

Code of Behaviour

Ballyfacey NS

Introduction

The impetus for the formation of this school discipline policy came from the Department of Education's circular 20/90: "Guidelines towards a positive policy for school behaviour and discipline". This was discussed at a meeting of the then Board of Management and the practical handling of the development of the policy was placed in the hands of the school principal at that time. This Code has been amended over time and the most recent review was carried out in March 2022.

Guiding principles:

In developing the discipline policy certain guiding principles were borne in mind. These were:

- The more various groups are involved in developing the policy, the more they will be willing to abide by it.
- A policy devised through agreement is more likely to succeed than one imposed by one group on another.

Aims:

The aims of the behaviour policy can be stated as follows:

- To ensure an educational environment that is guided by our vision statement
- To allow the school to function in an orderly way 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, recognising 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

1: Guidelines for behaviour in the school

The Education Welfare Act, Section 23, states that the code of behaviour shall specify "*the standards of behaviour that shall be observed by each student attending the school*". The following are the standards of behaviour in Ballyfacey NS:

- Children are expected to behave in a way, which shows respect for other pupils, staff, visitors to the school and their property, the property of others and school property.
- Children are requested to co-operate with their teachers at all times.
- Children are expected to complete their school work and homework to the best of their ability.
- Children are expected to enter and leave the school building and grounds in a safe manner.
- Children are expected to behave themselves properly when representing the school in any activities in or outside of school.

- Children are expected to wear the school uniform all year.
- The school day is from 9.30am to 3.10pm.
- Bullying of pupils in any form is totally forbidden.
- For health and safety reasons, chewing gum is forbidden.

The school recognises that there may be external factors influencing children's behaviour and these will need to be accommodated and considered when implementing the code of behaviour.

2. Whole school approach in promoting positive behaviour

The partners within the school can be identified as having a significant part to play in school discipline: The BOM, teachers, parents and the pupils. For the school code of behaviour policy to succeed, it is important to define the position and responsibility and level of involvement of each:

Teachers

All temporary and substitute staff will be given a copy of the Code of behaviour and supported by permanent members of staff.

The authority of the principal comes from the BOM and the responsibility for effective discipline in the school rests with him/ her. He/ she is expected to promote the general good discipline of the school, to direct the teachers to do likewise, to give them the support and help they need to do so, to develop home-school relations and co-operation and to take overall responsibility for the children's improvement through the effective implementation of the behaviour policy.

To the teachers falls the duty of promoting good discipline in their personal daily dealings with the children and with each other. Good classroom management, effective teaching methods and a positive approach to promoting good behaviour are the teacher's tools in promoting good behaviour. The teachers' efforts will extend beyond their own classroom and through co-operation with each other and the parents, promote whole school discipline also. Good behaviour can be promoted by:

- Presenting well prepared material in a way which is interesting, lively and suitable to the child's level of development and ability
- Motivating the child to good behaviour through the use of praise and rewards i.e. positive reinforcement of good behaviour
- Matching our expectations of the children's behaviour to the level of their development and maturity
- Effective supervision of the children at all times especially when they are outside the classroom
- Treating the children with firmness yet kindness through a consistent application of rules geared to promote good behaviour
- The teacher teaching discipline, i.e. the teacher educating the children to appreciate good behaviour and to espouse self-discipline

When dealing with children diagnosed with behavioural problems, the teachers in consultation with parents are drawing up Individual Behaviour Plans. Parents are asked to support the implementation of these plans. When the need arises parents are contacted and informed of the child's inappropriate ways of interacting. These are dealt with through the implementation of the SPHE programme in the classroom. Circle time is used as appropriate activities for dealing with situations that arise in the classroom or playground.

The school's SPHE curriculum is used to support the code of behaviour. It aims to help our children develop communication skills, appropriate ways of interacting and behaving, and conflict resolution skills. It also aims to foster self-esteem and to help children accommodate differences and develop citizenship.

BOM

The overall responsibility for ensuring that a code of behaviour is prepared rests with the Board of Management. The Board has particular responsibility for the ethos of the school, as well as having overall responsibility for school policies. The Board should play an active role in exploring the kinds of relationships and behaviours that will reflect the school's ethos and responsibilities. The BOM has ultimate responsibility for the effective running of the school. It holds the position of highest authority and has the final decision on school matters. It can promote good discipline by advancing the general effectiveness of the school, by helping and encouraging the principal, the teachers and the parents in their efforts. It may also have to deal with those issues that go beyond the scope of day-to-day practice.

The BOM are supportive of the schools code of behaviour and staff in implementing the code in the school. Where necessary the BOM will support the staff in the provision of any necessary staff development or training.

Parents

The parents and the home environment have a profound effect on a child's behaviour and on school discipline. By showing a positive interest in their children's good behaviour and education, by providing them with guidance and good example and by maintaining good contact with the school they help enormously in promoting good discipline. Parents' confidence and trust in the school can be put to the test should they receive a bad report on their child's behaviour. They should realise that the teacher also, is only concerned for the child's good and that it is together that they will most effectively promote this.

At enrolment and again at the beginning of each school year, each parent is provided with a copy of the school rules as a reminder of the school's policy on behaviour.

Parents are asked to support the school in promoting positive behaviour in the following ways:

- Encouraging good behaviour and checking that their children are behaving well in school.
- Ensuring children attend school each day it is in operation and providing a note or phone call to the school to explain absences.
- To support the teachers in the implementation of the Code of Behaviour.

Pupils

Pupils must learn that it is through the order of good discipline that the good of all is promoted. Their behaviour should display respect for others and for their property. Hopefully they will be a credit to themselves, their family and their school.

Pupils are involved in devising classroom rules. This takes place each September and the children while facilitated and guided by the teacher compile rules. The overall school rules are discussed and communicated with pupils at regular intervals or at the need arises.

Each of the partners has been dealt with separately, but rather than each holding a separate and distinct role, it is the overlap of their efforts which will most promote the success of the school's discipline policy.

3. Positive strategies for managing behaviour

Class rules:

Classroom rules are devised each September by the children and teacher and displayed in the classroom. These rules are referred to regularly and children are reminded of the rules throughout the school year. Each classroom has a system of rewarding good or improved behaviour and sanctions are applied as per the school's policy.

Playground rules:

The following rules are in place for the playground:

- When leaving or returning to the classroom, children must line up in the correct manner
- Children are expected to play safely in a manner that does not put their own safety or the safety of others at risk
- Permission must be sought before retrieving footballs or sliotars
- Children must remain within the school grounds
- Children are encouraged to go to the toilet going to or coming from the yard

General rules for other areas:

- Children should walk when inside the school building
- Only safe toys and age appropriate materials are allowed in the school
- Eating is confined to break times
- Leave the toilet fit for the next person to use

4. Rewards and Sanctions

Rewards and acknowledgement of good behaviour

Rewards are used on an incidental basis for good or improved behaviour. Pupil achievement is acknowledged by visits to the classroom or at whole school assemblies.

Junior classes rewards:

Praise

Work displayed

Golden time: extra art, PE, Music

Outdoor activities

Informal contact with parents

Senior classes rewards:

Work displayed

Golden time: extra art, PE, Music

Reduced homework
Positive comment from Principal
Informal contact with parents

Strategies for responding to inappropriate behaviour

The following are some *examples* of minor misbehaviours:

- Teasing, name calling
- Rudeness
- Talking out of turn in class

Examples of serious misbehaviour:

- Giving cheek
- Bad language
- Roughness in behaviour in the classroom or playground
- Damaging other peoples property and school property
- Theft

Correction is seen as part of the educative process and has as its aim the re-education of the offender. In correction, the nature of the misbehaviour should be explained to the child to help avoid repetition. The mildest forms of what the child may consider punishment are often effective when the offence is not a serious one.

The following sanctions are used in the school:

- *Show disapproval*
- *Verbal reprimand*
- *Carrying out a useful task in the school*
- *Removal from the group (in class or to another classroom)*
- *Withdrawal of privileges*
- *Withdrawal from the particular lesson or peer group*
- *Detention during break time*
- *Informal contact with parents*
- *Extra work assigned e.g. a written activity, to be signed by parents*
- *Formal contact with parents*
- *Formal report to the chairperson of the Board of Management*

Involving parents in management of problem behaviour

Where a behaviour issue arises, the class teacher makes initial contact with parents generally. Contact is usually made by phone call or notes where appropriate. Depending on the severity of the problem the principal and teacher may both be present at the meeting with parents. Parents who have concerns are asked to contact the school in advance and make an appointment. Parents are informed of these procedures in September of each year.

Managing aggressive or violent behaviour

When dealing with children with serious emotional and behavioural problems, an individual behavioural plan will be put in place. Parents will be involved on a constant basis and encouraged to implement a behaviour programme at home. Regular contact takes place between the home and school in assessing the progress of the plan. It is encouraged that rewards and sanctions be implemented at home as well as at school. Children who are emotionally disturbed will be referred for psychological or psychiatric assessment and support may be sought from external agencies e.g. HSE.

5. Suspension / Expulsion

Suspension

Suspension is defined as: requiring the student to absent himself/herself from the school for a specified, limited period of school days. The Board of Management of a Ballyfacey NS has the authority to suspend a student.

Grounds for suspension

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 pupil requires serious grounds such as that:

- 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 serious damage to property.

A single incident of serious misconduct may be grounds for suspension.

The factors to be considered before suspending a pupil as per the NEWB guidelines pg. 72 will be utilised prior to any suspension being imposed. (Refer pg. 72)

Suspension as part of a behaviour management plan

Suspension will be part of an agreed plan to address the pupil's behaviour. The suspension should:

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

Forms of suspension

Immediate suspension: In exceptional circumstances, the BOM in consultation with the principal may consider an immediate suspension to be necessary where the continued presence of the pupil in the school at the time would represent a serious threat to the safety of pupils or staff of the school, or any other person. Fair procedures will still be applied.

'Automatic' suspension: The Board of Management has decided that the following incidents of misbehaviour will incur suspension as a sanction:

- Aggressive, threatening or violent behaviour towards staff or other children.
- Violence which cause serious physical injury to another child.

Procedure in respect of suspension

The school will follow fair procedures (i.e. the right to be heard and the right to impartiality) when proposing to suspend a student. Where a preliminary assessment of the facts confirms serious misbehaviour that could warrant suspension, the school will observe the following procedures:

- Inform the student and their parents about the complaint.

Parents may be informed by phone or in writing, depending on the seriousness of the matter.

- Give parents and student an opportunity to respond.

Parents and student should be given an opportunity to respond before a decision is made and before any sanction is imposed. If 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 negative behaviour. The school will record the invitations made to parents and their response.

Procedures in relation to immediate suspension

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

The period of suspension

A student should not be suspended for more than three days, except in exceptional circumstances where the Principal considers that a period of suspension longer than three days is needed in order to achieve a particular objective.

Appeals

The Board of Management will offer an opportunity to appeal a decision to suspend a student. In the case of decisions to suspend made by the Board of Management, an appeals process may be provided by the Patron.

Section 29 Appeals

Where the total number of days for which the student has been suspended in the current school year reaches twenty days, the parents, 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 parents are being formally notified of such a suspension, they will be told about 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 about how to appeal.

Implementing the suspension

Written notification

The Principal will notify the parents 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.
- 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 General of the Department of Education and Science (*Education Act 1998*, section 29).

Engaging with students and parents

A meeting with the parents will be held to emphasise their responsibility in helping the student to behave well when the student returns to school.

Grounds for removing a suspension

Following or during a period of suspension, the parent/s may apply to have the pupil reinstated to the school. The parents 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 a pupil's own safety or that of other pupil's or staff. The Principal will facilitate the preparation of a behaviour plan for the pupil if required and will readmit the pupil formally to the class.

Under section 29 of the Education Act 1998, the Board of Management may then authorise the removal of the suspension, if deemed necessary. The Secretary General of the DES can also authorise the removal of the suspension.

Re-integrating the student

The school will help the student to take responsibility for catching up on work missed.

Children with Special Educational needs:

All children are required to comply with the code of behaviour. However the school recognises that children with SEN may require assistance in understanding certain rules. Specialised behaviour plans will be put in place in consultation with parents and class teacher/ SET 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/school may be taught strategies to assist the pupil with SEN to adhere to the rules and thus provide peer support. This will be done in a supportive and safe way, acknowledging and respecting the differences in all individuals.

Clean slate

When any sanction, including suspension, is completed, the student will be given the opportunity and support for 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.

Record keeping

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 the 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.

Report to TUSLA The Principal is required to report suspensions in accordance with the TUSLA reporting guidelines (*Education (Welfare) Act, 2000*, section 21(4)(a)).

Expulsion

The Board of Management of Ballyfacey has the authority to expel a student. Expulsion of a student is a very serious step, and one that should only be taken by the Board of Management in extreme cases of unacceptable behaviour. The school will have taken significant steps to address the misbehaviour and to avoid expulsion of a student including, as appropriate:

- meeting with parents and the student to try to find ways of helping the student to change their behaviour.
- making sure that the student understands the possible consequences of their behaviour, if it should persist.
- ensuring that all other possible options have been tried.
- seeking the assistance of support agencies.

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

- the student's behaviour is a persistent cause of significant 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.

Where expulsion is considered, school authorities will have tried a series of other interventions, and have exhausted all possibilities for changing the student's behaviour.

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 factors to be considered before expelling a student as per the NEWB guidelines pg. 82 will be utilised prior to any suspension being imposed. (refer pg. 82)

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.

(Refer to pg.83-86 of guidelines)

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). The National Educational Welfare Board on behalf of a student may also bring an appeal.

The appeals process

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).

6. Keeping records

A standard form is available in the school for the recording of serious incidents of misbehaviour. (**See attached**) These are kept in the office in a locked filing cabinet. Serious incidents of misbehaviour are reported to the principal as they arise. Behaviour of students is discussed at the parent teacher meetings.

7. Procedures for notification of pupil absences from school

Strategies used to encourage good attendance:

- Adapting curriculum content and methodologies to maximise relevance to pupils.
- Creating a stimulating and attractive school environment
- Making parents aware of the terms of the Education Welfare Act and its implications.

Following a child's absence parents are required to inform the school in writing of the reasons for the child's absence, including the date and signature of parents. These notes are kept for the duration of the school year and retained in the school office. Absences are reported on the standard report forms as per TUSLA.

8. Reference to other Policies

The following policies may be referred to in regard to behaviour:

- Home school links
- Data Protection and Record Keeping
- Health and safety
- SPHE
- Anti-bullying
- SEN policy

Success Criteria

This policy will be a success if;

- The rules are observed.
- If all partners are supportive of this policy.
- Observation of positive behaviour in class rooms, playground and school environment.
- Practices and procedures listed in this policy being consistently implemented by teachers.

- Positive feedback from teachers, parents and pupils.

Roles and Responsibilities:

Roles of each party outlined:

- The BOM support the staff in the implementation of this policy.
- All partners have a role in the implementation of the policy.
- The teachers will coordinate and monitor the implementation of this policy.
- Pupils have a role in involving themselves in devising class rules and adhering to rules.
- Parents have a role of supporting the school in the implementation of the policy.

Implementation Date:

The original policy was implemented in April 2009. It has been reviewed and amended frequently over time.

Timetable for Review:

This policy was last reviewed in March 2022. It will be reviewed again in the school year 2024-25 unless an earlier review is deemed necessary.

Ratification & Communication:

This policy was ratified by the BOM on the 14th March 2022.

Signed: Thomas O'Loide Date: 14th March 2022
Chairperson BOM

Signed: Tommy O'Garra Date: 14/3/22
Principal

Parents will receive a copy of this policy with the enrolment pack for new pupils.