

Scoil na Maighdine Mhuire,
Code of Behaviour

A: Introductory statement:

This policy was formulated in 2009 following consultation between the Board of Management, staff, parents and pupils at our school in compliance with Section 23 of the Education (Welfare) Act . This policy was drafted with reference to ‘Developing a Code of behaviour: Guidelines for schools’ (National Educational Welfare Board 2008)

B: Rationale:

- To comply with DES requirements
- An extensive consultative process took place to ensure that the views of all the partners in the school were included. Several meetings were held between the Principal and a representative group from the Parents’ Council, the Student Council, the staff and the Board of Management to ensure that a consensus was achieved. The Draft document was reviewed by students, parents, staff and BOM between September 2009 – February 2010.
- Following the implementation of the ‘Incredible years’ Behaviour Management programme
 - To ensure the safety of all members of our school community.

C: Relationship to characteristic spirit of the school:

In keeping with our Ethos statement our Code of behaviour enables us to strive to provide a caring, happy and secure environment where the intellectual, spiritual, physical, moral and cultural needs of each member of our school community is catered for and respected.

D: Aims:

In revising this policy, consideration has to be given to the particular needs and circumstances of this school. The aims are:

- To create an ordered and orderly environment in which pupils can, through developing self-discipline, feel secure and make progress in all aspects of their development.
- Through the implementation of the Incredible Years programme as a whole school approach to the management of behaviour issues, we seek to promote positive behaviours and self-discipline in an atmosphere of respect, tolerance and consideration for others.

E: Principles:

- The school recognises the variety of differences that exist between children and the need to tolerate these differences.
- It is agreed that a high standard of behaviour requires a strong sense of community within the school and a high level of co-operation among staff and between staff, parents and pupils.
- Every effort will be made to ensure that the code of behaviour is implemented in a reasonable, fair and consistent manner

F: Content of Policy:

At our school, all members of our school community are expected to behave in ways that show respect for one another. Standards of behaviour at our school should reflect values such as:

- Respect for self and others
- Kindness and willingness to help others
- Courtesy and good manners
- Fairness
- Readiness to use respectful ways to resolve difficulties and conflict
- Forgiveness

Standards that signal unacceptable behaviour include:

- Any behaviour that is hurtful in any way
- Behaviour that interferes with teaching and learning
- Threatening behaviour
- Damage to property
- Theft

1. Guidelines for Behaviour (Children)

At Scoil na Maighdine Mhuire we have a Student Council which is elected by the students on an annual basis. The Students’ Council were consulted when drafting the revised Code of Behaviour. In each class the children are involved in drafting the classroom behaviour expectations, keeping the key principles of the Incredible Years programme in mind. In that way, the pupils have assisted as architects of the Code of Behaviour for our school.

Note: The following are examples of the positive behaviours we strive to promote at our school. The list is neither exhaustive nor finite.

Safety:

- I should be careful coming to and going from school
- I should always walk on the left hand side while in the school building.
- I should remain seated in class and on wet days while inside at breaktimes
- I should be play carefully in the school yard and always show respect for my fellow pupils.
- I should be careful going to and from the soccer field and the playing pitch, making sure to use my 'walking legs'.
- I shall bring a note of explanation following absences.
- I know that when I am outside the school grounds, e.g. on a trip, tour, excursion etc, it is the same as if I was at school.
- I should never leave the school grounds without the permission of the Principal.

Caring for myself:

- I should respect my property, and myself, always keeping my school bag, books and copies in good order and always keep my body to myself.
- I should always be in school by 8.55a.m.
- I should show respect for my school and be proud to wear the complete school uniform every day.
- I should always be aware of my personal cleanliness.
- I should always bring a sensible, nutritional lunch to school. Crisps, minerals, sweets or chewing gum are not permitted.
- I should always do my best in school by listening carefully, working as hard as I can and by completing my homework.

Caring for others:

- I should be kind and respectful to all members of the school community, staff students, parents and visitors.
- I should use my walking legs, quiet hand and indoor voice.
- I should behave well in class so that my fellow pupils and I can learn.
- I should always keep my school clean by bringing unfinished food and drinks, cartons, wrappers, etc home.
- I shall not damage school property.
- I shall be truthful and honest at all times.

2. Guidelines for behaviour (Parents):

These guidelines were drafted by a review group of the Parents' Council following an invitation to all parents and guardians at our school.

Parents/Guardians

- Must ensure that the proper school uniform is worn
- Must ensure that their child/children are in school by 8.55am. If children are late then the parent/guardian must sign the late book at reception
- Should promote the healthy eating policy at the school by ensuring that their child brings a healthy lunch to school each day with treats only allowed on Fridays
- If your child is absent from school then a note must be sent to the school explaining this absence. (The pre-printed forms at the back of the school journal can be used).
- Should help children with homework and must ensure it is completed.
- Should instil in their child/children at home the messages that learning and good behaviour are conducive to a happy school life.
- Ensure that your child/children have the necessary books and materials for school.
- Should make teacher/principal aware of any changes in family circumstances if relevant to the child's well being at school.
- Should familiarise themselves with and embrace the principles of the Incredible Years Programme. (<http://www.scoilnamaighdinemhuire.ie/incredibleyears.html>)
- Must attend meetings if requested by the teacher or principal in relation to their child.
- Should strive to be courteous and calm in all dealings with school staff.
- School staff are entitled to have their privacy and personal lives outside school respected and to go about their business without fear of harassment of any kind.
- Under no circumstances approach another child whilst they are in the care of the school to discuss or chastise them because of their actions towards their own child. (Such an approach to the child may be seen to be an assault on the child and may have legal consequences.)

3. Guidelines for behaviour (staff)

At our school, the staff recognise that Teachers are bound by the Code of Professional Conduct as outlined by the Teaching Council. As this document is twenty five pages long it will not be included in this document. It may be accessed on www.teachingcouncil.ie At our school we have implemented the Incredible years behaviour Management Programme. All staff has received training in the Incredible Years programme. A booklet has been devised for new staff and all staff receives 'refreshment' training as part of professional development training or School Development Planning annually.

G: Strategies to foster good behaviour

- Praise
- A comment in a pupil's exercise book or homework journal or the use of Happygrams
- A visit to another member of Staff or to the Principal for commendation.
- A word of praise in front of a group or class.
- A system of merit marks/stars/stamps/tokens.
- Delegating some special responsibility or privilege.
- A mention to parent, written or verbal communication
- Student of the Week certificate presented at assembly on Friday

(b) Strategies for dealing with unacceptable behaviour.

From time to time it may be necessary to sanction an unacceptable behaviour. The Incredible years Programme seeks to eliminate negative behaviours by focussing on, promoting and reinforcing positive behaviours. However, situations may arise where sanction is necessary in order to help pupils to recognise that their behaviour is unacceptable and that it impacts on others. Sanctions should be used to bring about a change in behaviour from a negative behaviour to a positive one. At our school sanctions include:

- Reasoning with pupils and identifying what inappropriate choice the pupil has made and what alternative choice he/she could have made instead.
- Reprimand (including advice on alternative appropriate choices).
- Note in homework journal to parents
- Prescribing extra work.
- Formal communication with Parents.
- Temporary separation from peers and/or loss of privileges.
- Referral to Deputy-Principal/Principal.
- Suspension/expulsion (in accordance with Rule 130 of the Rules for National Schools as amended by circular 7/88 and The Educational Welfare Act).

It is very important to acknowledge that in the majority of cases, at our school, negative behaviours are usually in the 'minor' category in terms of severity. However from time to time, it may be necessary to implement more serious sanctions depending on the nature of negative behaviours exhibited. In all cases, parents/guardians should be consulted and encouraged to be part of the solution. From time to time, it may be necessary to engage support from outside agencies e.g. NCSE, NEPS, CAMHS, CEIS, CPSMA, Gardaí, Social Services etc to assist with finding a resolution to a problem.

The degree of misdemeanours (negative behaviours) i.e. minor, serious or gross, will be judged by the teachers and/or Principal based on a common sense approach with regard to the gravity/frequency of such misdemeanours, as follows:

Examples of minor misdemeanours:

Interrupting class work / Arriving late for school / Running in school building / time/ Not wearing correct uniform / Being discourteous/unmannerly / Not completing homework without good reason / Endangering self/fellow pupils in the school yard at break time.

Examples of steps to be taken by teachers when dealing with minor misdemeanours:

Verbal reprimand / reasoning with pupil
Teachers report yard incidences to principal for inclusion in incident book
Note to parents in homework journal

Examples of steps to be taken when dealing with regular occurrences of minor misdemeanours

Phase 1 (within the classroom)

Note in homework journal to be signed by parent / Temporary separation from peers
Sending to another teacher / Denial of participation in some class activity.
Notification to parents of pupils whose name appears in incident book more than three times
[Misbehaviour in yard consists of any action that puts the safety of self/other pupil at risk]

Phase 2:

- 1) Send to D-Principal
- 2) Send to Principal
- 3) Class teacher meets one/both parents
- 4) Principal/D-Principal meets one/both parents concerning yard behaviour.

Examples of serious misdemeanours

Constantly disruptive in class / Telling lies / Stealing / Damaging other pupil's property
Bullying / Back answering a staff member / Frequenting school premises after school hours without appropriate permission / Leaving school premises during school day without appropriate permission. / Using unacceptable language / Bringing weapons to school
Deliberately injuring a fellow pupil.

Examples of steps to be taken when dealing with serious misdemeanours:

- 1) Send to D-Principal
- 2) Send to Principal
- 3) Principal sends note in Journal to be signed by parent
- 4) Principal meets with one/both parents
- 5) Chairperson of Board Of Management informed and parents requested to meet with Chairperson and Principal

Examples of Gross Misdemeanours (this list is neither prescriptive nor complete)

Setting fire to school property / Deliberately leaving taps/fire hose turned on
Aggressive, threatening or violent behaviour towards a staff member/pupil, repetition of serious misdemeanours described above

Examples of steps to be taken when dealing with gross misdemeanours

- 1) Chairperson/Principal to sanction immediate suspension pending discussion with parents. The Board of Management has delegated this responsibility to the Principal teacher.
- 2) Expulsion will be considered in an extreme case in accordance with Rule 130 (6) i.e.
"No pupil can be struck off the rolls for breaches of discipline without prior consent of patron and until alternative arrangements are made for enrolment of pupil at another suitable school in the locality".

It should be noted that these lists consist of examples only: It is not meant to be a totally comprehensive list of misdemeanours and procedural steps.

H: Suspension and Expulsion

In keeping with our policy of focusing on promoting positive behaviour at our school, Suspension and expulsion are considered to be a last resort and not entered into without due consideration.

(1)Suspension:

For the purposes of this policy, suspension is defined as : 'Requiring the student to absent him/herself from the school for a specified limited number of days'.

Forms of suspension:

- Immediate Suspension: In exceptional circumstances, the principal may consider an immediate suspension to be necessary where the continued presence of the student poses a serious threat to any member of the school community. Fair procedures will be applied.
- Automatic Suspension: Suspension may be used as a sanction for gross misdemeanours described above. Fair procedures will be applied.

The authority to suspend a student has been delegated to the principal by the Board of management. The decision to suspend a student requires serious grounds such as

- The student's behaviour having a seriously detrimental effect on the education of other students
- The student's continued presence in the school constitutes a threat to the safety of other members of the school community
- The student is responsible for serious damage to property

Note: A single incident of serious misconduct may be grounds for suspension

(2) Fair procedures

The following Fair procedures will apply to any suspension:

- The right to be heard
 - The right to know the alleged behaviour is being investigated
 - The right to know the details of the allegations and any other relevant information
 - The right to know how the issue will be decided

- The right to respond
- The right to ask questions of the decision maker, the other party and/or witnesses
- The right to impartiality
 - The right to the impartiality of the investigation and decision making
 - The right to the absence of bias in the decision maker

(3)Procedural steps

The following procedures will apply when proposing to suspend a student:

- The student will be notified about the complaint
- The parents will be notified (usually by phone)
- Student and parents shall be given an opportunity to respond

Where an immediate suspension is considered by the principal in the interests of the health and safety of pupils, staff or others, parents must be notified and arrangements made for the collection of the student.

- Parents should be notified in writing of the decision to suspend and the length of the period of suspension. A programme of work should be sent to the student and any arrangements for returning to school. (A student should not be suspended for more than three days except in exceptional circumstances)
- Parents may wish to appeal a decision to suspend a student. They should be informed of their right to do so.
- Following a suspended student's return to school, the student shall be given the opportunity and support for a fresh start.
- Formal written records shall be kept of the investigation, decision and rationale, duration and conditions of the suspension
- The principal shall notify the NEWB and the Board of Management of the suspension in writing.

4 Expulsion:

For the purposes of this policy expulsion is defined as 'The permanent exclusion of a pupil from our school in compliance with the provisions of section 24 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000. The Board of Management has the authority to expel a student. The decision to expel is a very last resort. All other steps to address the behaviour should first be taken except in exceptional circumstances which might occur e.g.

- A serious threat of violence to a member of the school community
- Actual violence or physical assault
- Supplying illegal drugs to others in the school
- Sexual assault

Fair procedures shall apply (See section H(2) above)

5 Procedural steps

- A detailed investigation to be carried out under the direction of the principal
- A recommendation to the Board of Management by the principal
- Consideration by the Board of the principal's recommendation; and the holding of a hearing
- Board deliberations and actions following hearing
- Consultations arranged by the Educational Welfare Officer (NEWB)
- Confirmation of the decision to expel
- Parents shall be given due notice of meetings and time to prepare
- CPSMA guidelines shall be followed at all times
- Parents and student shall be informed in writing of the decision to expel and the right to appeal that decision in accordance with the Education Act 1998 Section 29

I: Record keeping

In seeking to promote positive behaviours in our school each class teacher employs a large number of strategies including star/sticker/token systems, the use of happygrams, student of the week certificates etc (cf Incredible years booklet for staff). Occasionally, it may be necessary to record incidents in the Incident report book in the staffroom. The responsibility for recording an incident rests with the member of staff who observed it (i.e. class teacher in class, supervising teacher or SNA in yard). The responsibility for notifying the Principal rests with the recording member of staff.

The principal counter signs the incident report book.

Where formal communication between the school and home is necessary, a copy of the letter is retained in the student's file in the principal's office. Copies of letters to the NEWB, Board of Management, NEPS, HSE, CAMHS, DES or any other agencies shall be retained in the student's file.

Documentation pertaining to suspensions, expulsions and/or appeals under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998 shall be retained in the student's file. All records are kept in accordance with the Data Protection act 1988 and the Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2003.

In addition, the Board of Management will inform the education welfare Officer of irregular attendance where a child is suspended or expelled for 6 days or more, where a child has missed 20 days or more in any school year, where attendance is irregular and where a pupils is removed from the school register.

J: Reference to other policies

The following policies may be affected by any changes to the Code of Behaviour:

SPHE policy

Anti-bullying policy

Enrolment policy

Health and safety policy

Educational provision for Special Needs Students policy

Incredible years behaviour Management programme

Ratified by the Board of Management April 15th 2011

Signed: _____

Michael Willis, Chairperson, Board of Management