

Scoil Mhichil Cahermurphy

Behaviour and Discipline Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

In compliance with Section 23 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, the Board of Management of Scoil Mhichil has prepared and made available a Code of Behaviour for its Pupils, Staff and Parents.

The Code of Behaviour details:

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

The Code of Behaviour of Scoil Mhichil has been developed in accordance with *'Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools'*, National Educational Welfare Board, 2008.

The School seeks to promote behaviour based on mutual respect between all members of the School community. Teachers encourage the highest standards in collective and self discipline.

The ethos of the School and the planning of the broad curriculum, promote the attitudes and values necessary for individual children to contribute positively to their own personal development and to that of the School. It is noted that a lack of or poor discipline is often the result of problems within the family unit or the lack of social skills.

The School's ethos supports the premise that the establishment of a good teacher/pupil relationship is central to working effectively with all pupils- especially those who experience emotional/behavioural difficulties. Teaching which exhibits differentiation, mutual respect and effective classroom management is conducive to building and maintaining good relationships between staff and pupils - however it is inevitable that in certain cases the relationship will break down or never be forged. Emotional and behavioural difficulties take many forms, i.e.

- 1* a pupil may become withdrawn and unable to make friends;
- 2* a pupil may be unable to concentrate on class work or homework;
- 3* a pupil may become disruptive and/or aggressive in class or in the yard.

In such cases the causes of the emotional/behavioural difficulties should be determined and strategies may well be needed to build or rebuild the teacher/pupil relationship. The School believes in the importance of 'negotiating'. This encourages mutual respect and fosters self-responsibility in the pupil. In certain cases tangible rewards may be offered in return for improved behaviour and effort.

2. RATIONALE

- It is envisaged that a good standard of behaviour will exist in the school as a result of this policy. It will seek to create a disruption free environment to allow for smooth daily routine of teaching and learning.

GENERAL MANAGEMENT.

- 1* It will allow all pupils to work in a calm, supportive and purposeful atmosphere.
- 2* All pupils come to school without the fear of being bullied - see 'Anti-bullying' policy.

3. AIMS

- Policy will ensure a positive attitude to behavior.
- Will create a cooperative environment between staff, pupils and parents in having an acceptable standard of behavior.
- To promote positive values and a high level of respect for fellow pupils, teachers and property.
- To engage parents in the disciplinary process.
- To provide ways of helping children understand their own behavior, the consequences for themselves and others.
- To provide workable strategies to improve behaviour
- To inculcate in all members of the school community the values of respect and consideration

4. MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES

The teachers recognize that rewards are a powerful tool for teachers to use in reinforcing positive behavior.

a. REWARDS

The general practice of classroom management involves many rewards being given to children on a daily basis. These include:

- 3* Verbal praise, written remarks about good work, stickers, sending children to a nearest teacher for praise.
- 4* Stars and or commendations are given to children in recognition of outstanding work or behaviour.
- 1* Displaying pupils' work is a tangible reward available to the teachers. Work is displayed if it deserves praise and in doing so the pupil will experience pleasure and self-satisfaction.
- 2* Reports which are also seen as a vehicle for constructive criticism and praise.
- 3* S.P.H.E , Drama and Religion classes play a significant role in reinforcing good manners, values and attitudes.

b. THE ROLE OF THE CLASS TEACHER.

The class teacher has prime responsibility for pastoral care. This includes:

- 4* Giving rewards and sanctions.

- 5* Watching out for children who are behaving out of character.
- 6* Looking for signs of distress and upset.
- 7* Through talking and listening to children, suspected occurrences of non-accidental injury or child abuse can be picked up and reported for further investigation.

5. SANCTIONS.

Under normal circumstances a clear distinction is made between minor and more serious offences, e.g. problems with pupils' class work will be dealt with by the class teacher. Teachers use sanctions which are appropriate to the particular offences in a flexible manner, i.e. by considering individual circumstances. The teachers are not in favour of punishment of a whole group unless this is unavoidable or appropriate.

It is emphasised that each teacher will deal with their own discipline problems without recourse to outside interference if at all possible.

On rare occasions, for reasons of 'good order or discipline', it may be considered necessary or desirable to transfer a pupil from one class to another for a brief period. Normally, such a move should only be contemplated after the imposition of other and less drastic sanctions has not brought the desired result.

ACTION TO BE TAKEN.

Sanctions can be particularly effective if they are seen by the peer group and the offender to match the offence. An effective way of accomplishing this difficult task is the involvement of pupils in the discussion of appropriate school rules. In many cases of bad behaviour there are **offenders** and **victims**. In such a case we talk to the suspected victim, the suspected offender and any witnesses (if appropriate). If any bad behaviour is confirmed, the following action will be taken:-

Help and support will be given as is appropriate to both the victims and the offenders:

We can support **victims** by using some or all of the following strategies.

- 4* by offering them an immediate opportunity to talk about the experience with their class teacher,
- 5* informing the victims' parents/guardians;
- 6* by offering continuing support when they feel they need it;
- 7* by taking one or more of the disciplinary steps described below to prevent more bad behaviour by the offenders.

We also discipline, yet try to help the **offenders** in the following strategies:

- 8* By talking about what happened to discover why they offended. This can be conducted in private or in public, possibly with the victim present - great care, experience and knowledge of the individuals is necessary for an appropriate choice to be made to avoid damage to relationships and pupils' self-esteem. The most powerful sanction is the disapproval of individuals who an offender respects, e.g. his/her peers, a parent or particular teacher. Teachers should also have opportunities to learn from what has happened and will decide what will
 - a). have the greatest effect;
 - b). preclude any re -offence.
- 9* By continuing to work with the offenders in order to get rid of unsocial attitudes as far as possible
- 10* By taking one or more of the disciplinary steps described below to prevent more bad behaviour.

DISCIPLINARY STEPS

The **offenders** may:

1. Be warned officially to stop offending.
2. Have their parents/guardians informed (parents may be called in to the School).
3. Be moved to another seat or transferred to another class. A pupil may work in another classroom away from the usual group for a cooling off period.
4. Make up work 'avoided' at break or lunch time under direct supervision.

Discipline during morning and afternoon break times is monitored by the teacher on duty.

6. INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR

In order to establish a common understanding and consistent response the Code of Behaviour classifies misbehaviour into three levels based on the degree of disruption caused by the misconduct. The Code also specifies the disciplinary actions and supportive interventions that will be employed.

Level One

Level 1: Behaviours

Level 1 behaviours are those that interfere with the orderly learning environment of the school, classroom, and common areas. Students learn through their mistakes. To this extent, responses to the daily behaviours, which occur in school, will be developmentally appropriate, instructive and positive. Children will be taught what is expected and how they should behave. Listed below are some examples of the types of Behaviour that are included in Level 1. Please note the list is not exhaustive.

- Failure to prepare for class, as defined by individual teachers
- Running in the hallways
- Disturbing the work or play of others
- Disrespectful language, tone, or manner
- Ignoring staff requests

Level 1: Disciplinary Actions

Consequences for Level 1 behaviour are dependent upon the severity and frequency of the specific behaviour. Teachers will discipline students at level 1. Some examples of Level 1 responses are:

- Verbal reprimand/reminder(s)
- Reinforcement of alternative positive behaviour
- Temporary separation from peers, friends or others
- Prescribing additional work
- Loss of privileges
- Parent contact
- Behaviour contract

Level 1 Supportive Interventions

Listed below are some examples of Level 1 supportive actions:

- Classroom-based interventions, such as Open Circle or class meetings, with the option of informal consultation, (e.g. with parent(s)/guardian(s) or staff members)
- Discussion of behaviour with the child
- Recording incident/intervention/date. This information becomes useful should a problem persist.

Level Two

Level 2: Behaviours

Level 2 behaviours are those that seriously interfere with the orderly environment of the school and are potentially dangerous to the safety and well being of the students and staff. Listed below are some examples of the types of behaviour that are included in Level 2. Please note the list is not exhaustive.

- Repeated instances of Level 1 behaviour which have not been modified by intervention
- Behaviour which is dangerous to self or others (e.g. shoving, pushing, hitting)
- Intentionally damaging school or personal property
- Stealing
- Cheating
- Use of profanity
- Derogatory reference to another person's race, gender, religion, physical condition, disability, or ethnic origin
- Disrespectful language or behaviour toward an adult
- Possession or use of dangerous toys or sporting equipment (e.g. bow and arrows, any kind of knives, etc.)

Level 2: Disciplinary Actions

The disciplining of students for Level 2 behaviour is dependent upon the severity and frequency of the specific behaviour and developmentally appropriate levels. The disciplinary actions at Level 2 are administered by the Principal, and include the formal notification of parents, with written documentation. Some examples of Level 2 responses are:

- In school supervised detention
- Meeting with parent(s)/guardian(s)
- Report submitted to the Board of Management
- Suspension from school of one to five days, depending on the severity of the Behaviour
- Implementation of extensive Behaviour management plan

LEVEL 2: SUPPORTIVE INTERVENTIONS

Listed below are some examples of Level 2 supportive actions:

- Team conference to include classroom teacher, other involved staff and Principal.

- Request for assistance from external agencies such as the 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.
- Referral of a Child displaying behavioural problems for psychological assessment (with the parent(s)/guardian(s) consent).

Level Three

Level 3: Behaviours

Level 3 behaviours are considered the most serious violations. These behaviours endanger the immediate health, safety and personal well being of the pupils and staff of the school. They represent a direct threat to the orderly operation of the school environment. Situations, which include illegal activity, may result in contact with the Garda Síochána after parental involvement. Listed below are some examples of the types of behaviour that are included in Level 3. Please note that the list is not exhaustive.

- Repeated or serious instances of Level 2 behaviour which have not been modified by intervention
- Setting fires
- Intentional possession or use of weapons
- Violent fighting or intentionally causing physical harm to others
- Discriminatory or prejudicial activities or actions toward another person or group involving race, gender, religion, physical condition, handicap, or ethnic origin

Level 3: Disciplinary Actions

Behaviour at Level 3 may involve suspension from school. The length of the suspension will depend upon the severity and frequency of the specific Behaviour. Specific information about due process and procedures in respect of the issuing of a suspension is contained in this document. Level 3 responses:

- **Suspension from school for one to five days:**

This response will occur with the first incidence of Level 3 behaviour or Level 2 behaviour of significant severity. The Principal following due process and procedure, can issue a suspension.

- **Suspension from school for five to ten days:**

This response will occur with the repeated incidence of Level 3 behaviour or a severe expression of this Behaviour. A suspension of this magnitude will only be issued with the approval of the Board of Management.

- **Expulsion:**

Repeated incidents of Level 3 behaviour can result in a pupil being expelled.

7. SUSPENSIONS & EXPULSIONS

The use of Suspension & Expulsions will be actions of last resort and will only happen when all other avenues have been exhausted. In the event of such action becoming necessary the following protocols will be observed.

The Legal context:

1. The entitlement to education is protected in a range of constitutional and legal provisions and in human rights conventions.
2. As a result the decisions to suspend or expel a student are open to appeal and may be subject to judicial review by the High Court.
3. **Under section 23(2) of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000** schools are required to detail their procedures for suspension & expulsion in their code of behaviour.

Authority to Suspend

The B.O.M has the authority to suspend a pupil when it is considered that certain named behaviour have been committed.

Suspensions will be

- Proportionate to the behaviour
- Will only be used as a means of sanction when other interventions have been tried, as a last resort.

Grounds for Suspension

The decision to suspend a student will only be taken when

- The student's behaviour has had a seriously detrimental effect on the education of other students.
- The student's continued presence in school constitutes a threat to safety.
- The student is responsible for serious damage to school property.
- A single incident of serious misconduct.

Parents of a child who is in danger of being suspended will be informed at all stages of the disciplinary process of the consequences of the child's actions and the likelihood of suspension if behaviour is not modified.

All communication with the parents as well as all incidents involving the child will be recorded, signed, dated and retained in school records.

FAIR PROCEDURES

- **The B.O.M and Principal** have a duty to ensure that there are no undue delays in an investigation and in making decisions about the imposition of suspension or expulsion i.e. the process must be **timely**.
- Great care should be taken to ensure that all matters to do with an investigation of alleged misbehaviour and **dealt with in confidence**.

FAIR PROCEDURES – PRINCIPLES OF NATURAL JUSTICE

The code of behaviour allows for the following principles of natural justice.

- **The right to be heard:**
 - to know that the alleged misbehaviour is being investigated
 - to know details of the allegations
 - to know how the issue will be decided
 - the right to respond to the allegations
 - the right to be heard by the decision-making body
 - the right to question the other party or witnesses where there is a dispute about the facts.

▪ **The right to impartiality;**

- The right to an absence of bias on the part of the decision maker.
- The right to impartiality in the investigation and the decision-making.

SUSPENSION

For gross misbehaviour or repeated instances of serious misbehaviour, suspension will be considered. All possible efforts to improve the child's attitude will be monitored. If it fails, however after a period of time, the proper parties e.g. parent/guardian, class teacher, principal and B.O.M will decide on the severity of the sanction. Aggressive, threatening or violent behaviour towards a teacher or child will be regarded as gross behaviour. The parents must be requested in writing to attend 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 have to be suspended for a temporary period. Suspension will be in accordance with the terms of Rule 130 (5) of the rules of National Schools. Expulsion may be considered in an extreme case in accordance with Rule 130(6).

Grounds for Suspension

Suspension should be

- Proportionate to the behaviour
- Normally, only used as a means of sanction when other interventions have been tried

The decision to suspend a student required serious grounds such as:

- The student's behaviour has had a seriously detrimental effect on the education of other students
- The student's continued presence in school constitutes a threat to safety
- The student is responsible for serious damage to school property
- A single incident of serious misconduct

Procedure for Suspension

1. The Principal and Board of Management decide on the severity of the incident and if suspension is warranted from the B.O.M.
2. A formal letter is issued to parents explaining the grounds for suspension and requesting parents to attend the school to meet the principal and the chairperson.
3. Procedures for appeal of suspension are given in writing to parent if requested.
4. Duration of the suspension is 3days-10 days

5. An undertaking must be given by parents and pupil (on return after suspension) that he/she will behave appropriately.
6. A record of the suspension and incident will be kept on file
7. All matters in these investigations must be dealt with in confidence.

Authority to Suspend:

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 5 school days.

An Automatic 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 5 school days.

The Board retains its authority to suspend a student in all other cases/circumstances.

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 wellbeing 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 5 school days.

An '***Automatic Suspension***' is a suspension imposed for named behaviours. The Board of Management of **Scoil Mhichil**, having given due consideration to its duty of care as prescribed by Health & Safety Legislation, has determined that the following named behaviours will incur 'Automatic Suspension' as a sanction;

FORMS OF SUSPENSION

Immediate Suspension: Exceptional circumstances – serious threat to safety of other students or staff – fair procedures must still be applied.

Automation Suspension: As part of the school's policy on sanctions and following the consultation process the B.O.M may decide that particular behaviours incur suspension- a decision to impose suspension for named behaviours does not remove the duty to follow due process and fair procedures in each case.

Open – ended Suspension: Students should not be suspended for indefinite periods- such a suspension is regarded as de-facto expulsion(Section 29, Education Act 1998)

Section 29 Appeals

- 1* A suspension that will bring the number of days for which a student has been suspended in the current school year to 20 days or more may be appealed.
- 2* Parents of the student are given this right under Section 20 of the Education Act 1998, as amended by the Education (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2007.
- 3* When parents are being formally notified of such a suspension, they and the student will be informed of this right of appeal, and given information on how to proceed with an appeal if they so choose.

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:

- 4* the period of the suspension
- 5* the reasons for the suspension
- 6* any study programme to be followed
- 7* the arrangements for returning to school
- 8* the provision for an appeal to the B.O.M.
- 9* the right to appeal to the Secretary General of the DES.

Grounds for removing a suspension

- 10* The B.O.M. decides to remove it for any reason.

11* The Secretary General directs it be removed following a Section 29 appeal.

Records & Reports

Formal written records will be kept of; -

- 12* Investigation and decision-making
- 13* Report to the B.O.M.
- 14* Report to the NEWB

7.a. CODE OF CONDUCT FOR PARENTS

Parents are expected to:

- Ensure their children attend school and are punctual
- Equip pupils with appropriate school materials, a sufficient healthy lunch and full uniform
- Be courteous towards pupils and staff
- Make an appointment to meet with a teacher/the Principal through the office
- Respect school property and encourage their children to do the same
- Label pupils coats and other personal property
- Strictly supervise pre-school children, when in the school.

As the Board of Management is responsible for the Health & Safety of all staff and students, parents are requested not to approach or reprimand another person's child on the school premises.

8. SUCCESS

- It is envisaged that this policy will create a positive ethos with emphasis on rewards for good behaviour rather than sanctions.

- The school hopes to achieve a firm but fair environment, which allows for child development, emotionally- socially and mentally.
- To establish a positive link with parents to reinforce positive attitude to behaviour.
- This policy will enable the teachers to provide a positive learning environment, which is the right of every child.
- Pupils are likely to respond positively. Such a policy if it is clearly understood and applied in a consistent manner.
- The positive ethos, which offers rewards for good behaviour, will permeate to all activities in the school.
- It will offer a social cohesion within the school between parents, teachers, pupils and principal.
- The policy will make a difference if the staff considers themselves responsible at all times in maintaining good behaviour.
- Communication to parents – on enrolment parents receive a copy of the Code of Behaviour.

9.HOW WILL THIS POLICY BE ASSESSED?

From staff feedback, parental feedback and observations.

10. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CODE

- There is a reward system for good behaviour.
- Children are allowed to become familiar with rules through group work and other tasks.

11. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The principal, teaching staff, parents and B.O.M will monitor the policy. It will be evaluated by the feedback from parents and staff through discussion.

12. TIMEFRAME OF IMPLEMENTATION

Provisional Date for one year from its implementation ie. September 2014.

13. RESPONSIBILITY OF REVIEW

Those involved in its review

- Teachers
- Staff

- Parents
- B.O.M

Ratification and Communication

The Board of Management ratify this policy on _____ .

Signature _____.

This policy will be communicated to parents and staff following ratification.