

Code of Behaviour of St. Nicholas' National School

Introductory Statement

In compliance with section 23 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, the Board of Management of St. Nicholas' National School has prepared and made available a Code of Behaviour for its pupils, staff and parents.

The Code of Behaviour details:

- The standards of behaviour that shall be observed by each pupil attending the school.
- The whole school approach in promoting positive behaviour.
- The measures that shall be taken when a pupil fails or refuses to observe those standards.
- The procedures to be followed before a pupil may be suspended or expelled from the school concerned.
- The grounds for removing a suspension imposed in relation to a pupil.
- The school's Anti-Bullying Policy.
- The procedures to be followed in relation to a child's absence from school.

The Code was developed through a process of whole school consultation with reference to the National Welfare Guidelines for schools in developing a Code of Behaviour (2008) and through reviewing the school's existing Code of Behaviour.

Relationship of Code of Behaviour to School Ethos Statement.

The purpose of this policy is to promote positive student behaviour and to allow the school to function in an orderly and harmonious way.

It is also to enhance the learning environment where children can make progress in all aspects of their development.

Our Code of Behaviour relates to the mission statement of St. Nicholas' National School in that it will nurture a caring environment in which each child can develop his/her full potential and grow in the knowledge that his/her individual talents are valued.

We endeavour to provide an environment where there is a good sense of order and a reasonable approach to discipline. In this way school can operate smoothly for the benefit of all.

Aims/Goals of this Policy

- To promote good behaviour in our school.
- To recognise and reward good behaviour.
- To allow the school to function in an orderly and harmonious way.
- To enhance the learning environment where children can make progress in all aspects of their development.
- To create an atmosphere of respect, tolerance and consideration for others.
- To promote positive behaviour and self-discipline recognizing the differences between children and the need to accommodate these differences.
- To ensure the safety and well-being of all members of the school community.
- To assist parents and pupils in understanding the systems and procedures that form part of the Code of Behaviour and to seek their co-operation in the application of these procedures.
- To ensure that the system of rules, rewards and sanctions are implemented in a fair and consistent manner.

Understanding of Behaviour/Principles

Pupils are expected to behave in accordance with the Code of Behaviour of St. Nicholas' National School.

Pupils are expected to show due consideration for others and respect for property of school, of selves and others.

Pupils are expected to attend school every day, and on time, unless there is a truly genuine reason, for example illness, bereavement etc.

It is the right of every child to education in a relatively disruption free environment and therefore children are expected to endeavour to be attentive in class and not to distract others in class, and to complete all assigned schoolwork and homework to the best of their ability.

Pupils are expected to have respect for the truth.

A high standard of behaviour requires a strong sense of community and a high level of co-operation among staff and between staff, pupils and parents.

The school recognizes the variety of differences that exist between children and the need to accommodate these differences.

However appropriate clothing and footwear should be worn in school and on designated school- based activities. Children should wear clothes suitable for the school environment and P.E. activities. Excessively revealing clothing is not acceptable. This includes but is not limited to short tops, fish net/mesh tights, see through clothing etc. Jewellery worn should take into account health and safety risks. If a teacher feels it poses a threat under Health and Safety, the pupil may be asked to remove a piece of jewellery. Hair colouring is discouraged. Only natural hair colouring is permitted.

Strategies for Promoting Positive Behaviour throughout the School

To encourage and reward good behaviour we will

- Highlight good behaviour in each classroom and around the school generally
- Give verbal praise, positive comments to parents
- Have discrete time in SPHE to discuss Code of Behaviour
- Good school and class routines.
- Adults model behaviour that is expected from children.
- Give positive feedback about good behaviour.
- Have a peer buddy system in place where every pupil has a buddy who will look out for one another in the playground.
- Set clear boundaries and rules for pupils.
- Have a variety of ways to reward good behaviour and good work ethic. Some examples of these are:
 - use of stickers/treats
 - student of the week – a certificate is given at the end of the week and perhaps a small token, pencil/rubber
 - Homework Pass – collect ten stars/stamps on your sticker sheet and exchange for a homework pass; to be used within a three week period at the discretion of the pupil. Stars may be awarded for good work and good behaviour.
 - Good Deed Box in the classroom where one pupil may nominate another pupil for a good deed; showed someone a special kindness; gave up their turn for someone else; acted in a selfless way etc
 - Chart for good behaviour
 - Golden time

These are varied from year to year and may be added to from time to time, otherwise they may lose effectiveness.

School Rules

- I will always walk within school buildings and when using the steps into the school and halla.
- I will sit while eating.
- I will play in designated area.*
- I will never leave the school grounds during the school day without the permission of school staff member.
- I will adhere to the school's Health and Safety Policy for example; procedures for fire-drill
- I will show respect and courtesy to all members of school staff, fellow pupils and visitors to the school.
- I will not use bad language in school.
- I will not chew chewing-gum in school.
- I will not engage in rough or dangerous play in the playground.
- I will not litter the school environment.
- I will not bring any dangerous toys or implements to school, for example; penknives

*Depending on circumstances, certain areas may be designated out of bounds at particular times during the year for example grass areas during very wet weather.

Class Rules

- I will be on time for class.
- I will have all necessary books and work completed
- I will respect school and other children's property.
- I will not disturb other children while the class is working.
- I will respect other children's safety.
- I will always use good manners and respect other children's work.
- I will always do my homework to the best of my ability.

School Based Activities

- Pupils are expected to behave in a manner which does not endanger themselves or others.
- On entering or leaving the school children are expected to line up in an orderly fashion and walk at all times without pushing or shoving.
- Any instruction given by a staff member is to be obeyed.
- Any form of bullying will not be tolerated and will be dealt with according to the school's policy.
- When representing the school, children should abide by the school's code of discipline, within and outside school hours.

Unacceptable Behaviour

Three levels of misbehaviour are recognized:

- Minor
- Serious
- Gross.

All everyday instances of a minor nature are dealt with by the class teacher.

In cases of serious misbehaviour or instances of gross misbehaviour, parents will be involved at an early stage and are invited to meet with the teacher and/or principal to discuss their child's behaviour.

Examples of *Minor Misbehaviour* (This list is not exhaustive)

- Non completion of homework with no valid excuse
- Running in the classroom/corridor/on steps
- Interruption of the smooth flow of work of the classroom
- Interfering with others (work, property or person)
- Undermining another's self-esteem (through comments or behaviour)
- Rough play
- Bad language
- Name calling
- Not standing quietly in line after bell rings
- Littering
- Telling fibs
- Use of mobile phone without permission

Sanctions include:

- Verbal reprimand
- Reasoning
- Temporary separation from peers
- Loss of privileges
- Time-out
- Prescribing additional work

Examples of Serious Misbehaviour

- Repeated instances of minor misbehaviour
- Behaviour that is hurtful (including bullying, harassment, discrimination and victimization, fighting, hitting, kicking, spitting, pushing etc.)
- Behaviour that consistently interferes with teaching and learning
- Threats or physical hurt to another person
- Damage to property
- Theft
- Deliberate lying and deceit
- Repeated incidences of disrespect to teacher

Sanctions include:

- Break time detention – lunch and toilet break only, no playtime
Send in from playground to classroom
- Referral to another teacher and/or principal
- Behaviour reflection
- Prescribing additional work
- Removal from classroom situation
- Contact parents/guardians
- Record in incident book
- Board of Management consulted

Examples of Gross Misbehaviour

- Repeated instances of serious misbehaviour
- Assault on a staff member or pupil
- Serious theft
- Serious damage to property
- Immodest/inappropriate behaviour
- Bringing to school any article or item which would be a source of physical or moral danger.

Sanctions include:

- As for serious misbehaviour
- Board of Management consulted
- Suspension/expulsion as per NEWB Guidelines (see below)

The standards expected in the school's Code of behaviour apply in any situation where pupils are still the responsibility of the school. These include school trips, swimming, going to and from the church for practices and school services, fieldtrips and games representing the school.

Sanctions

The use of sanctions or consequences should be characterised by certain features;

- It must be clear why the sanction is being applied.
- The consequence should relate as closely as possible to the behaviour.
- It should be the behaviour rather than the pupil that is the focus.

Suspension and Expulsion

Definition of Suspension:

Requiring the student to absent himself/herself from the school for a specified, limited period of school days.

Suspension/Expulsion

Before serious sanctions such as suspension or expulsion are used, the normal channels of communication between school and parents will be utilised.

For gross misbehaviour or repeated instances of serious misbehaviour suspension may be considered. Parents concerned will be invited to come to the school to discuss their child's case. Aggressive, threatening or violent behaviour towards a teacher or pupil will be regarded as serious or gross misbehaviour.

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

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

Expulsion may be considered in an extreme case, in accordance with the Rules for National Schools and the Education Welfare Act 2000. In this instance the Board shall notify the Local Welfare Education Officer in writing in accordance with Section 24 of the Education Welfare Act.

Removal of Suspension (Reinstatement)

Following or during a period of suspension, the parent/s may apply to have the pupil reinstated to the school. The parent/s 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 will facilitate the preparation of a behaviour plan for the pupil if required and will re-admit the pupil formally to the class.

Immediate Suspension and Automatic Suspension:

An immediate suspension will be deemed to be necessary where after a preliminary investigation the principal reaches the determination that the continued presence of the pupil in the school at the time would represent a serious threat to the safety and well-being of pupils or staff of the school.

An immediate suspension may be for a period of one to three school days depending on the severity of the specific behaviour.

In exceptional circumstances and with the approval of the Chairperson of the Board the suspension may be for a longer period but in any event will not exceed five days.

An automatic suspension is a suspension imposed for named behaviours. The Board of Management of St. Nicholas' National School having given due consideration to its duty of care as prescribed by health and safety legislation has determined that the following named behaviours will incur automatic suspension as a sanction:-

- Physical assault/violence resulting in bodily harm to a pupil or member of staff
- Physical violence resulting in serious damage to school property

In exceptional circumstances and with the approval of the Chairperson of the Board the suspension may be for a longer period but in any event will not exceed five days.

Parents or guardians will be informed of an immediate or automatic suspension by telephone and arrangements will be made with them for the pupil to be collected. In no circumstance will a student be sent home from school prior to his/her parents or guardians being notified.

Formal written notification of the suspension will issue in due course but no later than two days after the imposition of the suspension. Such a notification will detail:-

- The duration of the suspension and the dates on which the suspension will begin and end
- The reasons for the suspension
- The arrangements for returning to school including any commitments to be entered into by the pupil and the parents or guardians.

The Board of Management acknowledges that the decision to impose either an immediate or automatic suspension does not remove the duty to follow due process and fair procedures. In this regard and following a formal investigation to be completed no later than two school days after the incident the Board will invite the pupil and his/her parents or guardians to a meeting to discuss:-

- The circumstances surrounding the suspension
- Interventions to prevent a reoccurrence of such misconduct

The Board of Management of St Nicholas' National School acknowledges the fundamental importance of impartiality in the investigation process. In this regard the following undertaking is given:-

No person with a vested interest or personal involvement in the matter will be involved in the organisation or implementation of the investigation procedure.

Normally, other interventions will have been tried before suspension and the school staff will have reviewed the reasons why these have not worked. Suspension can provide a respite for the staff and the pupil; give the pupil time to reflect on the link between their action and its consequence and give staff time to plan ways of helping the pupil to change unacceptable behaviour. The decision to suspend the pupil will follow from serious or gross misbehaviour.

- The pupil's behaviour has had a seriously detrimental effect on the education of other students
- The pupil's continued presence in the school at this time constitutes a threat to safety
- The pupil is responsible for physical assault/violence resulting in bodily harm to a pupil or member of staff
- The pupil is responsible for serious damage to property.
- Any behaviour judged to be a gross misdemeanour deserving of suspension

Pupils with Special/Behavioural/Emotional Needs

All pupils are required to comply with the Code of Behaviour. However, the school recognises that children with special needs may require assistance in understanding certain rules.

Specialised behavioural plans may be put in place in consultation with parents and the class teacher, support teacher, SNA and/or principal who will work closely with home to ensure optimal support is given. Support services such as NEPS, (National Educational Psychological Service) the SENO (Special Education Needs Organiser) NEWB (National Education Welfare Board) and the SESS (Special Education Support Services) may be involved in this context.

Teaching children with SEN (special educational needs) the rules and helping them understand behaviour and its consequences may be the focus of the teacher's work. Parents of such children will be kept informed of their child's behaviour on a regular basis and may be requested to work with the school in devising effective strategies to help the child to improve his/her behaviour.

Cognitive/emotional development will be taken into account at all times.

Other pupils in the school may be encouraged to assist the pupil with special needs to adhere to the school rules and thus provide peer support.

Communication with parents is central to maintaining a positive approach to dealing with pupils.

A high level of co-operation and communication is seen as an important factor in encouraging positive behaviour in our school. Structures and channels designed to maintain a high level of communication among staff and between staff, pupils and parents have been established.