

Scoil Mhuire, Our Lady's Island,

Broadway, Co. Wexford.

Roll No. 19741A



Code of Behaviour Policy

Introductory Statement

This policy was initially devised by all members of the teaching staff of Scoil Mhuire together with Mr. Leo Kilroy S.D.P.S. on Friday November 28th 2008. Since then it has been reviewed and updated on a regular basis to keep up to date with relevant guidelines issued by the Department of Education.

Rationale

The Code was reviewed:

- To ensure an orderly climate for learning in the school
- As it is a requirement under the Education Welfare Act, 2000, Section 23
- To ensure existing policy is in compliance with legal requirements and good practice as set out in *Developing a Code of Behaviour. (Guidelines for schools, NEWB, 2008)*.

Aims

Scoil Mhuire hopes to achieve the following aims, by the implementation of this policy:

- To improve the standards of behaviour so that there is a positive learning environment created in the school.
- To create a positive culture in the school for staff and students.
- To ensure an educational environment that is guided by our school's 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.
- To ensure that the system of rules, rewards, and sanctions are implemented in a fair and consistent manner throughout the school.

Content

1. Expectations of behaviour in the school

Each pupil in Scoil Mhuire should:

- respect themselves and others.
- respect school and other people's property.
- show courtesy and good manners at all times.
- use appropriate ways of resolving difficulties and conflicts.
- contribute to creating a happy learning environment for all .

As per section 23 (4) of the Education Welfare Act 2000, prior to registering a pupil, the parents shall be provided with a copy of the school's Code of Behaviour. Registering a child confirms that the Code of Behaviour provided, is acceptable to parents and that they shall make all reasonable efforts to ensure compliance with the Code by their child.

Following implementation of the Code of Behaviour in February 2018, all parents of pupils already enrolled will be deemed to have accepted the Code of Behaviour.

2. Whole School Approach in promoting positive behaviour

All stakeholders in the education of the children in Scoil Mhuire will work as a team towards the development and implementation of policies and practices that promote positive behaviour. The role of each stakeholder is outlined as follows:

Staff

- Provide effective teaching and classroom management
- Develop clear classroom rules in collaboration with the children
- Ensure fair and effective implementation of the Code of Behaviour, taking account of the complex needs of each individual
- Provide constant and consistent monitoring of all pupils during the school day
- Communicate with other staff and parents regarding positive and improved behaviour
- Recognise and reward good behaviour
- Endeavour to equip students with strategies for resolving conflict through the teaching of the SPHE programme.

All new and temporary staff will be informed that a copy of the Code of Behaviour is available.

Board of Management

- The Board of Management will be given a copy of the draft Code of Behaviour for their consideration and input.
- The Board of Management supports the Code of Behaviour in the school.
- The Board of Management supports the staff in implementing the Code of Behaviour in the school.
- Communication where necessary, takes place between the BOM and the staff, through the Chairperson.
- In the case of serious breaches of behaviour, the Chairperson, acting on behalf of the Board will support the staff in implementing the agreed procedures.

Parents

- Parents were involved in the formulation and implementation of this policy.
- Regular and open communication with parents is facilitated.
- Parents can support the school in the promotion of positive behaviour and the maintenance of high standards of behaviour by:
 - ensuring their children attend school regularly and punctually.
 - supporting the teachers in the implementation of the Code of Behaviour.
 - encouraging their children to do their best and to take responsibility for their work.
 - making themselves aware of and cooperating with the school's rules and system of rewards and sanctions.
 - discussing the importance of the Code of Behaviour with their child(ren)
 - attending meetings at the school if requested.
 - helping their children with homework and ensuring that it is completed.
 - ensuring their children have the necessary books and materials for school.

3. Positive Strategies for Managing Behaviour

Classroom

- At the beginning of each school year, class rules are devised in each classroom with the children, taking into consideration the age of the children. The class rules will be derived from the schools 'Expectations of behaviour (Refer to Section 1) and stated in positive terms.
- Pupils are regularly reminded of how they are expected to behave.
- Good behaviour is rewarded by each individual teacher in different ways. Sanctions are imposed in the same method depending on the severity of the misbehaviour.
- Materials used in the classrooms are relevant and age appropriate and a variety of methodologies are implemented to ensure the children are engaged and motivated.

- When departing the classroom children line up in an orderly manner and are accompanied by the class teacher outside the school.
- Good manners is expected, encouraged and rewarded.

Playground

The following rules will be communicated with children in a positive way and done so on a regular basis.

- Children must show consideration and tolerance of all others using the yard.
- When the bell rings, children line up in classroom groups in an orderly fashion.
- Children must play in their classroom on wet days.
- In fine weather, all children play in the yard and school field.
- Permission to leave the yard must be sought from a member of staff.
- Allocated toilets only to be used during break times.
- Litter- Children must use the bins provided. If possible, children are encouraged to eat their lunch before they leave the classroom so as to avoid bringing litter out with them. If a child cannot see a bin, they must ask permission to leave the yard to dispose of it safely.
- Adequate supervision the yard is provided by the teachers on duty. The SNA/s provides assistance with supervision.
- Incidents that happen on the yard are reported to the child's class teacher, and to the Principal and the parents if deemed necessary. Serious incidents on the yard are recorded on an 'Incident Report Form'.

Other areas in the school

The following strategies are implemented to prevent behavioural problems in corridors, halls, cloakrooms and toilets. These are taught and reinforced regularly in the classroom. Examples of these are as follows:

- Walk quietly
- No loitering in corridors or outside classrooms
- Regulations are in place regarding the number of children allowed to use the toilets at any one time

School related activities

The standards and rules contained in this Code of Behaviour apply in any situation where pupils are still the responsibility of the school – school tours, swimming, games, liturgies, and extracurricular activities and other school-linked events, etc.

4. Rewards and Sanctions of Good Behaviour

Good behaviour is publicly recognized and acknowledged in the school by:

- A verbal acknowledgement of praise.
- Acknowledged at assemblies or in classes other than the child's own class.
- Class awards are devised by individual teachers including:
 - Star system
 - Sticker award chart
 - Students of the week
 - Homework Passes
 - Class visits (Cups and trophies)
 - Ladder system
 - Teachers will also be very creative in how they reward students in class
- A note of praise sent home or telephone call made to parents.

Strategies for responding to inappropriate behaviour

The following measures may be taken if a student fails to observe the standards of behaviour that the school has outlined:

- Verbal reprimand
- Removal from the group (in class or in yard)
- Withdrawal of privileges
- Withdrawal from the particular lesson or peer group
- The child is referred to the Principal
- If this behaviour persists Parents /Guardians are requested to attend a meeting with class teacher, or class teacher and Principal as deemed necessary
- The Chairperson is informed
- Formal report to the Board of Management

At all times, children are encouraged to choose appropriate rather than inappropriate behaviour. The staff, through consistent use of the incident report forms and verbal communication ensure a fair application of sanctions.

Involving parents in management of problem behaviour

- When a pupil's behaviour is a source of concern the parent/guardian is notified at the discretion of the teacher based on the degree of the misbehaviour, age of the child and the frequency of the misbehaviour.
- Effective communication with parents through phone calls, notes in the Homework Diary is encouraged.

- The class teacher may make initial contact informally, or the Principal and/or class teacher may make contact either formally or informally, depending on the individual merits of each situation.
- Parents are requested to arrive punctually for arranged meetings with a view to resolving the difficulty. Parents are expected to cooperate in reaching a desirable solution.
- The child may be present for part or all of a meeting where this is deemed to be helpful.
- Parents are involved in all steps if Suspension or Expulsion is possible.
- Our aim is to involve parents to prevent further incidents or escalation of bad behaviour.

Managing aggressive or violent misbehaviour

- Withdrawal of child to a safe space if they are deemed to pose a threat of injury to themselves, their peers or a member of staff.
- Advice and support may be sought from external services available e.g. Health Service Executive, NEPS, NCSE, SENO, etc.
- Children who are in need of additional support may be referred to an external agency if appropriate, with parental consent.
- Suspension will be considered.
- Medical assistance will be given if necessary.

Strategies used in the school...

- Open dialogue is used to inform, clarify and review.
- Mentoring of newly qualified teachers is in place.
- SNAs can inform teachers of concerns regarding behaviour.

In the event of seriously violent or threatening behaviour causing risk to the safety of the pupil himself/herself or the safety of other pupils and staff.

- The teacher's first priority is to keep the children not involved safe
- An attempt to separate and calm the involved parties is made, if deemed safe
- Adult assistance is sought at the earliest possible time
- A record of the incident is kept on file
- Parents are contacted as soon as possible
- The BOM is informed of the event

5. Suspension or Expulsion

In the history of Scoil Mhuire suspension and expulsion have never been warranted. In order to fulfill guidelines, and should the need ever arise, we include the following.

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 Scoil Mhuire, has the authority to suspend a student.

The decision to suspend a student requires **serious** grounds such as that:

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

Factors that the BOM / Principal/ Deputy Principal will consider before SUSPENSION of a student:

A. The nature and seriousness of the behaviour

- What is the precise description of the behaviour
- How persistent has the unacceptable behaviour been?
- Has the problem behaviour escalated, in spite of the interventions tried?

B. The context of the behaviour

- What are the circumstances of the incidents of serious behaviour (e.g. in class, in a particular teacher's class, in the yard, in a group)?
- What factors may have triggered incidents of serious behaviour (e.g. bullying, cultural or family factors)?
- What is the age, stage of development and cognitive ability of the student?
- Are there any factors that may be associated with the behaviour (e.g. particular home circumstances, special educational needs)?

C. The impact of the behaviour

- How are other students and staff affected by the student's behaviour?
- What is the impact of the behaviour on the teaching and learning of the class?
- Does the behaviour have a particular or greater impact on some students or teachers
- Does the student understand the impact of their behaviour on others?

D. The interventions tried to date

- What interventions have been tried? Over what period?

- How have the interventions been recorded and monitored?
- What has been the result of those interventions?
- Have the parents been involved in finding a solution to the problem behaviour?
- Has the intervention of NEPS or other psychological assessment or behaviour been sought, where appropriate?
- Are any other interventions such as peer mediation, restorative justice approaches or family conferencing available?
- Is the student or parent involved with any support service and has this agency or support service been asked for help in solving this problem?
- Has any other agency been asked for assistance (e.g. Child Guidance Clinic, Child and Adolescent services)?

E. Whether suspension is a proportionate response

- Does the student's behaviour warrant suspension?
- Is the standard being applied to judging the behaviour the same as the standard applied to the behaviour of any other student?

F. The possible impact of suspension

- Will suspension allow additional or alternative interventions to be made?
- Will suspension help the student to change the inappropriate behaviour?
- How will suspension help teachers or other students affected by the behaviour?
- Will suspension exacerbate any educational vulnerability of the student?

Suspension as part of a behaviour management plan

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

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

Immediate suspension

In exceptional circumstances, the Principal in consultation with the Chairperson where possible, 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 or staff of the school, or any other person. Fair procedures must still be applied.

‘Automatic’ suspension

The Board of Management has decided, that deliberate physical violence towards any member of staff or person working in a position of authority with the children during school hours, will incur suspension as a sanction. The decision to impose this type of suspension does not remove the duty to follow due process and fair procedures in each case.

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
- give parents and student an opportunity to respond.

Procedures in respect of suspension

The school will let the student and their parents know about the incident:

- How it will be investigated, and that it could result in suspension.
- Parents may be informed by phone or in writing. Parents and student will be given an opportunity to respond before a decision is made and before any sanction is imposed.
- A meeting with the parents (and pupil if deemed helpful by either party), the Chairperson and Principal will take place at the school, at an appointed time.
- The purpose of the meeting is to consider all sides and reach a decision and for the school to explore with parents how best to address the student’s behaviour.
- If the parents fail to attend the meeting, the Principal will write advising of the gravity of the matter, the importance of attending a re-scheduled meeting.
- Failing attendance at the re-scheduled meeting, it is then 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

Where an immediate suspension has occurred for reasons of the safety of the student, other students, staff or others, the formal investigation will immediately follow the imposition of the suspension. All of the conditions for any suspension apply to immediate suspension. (as above) No suspension, including an immediate suspension, should be open-ended. In the case of an immediate suspension, parents must be notified, and arrangements made with them for the student to be collected.

Period of suspension

The suspension period may be of 1, 2, or 3 days duration. If a suspension longer than three days is being proposed by the Principal, the matter will be referred to the Board of Management and/or Chairperson for consideration and approval. The Board of Management should normally place a ceiling of ten days on any one period of suspension imposed by it. The Board should formally review any proposal to suspend a student, where the suspension would bring the number of days for which the student has been suspended in the current school year to twenty days or more. Any such suspension is subject to appeal under section 29 of the *Education Act 1998*.

Appeals

The Board of Management will offer an opportunity to appeal a Principal's 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 Appeal

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 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 should 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 should 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)

Grounds for removing a suspension

A suspension may be removed if the Board of Management decides to remove the suspension for any reason or if the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science directs that it be removed following an appeal under section 29 of the *Education Act 1998*.

Clean slate

When any sanction, including suspension, is completed, a 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.

Records and reports

Formal written Records should 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 should report all suspensions to the Board of Management, with the reasons for and the duration of each suspension.

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

Expulsion

The Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire has the authority to expel a student. Expulsion will only be considered in the most extreme cases at the full and entire discretion of the BOM.

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, or
- the student's continued presence in the school constitutes a real and significant threat to safety, or
- 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 could include:

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

Factors that will be considered before proposing to EXPEL a student

A The nature and seriousness of the behaviour

- What is the precise description of the behaviour?
- How persistent has the unacceptable behaviour been and over what period of time?
- Has the problem behaviour escalated, in spite of the interventions tried?

B The context of the behaviour

- What are the circumstances of the incidents of serious misbehaviour (e.g. in class, in a particular teacher's class, in the yard, in a group)?
- What factors may have triggered or provoked incidents of serious misbehaviour (e.g. bullying, cultural or family factors)?
- Are there any factors that may be associated with the behaviour (e.g. particular home circumstances, special educational needs)?

C The impact of the behaviour

- How are other students and staff affected by the student's behaviour?
- What is the impact of the behaviour on the teaching and learning of the class.

D The interventions tried to date

- What interventions have been tried? Over what period?
- How have the interventions been recorded and monitored?
- What has been the result of these interventions?
- Have the parents been involved in finding a solution to the problem behaviour?
- Has the intervention of NEPS or other psychological assessment or counselling been sought, where appropriate?
- Is the student or parent involved with any support service and has this agency or support service been asked for help in solving this problem?
- Is the Board satisfied that no other intervention can be tried or is likely to help the student to change their behaviour?

E Whether expulsion is a proportionate response to the misbehaviour

- Is the student's behaviour sufficiently serious to warrant expulsion?
- Is the standard being applied to judging the behaviour the same as the standard applied to the behaviour of any other student?

F The possible impact of expulsion

- To what extent may expulsion exacerbate any social or educational vulnerability of the student?
- Will the student be able to take part in, and benefit from, education with their peers?
- In the case of a student who is in care, what might be the implications of expulsion for the care arrangements?

The following procedural steps as per NEWB guidelines will apply: (refer to pg. 83-86)

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

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). An appeal may also be brought by the National Educational Welfare Board on behalf of a student.

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). For further details about the Appeals process, including requirements for documentation, and the steps in the process, refer to current DES guidance.

6. Keeping Records

Class level

Each class teacher keeps a record of individual children's behaviour. This is recorded on a form for each child. When behaviour is considered serious or involves children outside of the specific class, this behaviour is reported to the class teacher of the child concerned or the Principal.

The end of year report includes a reference to behaviour. Parents are kept up to date during the year regarding behaviour issues through the homework journal, informal meetings and phone calls.

Playground

Incidents of a serious nature on the yard are recorded on 'Incident Report Forms.'

School records

The school will retain on file only records of *serious* misbehaviour where suspension has occurred. (These will be filed and will be retained.)

7. Procedures for notification of pupil absences from school

The Education Welfare Act, 2000, Section 23 (2) (e) states that the Code of Behaviour must specify, “*the procedures to be followed in relation to a child’s absence from school.*” Section 18 stipulates that parents must notify the school of a student’s absence and the reason for this absence.

The following strategies are used to encourage school attendance:

- Creating a stimulating and attractive school environment.
- System for acknowledging good attendance.
- Adapting curriculum content and methodologies to maximize relevance to pupils.
- Making parents aware of the terms of the Education Welfare Act and its implications.

Parents/Guardians are required to inform the school of the reason for their child’s absence. This is recorded on Aladdin. The school uses the standard forms to report on pupil absences to the Tusla Education Support Services.

Success Criteria

The success of this policy will be indicated by:

- Observation of positive behaviour in class rooms, playground and school environment
- Practices and procedures listed in this policy being consistently implemented by all parties
- Positive feedback from teachers, parents and pupils
- A reduction in the necessity for the use of suspension and expulsion

Roles and Responsibility

- The role of the BOM is to familiarise themselves with the policy and to support the school in the implementation of the policy
- Staff, parents and BOM have responsibility for the implementation of this policy
- The Principal will co-ordinate and monitor the implementation of this policy
- Pupils have responsibility to act in accordance with the Code of Behaviour

Timetable for Review

This policy will be reviewed every 1 – 2 years.

Communication

Parents are welcome to contact the school by appointment only if they have concerns regarding their child's welfare within the school.

Ratification

This Policy was amended in September 2023. It was ratified by the Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire on 20th September 2023.

Chairperson: *Jim Cogley*

Principal: *Eimear Druhan*

Fr. Jim Cogley

Ms. Eimear Druhan