

Code of Behaviour

INTRODUCTION:

This document is a statement of the Code of Behaviour at School of the Holy Spirit, Callan Road, Kilkenny. It was developed through a process of consultation with the teaching staff. It was presented to the Parents Council in draft form. Their observations and comments were presented along with the draft policy to the Board of Management.

School of the Holy Spirit is a special Co-Ed. Catholic School for children with Emotional Disturbance and Autism. Children are assessed for placement by the Health Services Executive or other Professionals and must have an assessed I/Q. Of borderline or above. In devising the Code of Behaviour, consideration has been given to the challenges experienced by the children, keeping in mind individual circumstances and needs.

The code allows for implementation of individual behavioural management plans but in the case of gross misbehaviour or repeated instances of serious misbehaviour when the safety and duty of care to others is at issue the code takes precedence.

AIMS:

- To create a safe, harmonious, secure and ordered environment which will facilitate the educational, moral, emotional, behavioural and social development of all students.
- To modify behaviour through developing a positive structured approach to discipline. We will endeavour to do this by providing clear and secure boundaries within which the children's school day is structured, and by encouraging children's successes, building their self-esteem and modifying inappropriate behaviour.
- To identify the individual difficulties of each child as he/she presents these difficulties within the school. To assist the children to overcome these problems and to facilitate them receiving an appropriate education.

- To work with relevant professionals in fields related to the identified needs of our students, i.e. Psychologists, Psychiatrists, Autism Team, Behavioural Specialists, Social Workers, Care Workers, Doctors appropriate to school, Speech & Language Therapists, Occupational Therapist etc.
- To offer a framework, within which the techniques of positive motivation and encouragement are utilised by teachers and staff.
- To ensure consistency in the applications of rules and sanctions.
- To enhance the learning environment of the school by promoting a sense of mutual respect among all members of the school community.
- To increase the co-operation between home and school.

Our school expects that its students will:

- Attend school regularly. The school will comply with the statutory requirements regarding the notification of student absences.
- Arrive on time.
- Complete all assigned work.
- Not bring any possessions to school which are not required for their day-to-day education.
- Respect all school property.
- At the end of the school day, wait quietly in their classroom until they are collected for their bus by the person on duty.
- Walk in an orderly fashion from the classroom to the gate and get on the bus in a safe and orderly way.

The teacher expects that students will:

- Come to school on time and have all the necessary materials.
- Show him / her courtesy and respect
- Accept his / her authority and responsibility and his/her right to teach.
- Accept his / her right to impose sanctions to those who display challenging behaviour.
- Listen carefully.
- Avoid distracting behaviour.
- Try their best at all times.
- Follow the rules drawn up by their class.
- Do their homework carefully and completely.

Fellow students expect that students will:

- Show acceptance and respect their differing personalities
- Be respectful to them and their property
- Listen to them and be a friend
- Be well mannered
- Share toys and school equipment
- Not bully them

Our students can expect that school will be:

- Safe
- Happy
- Suited to their learning style
- Encouraging and supportive
- Affirming of their abilities
- An equal and fair environment for all

Our Parents can expect that there will be:

- A safe and happy environment for their child.
- Recognition and provision for the individual differences of pupils.
- Fairness and consistency in the way children are dealt with.
- Regular home / school liaison.

Our teachers can expect:

- That they will be supported and encouraged.
- That there will be a fair and consistent implementation of the school discipline policy.
- That there will be a fair and agreed structure of sanctions.
- That School of the Holy Spirit encourages professional development and in them willingness to learn and change.
- That their professional judgements will be respected.

Our Special Needs Assistants can expect:

- That their working environment will be safe.
- That they will be supported and encouraged in their work.
- That the lines of communication within the school will be clearly defined.
- That their professional opinions will be respected.
- That there will be a fair and consistent implementation of the school discipline policy.

The school expects that parents will:

- Be familiar with the various policies and codes of the school and the expectation of pupils.
- Show support for teachers in their implementation of the schools behaviour policy.
- Support their child in his / her schoolwork / homework.
- Ensure the punctuality and regular attendance of their child.
- Ensure he/she has the necessary materials.
- Ensure their child has a positive attitude to and abides by the school and class rules.
- Never undermine the authority of the school or teachers.
- Promote respect for teachers and other school personnel.
- Give contact numbers where they can be reached at all times.
- Be available to discuss concerns.

Systems and Strategies in Place

The school aims to implement a blend of the following systems and strategies.

- Structured teaching environment
- Specific planning for each child with reference to their ability (Specific Educational Plan)
- Individual Behaviour Profile and interventions.
- Use of a wide range of education materials, methods and media in the classroom.
- Positive behaviour management strategies and crisis prevention methods (e.g. I.A.B.A., Studio 111).
- Advice sought from visiting therapists and professionals regarding individual children as necessary.
- An individual sensory regulation programme to enable the child to be regulated and available for learning.
- Sensory preparation theory and practice transferred into the classrooms as appropriate.
- Greenspan DIR Floortime principals and methods used where practicable.
- Use of PECs (Boardmaker) throughout the school.
- Use of lamh, PECs and Speech for communication as appropriate
- Emphasis placed on social and life skills education (e.g. Social Stories).
- Home / school liaison sheets / behaviour sheets
- Daily behaviour records
- Incident and Assault reports (Records in Principal's office)

Positive reinforcement of good behaviour leads to better self-discipline and we place a greater emphasis on rewards and incentives than on sanctions.

Sanctions will be applied according to the gravity of the misbehaviour with due regard to age and their emotional development of the child.

Sanctions:

- Reasoning with the pupil
- Reprimand, including advice on the more appropriate behaviour - PEC's, Social Stories.
- Temporarily move to a quiet space / another room
- Loss of privileges
- Teacher communicating with the parents
- Referral to Principal
- Principal communicating with parents
- Exclusion (suspension or expulsion) from school. (In accordance with rule 130 or Rules for national Schools as emended by Curricular and Education Welfare Act 2000).

Suspension

Suspension is defined as "requiring a student to absent himself or herself from the school for a specific number of school days"

The Board of Management has the authority to suspend a student. This authority to suspend for a period of up to and including three days is formally delegated to the Principal by the Board of Management. The Board of Management and Principal have a duty to ensure that there are no undue delays in an investigation in making decisions about the imposition of suspension. Great care will be taken to ensure that all matters to do with an investigation of alleged misbehaviour will be dealt with in confidence.

Suspension will always be exercised in a fair and non-discriminatory manner having regard to the good of the whole school community and the principles of natural justice which are the right to be heard and the right to impartiality.

Suspension will be an appropriate response to the behaviour that is causing concern such as:

- The student's continued presence in the school at this time constitutes a threat to safety
- The student's behaviour has a serious detrimental effect on the education of other pupils
- The student is responsible for serious damage to property
- The student is involved in a single incident of serious misconduct.

Suspension should be part of an agreed plan to address the student's behaviour.

- It should impress on a student and their parents the seriousness of the behaviour
- It should give school staff an opportunity to plan other interventions
- It should enable the school to set behavioural goals with the student and their parents.

Automatic suspension

Board of Management can impose automatic suspension for certain prescribed behaviours or in exceptional cases for a first offence.

- Possession of a weapon
- Sexual assault
- Possession of illegal drugs
- Actual violence or serious physical assault
- Serious threat of violence against another pupil or staff member.

Fair procedures will be followed at all times.

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, staff, themselves or any other person at the school.

In cases where suspension is to take effect immediately and in the interest of health and safety.

- Parents/ guardians will be informed by phone and asked to collect the student.
- Students will not be sent home unless collected by parent/guardian
- Parents and student will be invited to meet with principal and class teacher to receive the explanation for suspension
- Student and parents will be given the opportunity to respond.

Fair procedures will be followed at all times.

Procedures in relation to suspension

In the event that the principal exercises her authority to suspend a student for a fixed duration, the following procedure will be followed:

- The pupil will be informed and given the opportunity to respond.
- The parents /guardians will be informed and invited to come to the school for a meeting to receive an explanation for the suspension.
- Written notification will be sent to the parents.

A student should not be suspended again shortly after they return to school unless:

- They engage in serious misbehaviour that warrants suspension and

fair procedures are observed in full

- The standard applied to judging the behaviour must be the same as the standard applied to the behaviour of any other student.

Written notification

All suspension decisions will include a formal letter of notification with the following:

- Notice of suspension
- Duration of the suspension
- Dates on which the suspension will begin and end
- Reason for the suspension
- Arrangements for returning to school including any commitment to be entered into by student and parents/guardians e.g. students may be asked to re-affirm their commitment to the Code of Behaviour.
- Information of the appeal rights and procedures regarding suspension.
- A statement that the Education Welfare board has been informed if appropriate.

Suspension removal

A pupil or his parents / guardians may appeal the Principal's decision to suspend to the Board of Management. Such an appeal must be made in writing to the Chairman of the Board of Management stating the grounds on which the appeal is being made. However, the school may insist that the pupil remain at home while the appeal proceeds. In the event that an appeal is successful, the suspension will be lifted and if the suspension has already been served, it will be expunged from the pupil's record.

An appeal of a suspension decision may also be made under Section 29 of the Education Act where a student has been suspended for 20 days or more. Information regarding this right of appeal will be provided with a formal notification of the suspension, if applicable.

Beyond success in such appeals, a suspension may be rescinded in the following circumstances:

- New circumstances come to light after the suspension has been applied that would have mitigated the sanction had they had known beforehand.
- Other mitigating factors consistent with the application of the Principles of Natural Justice.

Suspension Completion

Upon completion of a suspension, the following procedures may apply for the formal reintroduction of the pupil into the school.

- Parents will be requested to attend with the pupil upon his return to school.
- A written or verbal apology may be required for the pupil for his misbehaviour.
- The pupil may be required to enter into a contract of good behaviour or other conditions that may be specified before returning to school.
- A meeting will be arranged between the Principal, class teacher, parents and student to support the student during the reintegration process.

Records and Reports

Formal written records will be kept of:

- The investigation
- The decision making process
- The decision and the rationale for the decision
- The duration of the suspension and any conditions attached to the suspension.

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 to N.E.W.B. when a student has been suspended for 6 days and for 20 days accumulatively.

Expulsion

The Board of management has the authority to expel a student. As a matter of best practice, the authority will be reserved to the Board of management and will not be delegated.

We recognise that expulsion of a student is a very serious step and one that will only be taken by the Board of Management in extreme cases of unacceptable behaviour. The school will take significant steps to address the misbehaviour and to avoid the expulsion of a student.

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

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

- the student's continued presence in the school constitutes a real and significant threat to safety.
- the student is responsible for serious damage to property.

Expulsion for a first offence.

There may be 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 to expel on the basis of a single breach of the code include:

- a serious threat of violence against another student or a member of staff.
- actual violence or physical assault.
- supplying illegal drugs to other students in the school.
- sexual assault.

Determining the appropriateness of expelling a student.

Given the seriousness of expulsion as a sanction the Board of management should undertake a very detailed review of a range of factors in deciding whether to expel a student.

Procedures in respect of expulsion.

Schools are required by law to follow fair procedures as well as procedures prescribed under the Education Welfare Act 2000, when proposing to expel a student (see 10.3 and 10.4 for information about fair procedures). Where 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.

In investigating an allegation, in line with fair procedures, the Principal will:

- Inform the student and their parents 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.
- Parents will be informed in writing of the alleged misbehaviour and the

proposed investigation in order to have a permanent record of having let them know. This also ensures that parents are very clear about what their son or daughter is alleged to have done. It serves the important function of underlining to parents the seriousness with which the school views the alleged misbehaviour.

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 should record the invitation issued to the parents and their response.

A recommendation to the board of Management by the Principal.

Where the principal forms a view, based on the investigation of the alleged misbehaviour, that expulsion may be warranted, the principal makes a recommendation to the Board of Management to consider expulsion. the Principal should:

- Inform the parents and the students that the Board of Management is being asked to consider expulsion.
- Ensure that 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 or oral submission to the Board of Management
- Ensure that the parents have enough notice to allow them to prepare 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 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 deliberations.

If the 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, or a student aged eighteen years or over, put their case to the Board in each other's presence. Each party will be allowed to question the evidence of the other party directly. The meeting will also be an opportunity for parents to make their case for lessening the sanction.

In the conduct of the hearing, the Board will 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 a hearing.

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

Where the Board of Management, having considered all of 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. (Educational welfare Act 2000, s24 (1)). The board of management will refer to National educational Welfare Board reporting procedures for proposed 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, s 4A).

The Board will inform parents in writing about its conclusions 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.

Confirmation of the decision to expel.

Where the twenty day period following notification to the educational welfare Officer has elapsed, and where 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 the student will be told about the right to appeal and supplied with the standard form on which to lodge an appeal. A formal record will be made of the decision to expel the student.