

## Code of Discipline St. Mary's NS, Knockbridge

The school has a central role in the children's social and moral development just as it does in their academic development. In seeking to define acceptable standards of behaviour it is acknowledged that these are goals to be worked towards rather than expectations that are either fulfilled or not.

The children bring to school a wide variety of behaviour. As a community environment, in school we must work towards standards of behaviour based on the basic principles of honesty, respect, consideration and responsibility. It follows that acceptable standards of behaviour are those that reflect these principles.

Children need limits set for them in order to feel secure and develop the skills for co-operation. Therefore any rules will be age appropriate, with clear agreed consequences.

Parents can co-operate with the school by encouraging their children to understand the need for school rules, by visiting the school and by talking to the members of staff.

A code of behaviour is established to ensure that the individuality of each child is accommodated while at the same time acknowledging the right of each child to education in a relatively disruption free environment.

### *Aims of the Code*

To create a positive learning environment that encourages and reinforces good behaviour

To enable teachers to teach without disruption

To promote self-esteem and positive relationships

To facilitate the education and development of every child

To encourage consistency of response to both positive and negative behaviour

To foster a sense of responsibility and self-discipline in pupils and to support good behaviour patterns based on consideration and respect for the rights of others

To foster caring attitudes to one another and to the environment

To ensure that the school's expectations and strategies are widely known and understood through the availability of policies and an ethos of open communication

To encourage the involvement of both home and school in the implementation of this policy

### *Responsibility of Adults*

The adults encountered by the children at school have an important responsibility to model high standards of behaviour, both in their dealings with the children and with each other, as their example has an important influence on the children.

As adults we should aim to:

Create a positive climate with realistic expectations

Promote, through example, honesty and courtesy

Provide a caring and effective learning environment including setting and correcting pupils work

Encourage relationships based on kindness, respect and understanding of the needs of others

Ensure fair treatment for all regardless of age, gender, race, ability and disability

Show appreciation of the efforts and contribution of all

Each staff member should ensure a high level of supervision at all times

### General School Rules-

Respect for self and others in all areas and facets of school life

Kindness and willingness to help others

Follow instructions from staff immediately

Being punctual and regular in attendance - absences must be explained in writing

Walk quietly in the school building  
Courtesy and good manners at all times  
Observance of the school policy on Uniforms  
Readiness to use respectful ways of resolving difficulties and conflict  
Ask permission when necessary  
Do your best in class to reach your maximum potential  
Completion of homework including oral/written assignments  
Take responsibility for your own work and actions  
Respect for school property and the property of others

### *Class Rules*

At the beginning of each academic year, the class teacher will draft a list of class rules with the children. These reflect and support the school rules, but are presented in a way that is accessible to the children. Class rules should be kept to a minimum and are devised with regard for the health, safety and welfare of all members of the school community. They should where possible emphasise positive behaviour (e.g. 'Walk' and not 'Don't run'). Rules will be applied in a fair and consistent manner, with due regard to the age of the pupils and to individual difference. Where difficulties arise, parents will be contacted at an early stage.

### *Incentives*

Part of the vision of St. Mary's NS is to help children achieve their personal best - academically, intellectually and socially. We recognise that there are many different forms of intelligence and that similarly children use a variety of approaches to solve problems. It is important that reward systems which are based on academic merit or particular extrinsic goals should not only apply to a limited number of high achieving children. But rather should respect the abilities and individuality of all children. All children deserve encouragement to attain their own best. Children will be encouraged, praised and listened to at all times by adults in the school. Praise is earned by the maintenance of good standards as well as by particularly noteworthy personal achievements. Rates of praise for behaviour should be as high as for work. The following are some samples of how praise might be given-

A quiet word or gesture to show approval  
A comment in a pupil's exercise book  
A visit to another member of Staff or to the Principal for commendation  
A word of praise in front of a group or class  
Assembly Awards  
Student of the Week Awards  
Compliment on class door from other member of staff  
A system of in-class merit marks or stickers  
Delegating some special responsibility or privilege  
A mention to parent, written or verbal communication.

### *Unacceptable Behaviour*

Three levels of misbehaviour are recognised:

1. Minor
2. Serious
3. Gross.

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

In cases of repeated serious misbehaviour or single instances of gross misbehaviour, parents will be involved at an early stage and requested to meet the teacher and/or the Principal to discuss their child's behaviour.

Examples of serious misbehaviour:

Behaviour that is hurtful (including bullying, harassment, discrimination and victimisation)

Behaviour that interferes with teaching and learning

Threats or physical hurt to another person

Damage to property

Theft

Examples of gross misbehaviour:

Assault on a teacher or pupil

Serious theft

Serious damage to property

### *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 must relate as closely as possible to the behaviour. It must be made clear what changes in behaviour are required to avoid future sanctions. Group/Class punishment should be avoided as it breeds resentment.

There should be a clear distinction between minor and major offences. It should be the behaviour rather than the child that is the focus.

The following steps will be taken when the children behave inappropriately. They are listed in order of severity. The list is by no means exhaustive. Teachers may put in place alternative measures bearing in mind the features by which sanctions should be characterised. The aim of any sanction is to prevent the behaviour occurring again and if necessary to help the pupils devise strategies for this-

Reasoning with pupil

Verbal reprimand including advice on how to improve

Loss of privileges-jobs, duties, important responsibilities

Temporary separation from peers within class

Prescribing extra work/ writing out the story of what happened/note in homework diary.

Detention during break in designated areas of the school -office.

Temporary removal to another class - with the knowledge of principal.

Referral to Principal

Principal communicating with parents

Exclusion (Suspension or Expulsion) from school (in accordance with Rule 130 of the Rules for National Schools as amended by circular and Education Welfare Act 2000)

However sanctions should relate as closely as possible to the behaviour.

Pupils will not be deprived of engagement in a Curricular Area, except on the grounds of health & safety.

Break time detention or separation from peers does not require prior notice to parents as it is an acceptable method of sanction.

## *Suspension and Expulsion*

Before serious sanctions such as suspension or expulsion are used, the normal channels of communication between school and parents will be utilised. Communication with parents may be verbal or by letter depending on the circumstances.

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 to attend at the school to meet the principal and the Chairperson if necessary. 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 authorise 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. The Board authorise the Chairperson or the Principal to sanction further periods of suspension of no more than 3 days to the same child subject to an overall maximum of 20 school days.

Expulsion may be considered in an extreme case, in accordance with the Rules for National Schools and the Education Welfare Act 2000. A meeting of the Board should be convened in order to sanction an expulsion. In the case of suspension/expulsion of a pupil, the Board shall notify the Local Welfare Education Officer in writing in accordance with Section 24 of the Education Welfare Act.

When a student is suspended, the parents/guardians will be requested to remove the student from the school. The Principal will meet with the parents/guardian to outline the decision to implement the suspension and will present the parents/guardian with a written statement of the terms, duration and date of the termination of the suspension as well as the parents' right to appeal the decision under Section 29, Education Act 1998.

### *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, if necessary or applicable, engage with the psychological/counseling services of the HSE and NEPS. 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.

## *Children with Special Needs*

All children 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 behaviour plans will be put in place in consultation with parents and the class teacher, learning support/ resource teacher, and or Principal will work closely with home to ensure that optimal support is given. Cognitive development will be taken into account at all times. Professional advice from psychological assessments will be invaluable.

The children in the class or school may be taught strategies to assist a pupil with special needs adhere to the rules and thus provide peer support. This will be done in a supportive and safe way, acknowledging and respecting the difference in all individuals.

### *Methods of Communicating with Parents*

Communicating with parents is central to maintaining a positive approach to dealing with children. Parents and teachers should develop a joint strategy to address specific difficulties, in addition to sharing a broader philosophy which can be implemented at home and in school.

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

Parents should be encouraged to talk in confidence to teachers about any significant developments in a child's life, in the past or present, which may affect the child's behaviour. The following methods are to be used at all levels within the school:  
Informal parent/teacher meetings and Formal parent/teacher meetings  
Through children's homework journal (infants do not have a homework journal -check bags)  
School Text/Letters/Notes from school to home and from home to school  
School notice board  
School Newsletter

### *Ratification*

This policy was updated and adopted by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Chairperson of Board of Management**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Principal**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date: 26-2-2014**