- Enrolment
- Record keeping
- Home / School links
- Health & Safety
- Equality
- Special Educational Needs

Success Criteria

- Observation of 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/guardians and pupils and co-operation between parents/guardians, teachers and pupils in maintaining the code
- Growth in self discipline among the children

Review

This policy was reviewed at BOM meeting in June 2022

Reference Section

- Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 Section 23(1 -5), 24 (1-5)
- Education Act, 1998 Section 15 (2(d))
- Circular 20/90 on Discipline (DES web site www.irlgov.ie/educ). Also in CPSMA Handbook
- Circular 22/02 Appeals Procedures under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998. (DES website). Deals with appeals under the following headings:
 - (1) Permanent exclusion from a school
 - (2) Suspension
 - (3) Refusal to enrol
- Guidelines for Developing School Codes of Behaviour (National Education Welfare Board) *Draft edition published for consultation in 2007*
- Department of Education and Science Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post Primary Schools (1993) available on DES website
- Report to the Minister of Education Niamh Breathnach, T.D. on Discipline in Schools. Maeve Martin, 1997. Ch. 4 p.56-61 Recommendations for Schools
- Stay Safe and Walk Tall Programmes
- Management Board Members' Handbook. Revised 2007. CPSMA: A suggested Code of Behaviour & Discipline for National Schools
- INTO (2004) Managing Challenging Behaviour: Guidelines for Teachers
- INTO (2006) Towards Positive Behaviour in Primary Schools
- INTO (1995) Enhancing Self Esteem
- The Education Act 1998. The Education Welfare Act 2000. Questions and Answers, INTO
- The Principal's Legal Handbook Oliver Mahon B.L. IVEA 2002 Ch. 2 School Discipline
- Responding to Bullying. First Steps for Teachers. The Cool School Programme. NE Health Board
- Investigating and Resolving Bullying in Schools. The Cool School Programme. NE Health Board
- Stop it! Steps to Address Bullying. Wexford Education Network. Wexford Area Partnership. Phone: 053 23994
- Working towards a Whole School Policy on Self-Esteem and Positive Behaviour. Jenny Mosley. Positive Press 2001
- Working Together – to promote positive behaviour in classrooms, CEDR, Mary Immaculate College of Education
- Achieving Positive Behaviour. A Practical Guide. Patricia Dwyer. Marino

