

Code of Behaviour

St. Mary's N.S.

Reviewed September 2024

Introductory Statement:

Our code of behaviour and discipline is under constant review and discussion between all the partners in education; students, parents, staff and BOM. We share ownership of this document and welcome input from all our partners.

Rationale:

In today's fast changing society we appreciate the importance of regular review and revision. This review is undertaken to continue to provide the orderly environment for quality teaching and learning to take place. This policy is formulated in accordance with the NEWB Guidelines for Schools (2008) as required under section 23 of the Education Welfare Act 2000.

We are incorporating elements of a number of different programmes to develop a code of behaviour for our school community.

These include Restorative Practice, Walk Tall, Mindfulness, SESS Behaviour Resource Bank, Executive Functioning and the NEPS Continuum of Support

Our vision for relationships and behaviour in the school and the ways in which the school promotes good behaviour.

The relationship with the characteristic spirit of the school:

Aims:

- To provide guidelines for pupils, teachers and parents on behavioural expectations, rewards and sanctions.
- To ensure that the individuality of each child is accommodated while acknowledging the right of each child to an education in a disruptive – free environment.
- To provide for the effective and safe operation of the school.
- To develop the pupil's self – esteem and to promote positive behaviour.
- To provide a safe environment for pupils, staff and others in the school.
- To promote the development of self – discipline and good citizenship in pupils based on respect, consideration, and tolerance of others.
- To foster caring attitudes towards one another and to the environment.
- To facilitate the education and development of every child.
- To enable teachers to teach without disruption.

- To promote consistency across the whole school in relation to standards of behaviour, rewards and sanctions.
- To ensure compliance with statutory requirements.

Promoting good behaviour:

- Positive reinforcement of good behaviour.
- Greater emphasis placed on rewards and incentives than on sanctions.
- Open communication with all partners in education.
- Modelling good behaviour.

The School Mission Statement:

St. Mary's National School is a Catholic primary school which welcomes children of all religions and nationalities. We, the school community, believe in the education of the whole child. Following a child – centred and holistic approach, we endeavour:

1. To recognise and acknowledge the talents and abilities of each child.
2. To nurture each child's talents and self – esteem in a caring and supportive environment.
3. To provide the learning opportunities which will foster and develop the life – skills and resources necessary for his / her role in society.
4. To uphold the Catholic ethos of the school.

The expectations for students, staff and parents and how to treat each other:

We all expect to be treated fairly and with respect. This we can do by listening calmly to each other's points of view, giving everyone the right to reply and working together to resolve issues.

a. Contact between parents and staff:

- Teachers should remain in regular contact with parents throughout the school year, both formally and informally. The journal or notebook can be used to write a note home commenting on good and poor behaviour. This can be followed up with a meeting if necessary to resolve a problem. Meetings can be arranged by appointment to facilitate cover and minimise class disruption.
- A parent – teacher meeting is held in November each year. This is another forum for parents to discuss issues with class teachers.
- A written school report is posted home in June before the end of the school year.

b) Students and Staff:

- Students and staff should treat each other with respect at all times.

- If there is an issue that needs to be discussed the teacher should try to do so privately, i.e. out of ear shot of the rest of the class. All issues should be followed through as soon as possible.
- If there is an issue that a student needs to raise with the teacher, each teacher should have a system in place so the student knows that there is a suitable time in the day that the teacher has time to listen and give feedback. A student may use the opportunity to speak with the teacher at breaktime.

How students, teachers and parents can help promote a happy school.

a) What expectations do we have of teachers in terms of promoting positive behaviour and a happy school?

By creating and promoting a happy, positive, co-operative school environment the aim is to minimise the occurrence of incidents that disrupt or challenge the right of the child to an education in a safe, disruption free environment. In order to achieve this it is expected that the teacher will;

- Organise classroom management and layout to promote a positive, co-operative atmosphere.
- Spend time at the start of and during the year building relationships with students setting expectations for the year
- Design class rules, rewards and sanctions with class outlining behaviour expected in class and outside of class.
- Set down a certain standard of behaviour and expect those standards to be followed, such as, good manners, taking turns, being respectful and remaining calm. These should be taught incidentally, by example and in SPHE.
- Explain and discuss penalties for misbehaviour.
- Be consistent.
- Be good role models.
- Communicate calmness.
- Make time to talk to children, show respect for them and their culture and interests.
- Make time to discuss problems with children.
- Use restorative questions to teach responsibility for behaviour.
- Record keeping.
- Calming system in the yard.
- Keep parents / guardians regularly informed about progress and behaviour.
- Supervise children adequately.

b) What expectations do we have of parents in terms of promoting positive behaviour and a happy school?

The parents / guardians are the greatest influence in their child's life and by prompting a happy positive outlook towards school they can greatly enhance the child's experience of school. The following are suggestions towards achieving this:

- Keep in contact with teachers regularly informally and through parent teacher meetings so as to have a clear picture of what is going on in school.
- Send your child to school unless there is a very good reason for keeping him / her at home. Regular attendance is important.
- Write a note explaining absences and give to teacher.
- Ensure that homework is done each day.
- Ensure that children wear correct uniform and are tidy.
- Ensure children have the equipment they require for class each day and that their books/copies/folders are neat and presentable.
- Ensure children always use correct entrance and exit.
- Ensure that children do not have a mobile phone or electronic device in school, as per Mobile Phone Policy.
- Write a note if you wish children to leave the school early e.g. for a dental appointment etc and ensure child is collected from the school building.
- Write a note if someone other than the parent / guardian is collecting the children.
- Ensure you sign your child out of school if leaving early.

b. What expectations do we have of pupils in terms of promoting positive behaviour and a happy school?

- Contribute to discussion and agreement of class rules, rewards and sanctions.
- Treat others as you would like them to treat you.
- Treat everyone you meet in school with respect.
- Be mannerly and kind.
- Be fair to others.
- Be tolerant of others.
- Be inclusive of others.
- Be attentive in class.
- Don't disrupt class and learning of others.

- Raise problems calmly and at appropriate times.
- Take responsibility for their own learning and behaviour.

Roles and responsibilities of staff members in relation to behaviour:

- Model good behaviour.
- Inform staff, pupils and parents of code of behaviour and of preferred practices.
- Review and update code.
- Classroom management to promote positive behaviour.
- Discussion with children about expectations, rules, rewards and sanctions.
- Rewards system in place.
- Consistent and fair application of sanctions.
- Open communication with parents.
- Whole school approach towards behaviour.
- Record keeping.

Role of the Principal:

- Ensure everyone is aware of the Code of Behaviour
- Ongoing consultation with staff and parents.
- Support staff in implementing rules.
- Ensure consistent link between all parties.

Role of the S.N.A:

- Reinforce the Code of Behaviour under the guidance of the class teacher.
- Support the class teacher in the implementation of individual behaviour programmes.

The purpose and content of school rules:

- The school rules are part of the school's plan for helping students in the school behave well and learn to the best of their ability.
- They promote the school ethos, relationships, policies procedures and practices that encourage good behaviour and discourage unacceptable behaviour.
- These practical arrangements help teachers, other staff members, students and parents to be part of a happy, effective and safe school.

Rules we discuss in the classroom:

- Respect everyone and their property
- Listen to the person speaking and be attentive.
- Be on time and be prepared for class
- Do as you are asked immediately
- Raise your hand and wait quietly for attention
- Always do your best and allow others to do the same
- Stay seated when your teacher is out of the room
- Under no circumstances should you leave school grounds

Each class is taught the above rules. They apply in class and on yard.

Playtime:

- Students must show respect for people and their property.
- Keep the school clean – use the bins.
- Chewing gum and fizzy drinks are not allowed in school.
- Students play in the designated area.
- Students should not leave school grounds.
- Play gently, be a good friend.
- Don't call names, don't hurt others.
- Return to class/line up immediately when the bell rings.

Access:

- Always use the correct entrances / exits on entering or leaving the building and grounds.
- Students must walk quietly on corridors.
- Students should stand back for an adult in a doorway

Uniform

- Students must wear the full school uniform and appropriate shoes.
- For safety reasons, if earrings are worn, they should be of the stud variety. Hoop or dangling earrings are not permitted.

- School tracksuit for P.E

Mobile Phones

- Student must not have a mobile phone in school. (See Mobile Phone Policy)
- If a student brings their phone without permission it will be confiscated and returned to the parent / guardian.
- If a student has a mobile phone turned on while on break / lunch, it will be confiscated and returned to the parent / guardian.
- No school related photographs are to be posted on social media without permission of the Principal.
- These rules are in place to ensure no disruption of learning and are good practice in terms of the anti-bullying policy, child protection and data protection.

Electronic devices

- Electronic devices owned by pupils are not allowed on the school premises as the school cannot be responsible for their safe keeping.
- Electronic devices used by the staff for educational purposes must be used in line with our schools 'Photography Policy' and as per permission granted on enrolment form.
- No photographs of children or staff are to be taken by children on any device.

Systems for acknowledging good behaviour, progress and effort (e.g. rewards systems)

The staff utilise systems that reward behaviour and effort as opposed to results. These have to be meaningful to the student or group. The student must understand why the rewards are given. The reward must acknowledge behaviour that is valued and wanted. The reward must be closely linked with time to the specific behaviour. The reward must be used in an inclusive way.

Teacher acknowledges examples of kindness, respect, helpfulness, thoughtfulness and special effort.

These include the following:

Junior / Senior Infants

Rewards:

- Stickers used informally to promote good work ethic, kindness and good behaviour
- Golden Time
- Students of the week awarded during whole-school assembly - certificate and prize from the prize box
- Good friend / random act of kindness of the week - certificate awarded during whole-school assembly and prize from the prize box
- Display of exemplary work on 'Our Wow Work' wall

1st / 2nd class

Rewards:

- Student of the Week/Good Friend of the Week - certificate and prize.
- Individual reward system – stickers/ stampers (used informally)
- Homework pass
- Student of the Week plaque
- Golden Time

3rd / 4th class

Rewards:

- Display of individual work
- Golden Time
- Pupil of the Week certificate and treat.
- Good Friend of the Week

5th / 6th class

Rewards:

- Golden Time Whole Class Reward- earn up to 30 mins for Friday
- Ticket in the Friday prize draw (winner every Friday)
- Display of work
- Pupil of the Week.
- Good Friend of the Week
- Positive note home

Whole School Rewards:

- Public display of exemplary work on corridor
- Recognition during whole school assembly

How students, staff and parents can help each other to meet the standards expected in the school.

The single most important way in which students, staff and parents can help each other meet the standards expected by the school is through communication. Good communication means:

- Having a positive attitude.
- Being polite to each other.
- Acknowledging the input that each student, parent and teacher has.
- Acknowledging the contribution that each has to make to the education of the students.

The code is a live and positive set of beliefs and actions that help ensure the school and classroom are effective settings for teaching and learning. To achieve this the code requires regular monitoring and feedback by all students, parents and teachers.

Staff member with responsibility for reviewing and updating the code: the Principal, or in his/her absence, the Deputy Principal.

Where parents and students can get help when a problem arises

If parents and students have a problem or issue that they wish to discuss they can contact the school to arrange time to talk to any of the following:

- Class teacher
- Deputy Principal: Ms. Murphy
- Principal: Mr. Nolan

The consequences of unacceptable behaviour: what is considered unacceptable behaviour and what happens when people break the rules (responses and sanctions)

- The object of a sanction is to help the student to learn how to behave.
- Even minor breaches of the code of behaviour can be disruptive particularly if they are persistent. Serious misbehaviour can have damaging and long- lasting effects including the disruption of the students own learning and the learning of others. It can cause distress and anxiety or even pose a threat to the safety of students and teachers.
- We work on the strategy of early intervention where student behaviour does not meet the standards expected at the school.

The elements of the whole – school approach to inappropriate behaviour includes:

- Agreed ways of describing misbehaviour.
- Arrangements for recording behaviour.
- A ladder of intervention.

Describing misbehaviour:

- Use clear language.
- Accurately describe what has occurred.

- Accurately state what was said by each party in an incident.
- Use of restorative practice and questions
- Date and sign records.
- Child may be asked to complete a 'Behaviour Reflection Sheet'.

Records:

Teachers should keep a record of behaviour in their class. Students should be told the record is being kept. The eight rules of data protection apply to personal records kept in school (Please refer to GDPR Policy):

- Obtain and process information fairly.
- Keep it only for one or more specified explicit and lawful purposes.
- Use and disclose it only in ways compatible with these purposes.
- Keep it safe and secure.
- Keep it up to date, accurate and complete.
- Ensure that it is adequate, relevant and not excessive.
- Retain it no longer than is necessary for the purpose or purposes.
- Give a copy of their personal data to an individual on request.

Levels of intervention:

1. Support for all. Most students behave appropriately with the help of consistent and clear rules and routines in class and in school. Occasional minor misbehaviour will be dealt with by the class teacher.
2. Additional support for some students. Some students need more active intervention to help them manage their behaviour. Without this help they would be at risk of failing, behaviourally, socially and educationally. Additional inputs and interventions include:
 - Referral to another teacher or adult who can work with the student.
 - Setting targets for behaviour plan and monitoring them with the student in a supportive way.
 - Behaviour contracts.

Local support services that may be able to assist are the National Educational Psychological Service, HSE Community Psychology Services, the National Behavioural Support Services, the National Council for Special Education, SESS, Child Guidance Services or Adolescent Health Services.

Staff roles and responsibilities:

The team approach to individual behaviour is important. The class teacher is the front – line source of help for the students. Both teacher and student have access to other staff members for support and advice.

Types of misbehaviour:

Minor incidents of misbehaviour are those of a less serious nature which occur on a once off basis and may include:

- Use of bad language.
- Speaking out of turn.
- Passing notes.
- Flicking objects.
- Distracting others.
- Swinging on chair.
- Mocking, jeering.
- Leaving place without permission.
- Marking, scratching furniture / writing on walls/windows
- Littering.
- Playing outside the approved area.
- Leaving play area without permission.
- Interfering with other children's play.
- Excluding others from games.
- Pushing, jostling.

Major incidences of misbehaviour are a single incidence of gross behaviour or repeated instances of serious behaviour. Gross behaviour is that which seriously endangers self or others.

Serious misbehaviour may include:

- Aggressive, threatening or violent behaviour towards a pupil or member of staff. Aggressive behaviour may include kicking, fighting, punching, deliberate tripping or spitting at someone.
- Possession of a dangerous weapon.
- Bullying.
- Stealing.

- Immodesty.
- Serious damage to property / vandalism.
- Verbal abuse, insulting another child, name – calling, jeering another's background or parents, sexual orientation, slurs etc.
- Racial / cultural / sexual remarks.
- Giving cheek, answering back to a staff member.
- Refusing to co – operate / disobeying.
- Constant interruption in class.
- Inciting others to fight.
- Leaving school grounds.

A child who engages in a single incident of serious misbehaviour and poses a threat to the safety of staff or other children in our school may be sent home immediately.

Definition of bullying:

“Bullying is repeated aggression, verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against others. Isolated incidents of aggressive behaviour, which should not be condoned, can scarcely be described as bullying. However, when the behaviour is systematic and ongoing it is bullying.” (DES Feb 2010)

Types of bullying behaviour:

Student behaviour:

- Physical aggression.
- Damage to property.
- Extortion.
- Intimidation.
- Abusive telephone calls / texts / e – mails / social media comments.
- Isolation.
- Name calling.
- Slagging.
- Bullying of school personnel.

See Anti – Bullying Policy for further details.

Sanctions:

Sanctions should be used in a way that ensures that they are part of a plan to change behaviour. A sanction is a form of positive intervention. It helps students understand the consequences of their behaviour and to take responsibility for changing that behaviour. A sanction aims to:

- Defuse and not escalate a situation.
- Preserve the dignity of all the parties.
- Be applied in a fair and consistent way.
- Be timely.

Sanctions are to be used consistently.

Sanctions should be proportionate to the nature and seriousness of the behaviour taking into account the frequency, duration and persistence of the behaviour, whether it is part of an escalating pattern of poor behaviour and the context of the behaviour. Sanctions should be appropriate to age and developmental stage of a student.

- Immediate/timely
- Focus on behaviour not the pupil as a person
- Give opportunity to put things right
- Every day is a fresh start

Examples of sanctions used in classes:

- Non verbal warning.
- Verbal warning.
- Isolation in class.
- Detention.
- Exclusion from class.
- Withdrawal of privileges such as golden time.
- Withdrawal from a particular lesson or peer group.
- Extra work assigned.

Procedures used for dealing with minor misbehaviour in class:

- Highlight good behaviour first – eg “eyes and ears this way please.”
- Send student an alert signal first so they know teacher is aware of his / her behaviour – eg moving to stand at desk.

- Quiet intervention – a private firm word – eg “leave that down and face forward, thanks.”
- Allow take up time.
- Offer the student a choice – eg. Behave and remain with the group, continue to disrupt and be moved.
- Instigate choice – consequence / result.
- Prescribe extra work to be done during breaktime or at home and signed by parent.
- Discuss incident with student afterwards in terms of what they did, what rule they broke, their explanation / side of the story and what they can do to fix things. Children may be asked to complete a ‘Behaviour Reflection Sheet’.

Procedures used for dealing with persistent minor misbehaviour in class:

- Remove student from the group and have a firm talk about rules and consequences and a final warning about being moved to another room.
- Time out (loss of some or all of break time)
- Remove the student to an alternative class or teacher nearby for a limited period of time.
- Loss of certain privileges. This should be communicated to parents.
- Deputy Principal and Principal notified of persistent offenders.

Procedures used for dealing with inappropriate behaviour on the yard:

Inappropriate behaviour on the yard is often not just a breach of school rules but also a serious health and safety issue.

- In the case of breaking rules on the yard, for example playing roughly and dangerously, repeatedly not in designated areas or fighting, the teacher on the yard can send the student for “time – out”
- The student gets a cooling down period and the teacher on the yard can continue to supervise the other children safely.
- The teacher talks to the student about what has happened and informs the class teacher. A record is kept by the class teacher.
- A student who is featuring regularly may need further intervention as discussed earlier.
- A student who leaves school grounds may be sent home for the remainder of the school day.

During timeout restorative practice methodologies are to be used.

The schools duty of care:

In applying any sanction the duty of care of the student is still maintained. The students are appropriately supervised at all times. Appropriate arrangements are made to ensure that child protection guidelines are observed. (See Department of Health and Children), (1999) *Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children*).

Students with Special Educational Needs:

Sanctions may be needed to help a student with special educational needs to learn about appropriate behaviour and skills, as in the case of any student. It is important, as with any student, that students with special educational needs understand the purpose of the sanction and the reason why their behaviour is unacceptable. Pupils for whom English is not their first language may need help understanding the rules and reasons for them. Some time spent working through this with the SET may be needed and will be timetabled as necessary.

Inappropriate Sanctions:

- Physical punishment or the threat of physical punishment.
- Ridicule, sarcasm or remarks likely to undermine a student's self – confidence.
- Public or private humiliation.
- Applying sanctions to whole groups or classes in cases of individual or small group wrongdoing.
- Leaving a student in an unsupervised situation while in the care of the school.
- Persistent isolation of, or ignoring, a student in class.
- Sanctions that are used in a discriminatory way.

Procedures for detention:

Detention is used as a sanction in conjunction with support for students showing challenging behaviour as part of a graded consequence for poor behaviour.

During detention restorative practice methodologies are to be used.

Reference to school policies to deal with bullying, harassment and sexual harassment:

See Anti – Bullying Policy

When and where behaviour will be subject to the code of behaviour:

The code of behaviour applies at all times during the school day.

Applying sanctions in response to behaviour that takes place outside school.

The standards and rules contained in the code of behaviour apply when the student, though outside school, is still the responsibility of the school.

Examples include:

- School tours.
- Library trips.
- Matches.
- Quizzes.
- Events organised by the school.
- Swimming.

Where a student is alleged to have engaged in serious misbehaviour outside of school, when not under the care or responsibility of the school, a judgement would have to be made that there is a clear connection with the school and a demonstrable impact on its work, before the code of behaviour applies. The school authorities may need to get legal advice where the situation is complex.

Policies and procedures for suspension and expulsion:

Fair procedures apply in the investigation of alleged misbehaviour that may lead to suspension or expulsion.

Fair procedures have two essential parts:

- The right to be heard.
- The right to impartiality.

1) The right to be heard means that a student and his / her parents are fully informed about an allegation and the processes that will be used to investigate and decide the matter; and that they must be given an opportunity to respond to an allegation before a decision is made and before a serious sanction is imposed.

2) The right to impartiality means that where possible the Principal arranges for another member(s) of staff to conduct the investigation and to present a full report on the facts of the case and any other relevant information to the principal. The principal can then take a view about whether the student did engage in the behaviour and about the sanction, based on the report.

To ensure an absence of bias, if there is a connection between the Principal or a Board member and the student that is accused of misconduct, the principal or board member would absent themselves from the decision.

The principal must ensure that the investigation is fully and fairly conducted.

The person alleging the misbehaviour or the victim or a witness would not usually conduct the investigation.

The degree of formality required will depend on the gravity of the alleged misbehaviour and the seriousness of the possible sanction. The level of formality required, for example for a

suspension of fewer than three days, would be less than that required in the case of a longer suspension or in circumstances that might lead to an expulsion.

Suspension:

Suspension is defined as “requiring the student to absent him / her from school for a specified, limited period of school days.”

The Board of Management of a recognised school has the authority to suspend a student. Where this authority is delegated to the principal, the delegation should be done formally and in writing.

Suspension should be a proportionate response to the behaviour that is causing concern. Normally, other interventions will have been tried before suspension and school 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 of the other students.
- 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.

Factors considered before suspending a student:

- What is the precise description of the behaviour?
- How persistent has the unacceptable behaviour been?
- Has the problem escalated, in spite of interventions tried?
- What are the circumstances of the incidents of serious misbehaviour?
- What factors may have triggered the incidents of serious misbehaviour?
- What is the age, stage of development and cognitive ability of the student?
- Are there any factors that may be associated with the behaviour? (eg. provocation or special educational needs).
- How are other students and staff affected by the behaviour?
- What impact has this behaviour on the teaching and learning of the class?
- Does the behaviour have a particular or greater impact on some students or teachers?
- Does the student understand the impact of their behaviour on others?

- What interventions have been tried? Over what period?
- How have the interventions been recorded and monitored?
- What have been the results of these interventions?
- Have the parents been involved in finding a solution to the problematic behaviour?
- Have the interventions of NEPS or other psychological assessment or counselling been sought, where appropriate?
- Any other interventions?
- Any other agencies asked for assistance?
- Does the student's behaviour warrant suspension?
- Is the standard being applied to judging the behaviour the same as the standard applied to the behaviour of any other student?
- Will suspension allow additional or alternative interventions to be made?
- Will the suspension help the student to change the inappropriate behaviour?
- How will suspension help teachers or other students affected by the behaviour?
- Will suspension exacerbate any educational vulnerability of the student?

Suspension is part of the plan to address inappropriate behaviour.

Suspension should:

- Enable the school to set behavioural goals with the student and their parents.
- Give the school staff an opportunity to plan other interventions.
- Impress on the student and their parents the seriousness of the behaviour.

Forms of suspension:

Immediate suspension

In exceptional circumstances, the Principal may consider an immediate suspension to be necessary where the continued presence of the student in the school at the time would represent a serious threat to the safety of students or staff of the school, or any other person. Fair procedures still apply.

Automatic Suspension

The Board of Management may decide that particular behaviours incur suspension as a sanction.

Fair procedures still apply.

Suspension is not used for poor academic performance, poor attendance or lateness or minor breaches in the code of behaviour.

However, any behaviour that is persistently disruptive to learning or potentially dangerous can be a serious matter.

A student will not be suspended again shortly after they return to school from a suspension unless they engage in serious misbehaviour that warrants suspension and fair procedures are observed in full and the standard applied to judging the behaviour is the same as the standard applied to the behaviour of any other student.

There is no informal or unacknowledged suspension.

There is no open – ended suspension.

When proposing to suspend a student after a preliminary assessment of the facts confirms serious misbehaviour that would warrant suspension the school will

- Inform the students and their parents about the complaint. This can be done by phone or in writing.
- Give the parents and student an opportunity to respond. A meeting is arranged with the student and parents to provide them with the opportunity to give their side of the story and ask questions about the evidence of serious behaviour.

In the case of immediate suspension, parents will be notified and arrangements made for the student to be collected. The formal investigation will immediately follow the imposition of the suspension.

Except in exceptional circumstances a student will not be suspended for more than three days. If it is considered necessary to suspend for longer than three days to achieve a particular objective, the matter will be referred to the Board. A suspension of up to five days can be imposed by the Principal where a meeting of the Board cannot be convened in a timely fashion. The Board would normally place a ceiling of ten days on any one period of suspension. The Board will formally review any proposal to suspend a student where the suspension would bring the number of days for which the student has been suspended in the current school year to twenty days or more. These procedures enable the school to give the student a reasonable time to reflect on his/her behaviour while avoiding undue loss of teaching time and loss of contact with the positive influences of school. They recognise the serious nature of the sanction of suspension and ensure that this seriousness is reflected in school procedures. The provisions mean that the Board of Management takes ultimate responsibility for sanctions of significant length, especially where such suspensions might reach twenty days in one school year.

Appeals:

Where a total number of days for which the student has been suspended in the current school year reaches twenty days, the parents, on behalf of the pupil, may appeal the suspension under section 29 of the *Education Act 1998*, as amended by the *Education (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2007*.

At the time when the parents are formally notified of such a suspension, they and the student will be told of their right to appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science under section 29 of the *Education Act 1998*, and will be given information on how to appeal.

Implementing the suspension:

Written notification:

The Principal will notify the parents and the student in writing of the decision to suspend. 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.
- Any study programme to be followed (teacher will assign work to allow child continue their class work).
- The arrangements for returning to school, including any commitments to be entered into by the student and the parents (for example, parents might be asked to reaffirm their commitment to the code of behaviour.)
- The provision for an appeal to the Board of Management.
- The right to appeal to the Secretary of the Department of Education and Science (*Education Act, 1998*, section 29)
- It will maximise the impact and value of the suspension if the Principal or another delegated staff member meets with the parents to emphasise their role and responsibility in helping the student to behave well when the student returns to school and to offer help, support and guidance in this.

Grounds for removing a suspension:

A suspension will 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*.

After the suspension ends:

The school should have a plan to help the student to take responsibility for catching up on the work missed, thus avoiding a possibility of academic failure. However successful reintegration goes beyond academic work. The staff will provide support for the student during the reintegration process to discuss and help deal with any feelings of anger or resentment about their suspension.

As with any sanction, when completed a student has a fresh start. Although a record is kept of the behaviour and any sanction imposed, once the sanction has been completed, the school will expect the same behaviour of this student as of all other students.

Records and Reports:

(Records of investigation and decision-making)

Formal written records will be kept of:

- The investigation (including notes of all interviews held.)

- The decision making process.
- The decision and rationale for the decision.
- The duration of the suspension and any conditions attached to the suspension
- Report to the Board of Management.
- The Principal will report all suspensions to the Board of Management, with the reasons for and the duration of each suspension.
- The Principal will report suspensions in accordance with the new NEWB reporting guidelines *Education (Welfare) Act, 2000*, section 21(4)(a)).

Review of use of suspension:

The Board of Management will review the use of suspension in the school at regular intervals to ensure that it is consistent with school policies, that patterns of use are examined to identify factors that may be influencing behaviour in the school and to ensure that the use of suspension is appropriate and effective.

Expulsion:

A student is expelled from school when a Board of Management makes a decision to permanently exclude him / her from the school, having complied with the provisions of section 24 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.

The Board of Management has the authority to expel a student. This authority is reserved to the Board of Management and should not be delegated.

Expulsion is a very serious step and is only taken by a Board of Management in extreme cases of unacceptable behaviour.

The school will take significant steps to address the misbehaviour and to avoid expulsion of a student including, as appropriate:

- Meeting with the parents and the student to try to find ways of helping the student change their behaviour.
- Making sure the student understands the possible consequences of their behaviour, if it should persist.
- Ensure that all other possible options have been tried.
- Seeking the assistance of support services (e.g. National Educational Psychological Service, Health Service Executive Community Services, the National Behavioural Support Service, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, National Council for Special Education.)

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

- The student's behaviour is a persistent cause of significant disruption to the learning of others or 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.

The grounds for expulsion may be similar to the grounds for suspension. In addition to factors such as the degree of seriousness and the persistence of the behaviour, a key difference is that, where expulsion is considered, the school authorities have tried a series of interventions, and believe they have exhausted all possibilities for changing the student's behaviour.

Automatic Expulsion:

The Board of Management may decide that particular behaviours incur expulsion as a sanction. Due process and fair procedures still apply.

Expulsion for a first offence:

There are exceptional circumstances where the Board of Management forms the opinion that a student should be expelled for a first offence. The kinds of behaviour that might result in a proposal on the basis of a single breach of the code include:

- A serious threat of violence against another student or member of staff.
- Actual violence or physical assault.
- Supplying illegal drugs to other students in the school.
- Sexual assault.

Factors considered before proposing to expel a student:

- What is the precise nature of the behaviour?
- How persistent has the unacceptable behaviour been and over what period of time?
- Has the problem escalated, in spite of the interventions tried?
- What are the circumstances of the incidents of serious behaviour (e.g. in class, in the yard or in a group?)
- What factors may have triggered or provoked incidents of serious misbehaviour (e.g. bullying, cultural or family factors?)
- Are there any factors which may be associated with the behaviour (e.g. particular home circumstances, special educational needs?)
- How are other students and staff affected by the student's behaviour?
- What is the impact of the behaviour on the teaching and learning in the class?
- What interventions have been tried? Over what period?
- How have the interventions been recorded and monitored?

- What have been the results of these interventions?
- Have the parents been involved in finding a solution to the problem behaviour?
- Have the intervention of NEPS or other psychological assessment or counselling been sought, where appropriate?
- Is the student involved with any support service and has this agency or support service been asked for help in solving this problem?
- Has any other agency been asked for assistance (e.g. Child Guidance Clinic, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services?)
- Is the Board satisfied that no other intervention can be tried or is likely to help the student to change their behaviour?
- Is the student's behaviour sufficiently serious to warrant expulsion?
- Is the standard being applied to judging the behaviour the same as the standard applied to the behaviour of any other student?

Expulsion is not purposed for:

- Poor academic performance.
- Poor attendance or lateness.
- Minor breaches of the code of behaviour.

Procedures in respect of expulsion:

Fair procedures are followed as well as procedures prescribed under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, when proposing to expel a student.

When a preliminary assessment of the facts confirms serious misbehaviour that could warrant expulsion, the procedural steps will include:

1. A detailed investigation carried out under the direction of the principal.
2. A recommendation to the Board of Management by the Principal.
3. Consideration by the Board of Management of the Principal's recommendation; and the holding of a hearing.
4. Board of Management deliberations and actions following the hearing.
5. Consultations arranged by the Educational Welfare Officer.
6. Confirmation of the decision to expel.

It is a matter for each Board of Management to decide which of the tasks involved in these procedural steps requires separate meetings and which of the tasks can be accomplished together in a single meeting, consistent with giving parents due notice of meetings and a fair and reasonable time to prepare for a Board hearing.

A detailed investigation carried out under the direction of the Principal. In investigating an allegation, in line with fair procedures, the Principal will:

- Inform the parents and the student about the details of the alleged misbehaviour, how it will be investigated and that it could result in expulsion.
- Give parents and the student every opportunity to respond to the complaint of serious misbehaviour before a decision is made and before a sanction is imposed.

The parents will be informed in writing of the alleged misbehaviour and the proposed investigation in order to have a permanent record of informing them. This also ensures that parents are very clear about what their child is alleged to have done. It serves the important function of underlining to parents the seriousness with which the school views the alleged misbehaviour.

The parents will be given every opportunity to respond to a complaint of serious misbehaviour before a decision is made about the veracity of the allegation, and before a sanction is imposed. A meeting with the student and parents is essential. It provides the opportunity for them to give their side of the story and to ask questions about the evidence of serious misbehaviour, especially where there is a dispute about the facts. It may also be an opportunity for parents to give their case for lessening the sanction, and for the school to explore with parents how best to address the student's behaviour.

If a student and their parents fail to attend a meeting, the Principal will write advising of the gravity of the matter, the importance of attending a re – scheduled meeting and failing that, the duty of the school authorities to make a decision to respond to the inappropriate behaviour. The school will record the invitation issued to parents and their response.

A recommendation to the Board of Management by the Principal:

Where the Principal forms the view, based on the alleged behaviour, that expulsion may be warranted, the Principal will make a recommendation to the Board of Management to consider expulsion. The Principal will:

- Inform the parents and the students that the Board of Management is being asked to consider expulsion.
- Ensure that the parents have records of: The allegations against the student, the investigation and written notice of the grounds on which the Board of Management is being asked to consider expulsion.
- Provide the Board of Management with the same comprehensive records as are given to the parents.
- Notify the parents of the date of the hearing by the Board of Management and invite them to that hearing.
- Advise the parents that they can make a written and oral submission to the Board of Management.
- Ensure that the parents have enough notice for the hearing.

Consideration by the board of Management of the Principal's recommendation and the holding of a hearing:

It is the responsibility of the Board of Management to review the initial investigation and satisfy itself that the investigation was properly conducted in line with fair procedures. The Board will undertake its own review of all documentation and the circumstances of the case. It will ensure that no party who has had any involvement with the circumstances of the case is part of the Board's deliberation (for example, a member of the Board who may have made an allegation about the student.)

Where a Board of Management decides to consider expelling a student, it will hold a hearing. The Board meeting for the purpose of the hearing will be properly conducted in accordance with Board procedures. At the hearing, the Principal and the parents put their case to the Board in each other's presence. Each party should be allowed to question the evidence of the other party directly. The meeting may also be an opportunity for parents to make their case for lessening the sanction. In the conduct of the hearing, the Board must take care to ensure that they are, and are seen to be, impartial as between the Principal and the student. Parents may wish to be accompanied at hearings and the Board should facilitate this, in line with good practice and Board procedures.

After both sides have been heard, the Board will ensure that the principal and parents are not present for the Board's deliberations.

Board of Management deliberations and actions following the hearing:

Having heard from all the parties, it is the responsibility of the Board to decide whether or not the allegation is substantiated and, if so, whether or not expulsion is the appropriate sanction.

Where the Board of Management, having considered all the facts of the case, is of the opinion that the student should be expelled, the Board will notify the Educational Welfare Officer in writing of its opinion, and the reasons for this opinion. (*Education (Welfare) Act 2000, s24(1)*). The Board of Management will refer to National Educational Welfare Board reporting procedures for purposed expulsions. The student cannot be expelled before the passage of twenty school days from the date on which the EWO receives this written notification (*Education (Welfare) Act 2000, s24(1)*).

The Board will inform the parents in writing about its consultations and the next steps in the process. Where expulsion is proposed the parents will be told that the Board of Management will now inform the Educational Welfare Officer.

Consultations arranged by the Educational Welfare Officer:

Within twenty days of the receipt of a notification from the Board of Management of its opinion that a student should be expelled, the Educational Welfare Officer must:

- Make all reasonable effort to hold individual consultations with the Principal, the parents and the student, and anyone else who may be of assistance.
- Convene a meeting of those parties who agree to attend (*Education (Welfare) Act 2000, section 24*).

The purpose of the consultations and meetings is to ensure that arrangements are made for the student to continue in education. These consultations may result in agreement about an alternative intervention that would avoid expulsion. However, where the possibility of continuing in the school is not an option, at least in the short term, the consultation should focus on alternative educational possibilities.

In the interest of the educational welfare of the student, those concerned should come together with the Educational Welfare Officer to plan for the student's future education.

Pending these consultations about the students continued education, a Board of Management may take steps to ensure that good order is maintained and that the safety of students is secured (Education (Welfare) Act 2000, s24(5)). The Board may consider it appropriate to suspend a student during this time. Suspension will only be considered where there is a likelihood that the continued presence of the student during this time will seriously disrupt the learning of others, or represent a threat to the safety of other students or staff.

Confirmation of the decision to expel:

Where the twenty day period following notification to the educational Welfare Officer has elapsed and the Board of Management remains of the view that the student should be expelled, the Board of Management will formally confirm the decision to expel (this task might be delegated to the Chairperson and the Principal). Parents will be notified immediately that the expulsion will now proceed. Parents and students will be told of the right to appeal and supplied with the standard form on which to lodge an appeal. A formal record is made of the decision to expel the student.

Appeals:

A parent may appeal a decision to expel to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science (Education Act 1998 section 29). An appeal may also be brought by the National Welfare Board on behalf of the student. The appeals process under section 29 of the Education Act 1998 begins with the provision of mediation by a mediator nominated by the Appeals Committee (Department of Education and Science). For further details about the Appeals process, including requirements for documentation, and the steps in the process, refer to current DES guidance.

Review of the use of expulsion:

The Board of Management will review the use of expulsion in the school at regular intervals to ensure that its use is consistent with school policies, that patterns of use are examined to identify factors that may be influencing behaviour in the school, and to ensure that expulsion is used appropriately.

Procedures for notifying the school about reasons for absence from school:

- It is very important to let the school know of a student's absence for any reason.
- The school may be informed by a note on return to school.
- The class teacher should be informed.
- Give detailed information about reasons for absence.

- School will contact by phone a parent when a student is absent under suspicious circumstances e.g. student was seen at school gate in school uniform but failed to turn up for class.
- If the parent fails to notify the school about a student's absence, the class teacher will write a reminder requesting the information.
- There is a legal requirement on the school to inform EWB after 20 days absence.

Procedures for raising a concern or bringing a complaint about behaviour matter: (See Grievance Procedure Policy)

Students: Bring to attention of class teacher who will follow procedures below.

Parents: Phone school or make an appointment to speak to the Class teacher

Class teacher: Investigates the behaviour and brings to the attention of deputy principal or principal if they feel it necessary to do so.

Staff: Inform class teacher or deputy principal or principal.

All staff will have the opportunity to discuss with colleagues to identify possible patterns and triggers for behaviour.

All staff will be informed of their responsibility for Code of Behaviour.

We plan to review the code in September 2025.

Ratification

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on the date...27-9-24.....

Signed...Eileen Byrne.....

Chairperson of the Board of Management

