Scoil Muire agus Treasa
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Behaviour Management and Code of Discipline

Introduction

The general aims of primary education are:

- to enable the child to live a full life as a child and to realize his or her potential as a unique individual
- to enable the child to develop as a social being through living and co-operating with others and so contribute to the good of society
- to prepare the child for further education and lifelong learning.

To achieve these aims it is important that the individuality of each child is recognised and accommodated while also acknowledging the right of other children to education in a proper environment. Creating the proper environment in the school, as described on pages 2/3, is the duty of the entire school community. A well developed Behaviour Management Policy and Code of Discipline is an important part of that environment.
The following is our Behaviour Management Policy and Code of Discipline which has emerged over several years of review and implementation and has been developed in a process of collaboration with the school community. This policy was reviewed by the Staff of Swinford National School and in consultation with representatives from the Parents Association and the Board of Management in September 2024. This Code of Behaviour Policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Swinford National School on 2nd October 2024.

Roles and Responsibilities

1. The overall responsibility for discipline within the school rests with the Principal Teacher who is entrusted with this responsibility by the Board of Management.
2. Each teacher is responsible for the maintenance of discipline within his/her classroom while sharing a common responsibility for good order within the school premises.
3. A set of rules for the class is drawn up by each teacher, in consultation with the pupils, that are broadly in line with overall school policy.
4. A set of playground rules is drawn up in consultation with the pupils
5. At the start of each year the Principal will explain the Code of Discipline/Code of Behaviour to the children.
6. Our Code of Behaviour can be accessed on our Website at www.swinfordns.ie
7. The term 'parent' in this code is used to refer to natural parents, adoptive parents or legal guardians.
8. A system of recording incidents to be organised by class teacher and yard teacher.

Beliefs and values

Scoil Muire & Treasa is a Catholic school and as such we are motivated by Christian values.

In addition we believe that:

- Respect is at the core of good behavior
- Positive encouragement and motivation should be our main approach
- Enhancing a child's self-esteem and morale contributes greatly to good behaviour
- Children should be educated towards self-discipline and responsibility as early as possible.
- Being pro-active in preventing indiscipline works best
- Preventing misbehaviour occurring by dealing with its causes and the factors that contribute to its development is the most effective approach

Expectations

We expect each child to:

Show respect for himself/herself
Show respect for other people
Show respect for the school environment.
Make a genuine effort to do his / her best.
Behave in a courteous, friendly and responsible manner.
Behave in a way that shows tolerance of everyone's needs.

Charter

The following charter has been adopted by our school community. It is a fundamental set of understandings that informs how we all behave.

1. **We will treat everyone with respect.**
2. **We will respect everyone's right to learn**
3. **We will respect everything to do with safety**
4. **We will show respect for property**

Whole School Approach to Promoting Positive Behaviour

- The Board of Management and the Principal have overall responsibility for the implementation and the on-going monitoring of this policy.
- However, all teachers have responsibility for their own classes and for the general school community when on yard duty or on any other out-of-school activity.
- Each class teacher should ensure that he/she compiles classroom rules at the commencement of each school year. This should be done in collaboration with the pupils so that pupils have a sense of ownership of these rules.
- Rules should be consistent with the school ethos and set a positive atmosphere for learning.
- Teachers should ensure that pupils understand and are frequently reminded of how they are expected to behave.
- A concise set of playground rules which emphasises positive behaviour and make it clear to all what activities are permitted are compiled and communicated to all.
- These rules should also be revised and reviewed with all pupils on a regular basis.
- The Code of Behaviour will also apply to all extracurricular activities e.g. school tours, football matches, swimming lessons etc.

- If the school is to be a happy, secure environment where children can develop to their full potential it is necessary to provide a framework, which promotes constructive behaviour, and discourages unacceptable behaviour.

  - The school code should place a greater emphasis on rewards than on sanctions and the ideal is that all pupils will acquire the skills of self- discipline.
  - There are times however when it may be necessary to impose sanctions in order to maintain good order and to discourage offenders.
  - The school recognises the variety of differences, which exist between children and the need to accommodate these differences.
  - To ensure that all staff is familiar with the Code of Behaviour and with practices within the school, a discussion on the Code will form part of the first staff meeting of the year.
  - All staff will have a copy of the Code of Behaviour.
  - Substitute/ temporary teachers will also be given a copy of the Code of Behaviour (to be included in each teacher's absence pack).
  - The parents/guardians of newly enrolled pupils will also be given a copy of the code.

Promoting Positive Behaviour

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.

Strategies to be used to promote positive behaviour could and should include....

- 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 e.g. occasional treats/star reward charts, stickers, homework passes, traffic light system for positive behaviour used consistently throughout the school
- Special mention at assembly
- Delegating some special responsibility or privilege
- A mention to parents either written or verbal communication
- Using Buddy System to promote positive interaction/good example between senior and junior pupils e.g. paired reading, story writing, letter writing to Santa, Friendship Week, World Book Day, Minders in Junior classes.

Managing misbehaviour

We have divided misbehaviour into four broad categories;
(i) Minor (ii) Serious (iii) Gross (iv) Challenging
Examples of these might be:

Minor Misbehaviour:

- Litter
- Running on corridors
- Talking or whispering during lessons
- Improper uniform
- Rough play in the playground
- Not observing procedures for coming in and out of class

Minor misbehaviour is generally behaviour that is disruptive rather than malicious.

Serious Misbehaviour

- Persistent minor misbehaviour
- Unwillingness to heed advice or instructions from teachers
- Bullying (depending on the circumstances)
- Vandalism
- Theft (depending on the circumstances)
- Disruption of class work

Gross Misbehaviour

- Serious vandalism
- Bullying (depending on the circumstances)
- Theft (depending on the circumstances)
- Threatening behaviour towards a member of staff

Challenging Behaviour

Aggressive and violent behaviour is not a regular occurrence in most primary schools. However when such incidences occur and there is a danger of injury to the child him/herself or to staff or other children the use of physical restraint may be necessary. In certain incidences it may be necessary to remove other children/staff from the classroom/setting if the behaviour of a child is deemed a potential risk to the safety of other children/staff.

In a situation where e.g. a child with special education needs may be unable to respond to normal sanctions and/or in an emergency situation where sanctions are not appropriate or adequate the Board of Management approve the use of restraint by staff members for whom the Board has provided training. When challenging behaviour is an ongoing problem an Individual Behaviour Management Programme should be drawn up with input from relevant professionals

Each incident to be examined on its own merits using common sense and discretion.

When children misbehave, it may be sometimes necessary to use sanctions in order to deal with the misbehaviour. The teacher will decide if and when sanctions are appropriate and whether those sanctions should be formal or informal.

Informal Approach

The teacher will deal with **minor** misbehaviour in an **informal** way initially by:

1. Explaining the misbehaviour to the child
2. Praising any improvement
3. Issuing a reprimand
4. Organise a change in seating arrangements to minimize disruption
5. Getting the child to recognise where he or she has caused hurt or injury, apologise accordingly and give an undertaking to bring about an improvement.
6. Placing the child on a self-monitoring / self-regulation programme where the child will focus on improving his/her behaviour by keeping a simple log for a number of days in which he/she will rate the behavior during the morning, lunch and afternoon sessions. This will be used by the teacher to reinforce attempts at improvement.

The teacher may employ a range of **informal sanctions** such as:

1. Issuing a special form called a '*Reflective Sheet'*, that the child fills in describing the misbehaviour and why it is unacceptable (Appendices D, E, F)
2. Issuing additional exercises to accompany the above
3. Depriving the child of the privilege of using the normal playground facilities for a period. A '*Time Out'* may be employed for a short period only for misbehavior on the yard.
4. Allocating a task to the child that compensates for the misbehaviour
5. Ensuring that the child makes due compensation for damage to property
6. Contact child's parent / guardian via Aladdin or phone call.
7. Reporting the child to the Principal.

It has been agreed that the following sanctions will not be used:

Putting a child outside the class without supervision

Loss of PE or Art except for misbehaviour during those classes

Class punishment for the misbehaviour of a few

Time out on yard is not to be used for Classroom misbehaviour

Progression

Deciding what sanctions to use is at the discretion of the staff depending on the issues involved.

A child who **persistently** misbehaves even on a minor scale and who has to be continuously corrected has a very damaging effect on the whole atmosphere of the class and the school. The school regards such persistent misbehaviour as **serious** and will use **formal** sanctions in these circumstances.

Formal Sanctions

For dealing with **Serious or Gross** misbehaviour a **formal** set of sanctions is required. The purpose of the sanctions is to get the child to change his/her pattern of misbehaviour, for his/her own good and the good of the class.

The following sanctions may be used to show disapproval of unacceptable behaviour, depending on the nature and seriousness of the occasion, and bearing in mind the age and maturity of the child involved.

Stage 1. **Formal Stage 1 Disciplinary Letter to Parents/Guardians – from the Class Teacher and the Principal**. This letter is brought home, signed, returned to the school and kept on file. (See ***Appendix A*** , P. 9).

Stage 2**. Stage 2 Disciplinary letter to Parents/Guardians from the Class Teacher and the Principal.** The Stage 2 letter is brought home, signed, returned to the school and kept on file (see ***Appendix B***, P. 10).

Stage3**. Parents are requested to call to the school**. If matters have not improved as a result of previous attempts (or for some isolated incident of serious misbehaviour) parents may be asked to call to the school to discuss how an improvement might be brought about**. It is envisaged that this would be an on-going process where teachers and parents would co-operate fully in order to bring about an improvement in the child's behaviour.** Parents may be requested to visit the school regularly for an update. In the specific case where a child blankly refuses to do what he/she is told by a teacher – a parent/guardian is immediately contacted to come to the school.

The Board of Management is mindful of every child's constitutional right to education and will only use the sanction of suspension or expulsion in exceptional circumstances and as a last resort after the school, in consultation with parents, has taken all reasonable steps to avoid excluding the child temporarily by suspension and or permanently by expulsion.

Phase 2

- Suspension (See ***Appendix C***, Page 11/12 for full details)
- Expulsion (See ***Appendix C***, Page 11/12 for full details)

Involving Parents/Guardians in Managing Problem Behaviour

Parents/guardians are valued as partners in the school community and as such will be invited to participate in promoting positive behaviour both in school and in the wider community.
Class teachers will refer to repeated episodes of minor misbehaviour as recorded on Aladdin, Class incident log or yard book
In cases where pupils are required to do some extra homework as a sanction, parents/guardians will again be requested to sign the relevant work.
Class teachers may occasionally request parents/guardians 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.
Parents/guardians are encouraged to make appointments with class teachers and/or the Principal at the earliest opportunity to prevent any escalation of inappropriate behaviour.

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 because of behavioural/emotional needs. These students will need a sustained and systematic response involving all the important adults in their lives, in school and at home. The support of outside agencies may also be requested to deal with such aggressive or violent behaviour.

Procedures for notification of pupil absences from school
Under the terms of the Education Welfare Act 2000 parents/guardians must notify the school in writing of a student's absence and the reason for this absence.

Record Keeping
All records pertaining to a pupil's behaviour must be kept in a secure filing cabinet. This is in line with the school's policy on record keeping and also is in line with data protection legislation.

Notes on the implementation of sanctions

1. It is envisaged that generally a child would progress from one stage to the next. However, depending on the nature of a particular incident, the school reserves the right to apply whatever stage it feels appropriate in accordance with the Rules for National Schools.

2. It is assumed in this code of discipline that parents are ultimately responsible for their own children's behaviour.

3. Parents will be involved at an early stage rather than as a last resort.

4. A written record of all instances of serious misbehaviour or gross misbehaviour, shall be kept in the school as well as a record of improvements in the behaviour of disruptive pupils.

5. Every effort will be made to have an emotionally disturbed child referred for psychological assessment without delay. Help will be sought from community services where this is appropriate.

6. This code will be reviewed every year.

The Board of Management of the school and the teaching staff has examined the code carefully and has adopted its terms.

Reviewed: _____

Responsibility for Review:

All members of staff
Parents' Association
Board of Management of School

Ratification and Communication

Policy ratified by B.O.M.

Signed: _____
Chairperson Board of Management

Date: _____

Date for next Review:_____

Appendix A

The STAGE 1 Disciplinary Letter to Parents/Guardians

Pupil's Name: _____
Date____/_____/____

Class Teacher: _____

Dear Parents/Guardians

I would like to draw your attention to the fact that your child's behaviour has been unsatisfactory as indicated below. His /Her name has been noted on a number of occasions.

Disruptive in class ☐

Inattentive in class ☐

Has shown lack of respect towards teacher/pupil/property ☐

Homework assignment not completed/completed unsatisfactorily ☐

Behaviour on playground unsatisfactory ☐

I would appreciate if you would discuss this matter with your child.
Please sign and return.

Yours sincerely,

_____
Class Teacher

_____

Adrian Cregg
School Principal

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Signature(s):

_____

Appendix B

The STAGE 2 Disciplinary Letter to Parents/Guardians

Pupil's Name: _____ Date: _____/_____/_____

Class Teacher: _____

Dear Parents/Guardians

I sent you a note previously on _____/_____/_____. I would like to draw your attention to the fact that your child's behaviour has again been unsatisfactory as indicated below and his /her name noted again on a number of occasions.

Disruptive in class ☐

Inattentive in class ☐

Has shown lack of respect towards teacher/pupil/property ☐

Homework assignment not completed/completed unsatisfactorily ☐

Behaviour on playground unsatisfactory ☐

I would appreciate if you could contact the school (094-9252055) to make an appointment to meet with me to discuss this matter.

Yours sincerely,

_____
Class Teacher

_____

Adrian Cregg
School Principal

Appendix C

Suspension/Expulsion

- Before serious sanctions such as suspension or expulsion are used, the normal channels of communication between school and parents will be utilised. Communications with parents may be verbal or by letter depending on the circumstances.
- For gross misbehaviour or for repeated instances of serious misbehaviour, suspension

for a period may be considered. Parents concerned will be invited to come to the school to discuss the child's case. Aggressive, threatening or violent behaviour toward a teacher or fellow pupil will be regarded as serious misbehaviour.

- Where there are repeated instances of 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 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, suspension for a period will be considered.

- Prior to suspension, the Principal, where possible, may review the case, in consultation with teachers and other members of the school community, having due regard to records, (if any) of previous misbehaviours, their pattern and context, sanctions and other interventions used, and their outcome, and any relevant medical/family information. Suspension will be in accordance with the Rules for National Schools and the Education Welfare Act 2000.
- In the case of serious misbehaviour, where it is necessary to ensure that order and discipline are maintained and to secure the safety of the pupils and staff, the Board of Management may authorise the Chairperson or Principal to sanction 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 days. In line with the requirements of the Education 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/guardians may apply to have the pupil reinstated to the school. The parents/guardians 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. 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 readmit the pupil formally to the class.

When 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 of Management 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 instances 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 its 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 recorded on the student absence form.

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

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 Skills against some decisions of the BOM, including (1) permanent exclusion from a school and (2)

suspension for a period which would bring the cumulative period of suspension to 20 days or
longer in any one school year. Appeals must be made within 42 calendar days from the date the decision of the school was notified to the parent or the guardian.(See Circular 22/02)

Appendix E

Reflective Sheet – 2nd to 6th Class

Child's Signature _____

What did I do? **I _____** _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
Who did I hurt? **I_____** _____ _____ _____ _____

_____

_____

Parent's Signature _____