



ST. FRANCIS'
NATIONAL
SCHOOL

Code of Behaviour

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

The school's Code of Behaviour was drawn up by members of staff and members of the Board of Management in consultation with our school facilitator, following an audit of our original policy in line with the publication "Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools". All parents in the school were given the opportunity to contribute to the policy.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE SCHOOL ETHOS

This policy was drawn up in line with our School Ethos Statement and reflects its values and beliefs. (See Appendix A) The primary responsibility for the development of good behaviour rests in the home with parents and guardians, where children spend most of their time. However, in order to foster good behaviour in school every member of the school community has a role to play. We believe that positive reinforcement of good behaviour leads to better self-discipline and we place a greater emphasis on rewards and incentives than on sanctions.

AIMS

- To promote good behaviour
- To provide guidance for pupils, parents and teachers on behavioural expectations
- To provide for the effective and safe operation of the school
- To develop pupil's self-esteem
- To foster the development of a sense of responsibility and self-discipline in pupils based on respect, consideration and tolerance of others
- To facilitate the education and development of every child
- To foster caring attitudes to one another and to the environment
- To enable teachers to teach without disruption

SCOPE OF CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

The standards expected in the Code of Behaviour apply in any situation where pupils are the responsibility of the school. This includes, for example, activities such as school tours, swimming, going to the church and fieldtrips.

STRATEGIES TO AFFIRM AND PROMOTE POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR

- Promoting good behaviour is the main goal of our code. All staff actively support our school ethos which emphasises care, respect and responsibility.
- We foster good relationships among teachers, parents and pupils in order to create a happy school atmosphere.
- Adults model the behaviour that is expected from pupils.
- Good school and class routines are in operation. Core routines necessary for the smooth running of classroom learning are clearly established – e.g. entry to the classroom, settling for whole class teaching,

appropriate seat planning, transition time routines, how to fairly get the teacher's attention, noise level for pair/group work etc.

- We operate a grid book system where pupils earn rewards for good behaviour.
- We have weekly award ceremonies where success in relation to behaviour, attendance, schoolwork and homework is acknowledged.
- Parents are welcome in our school and staff members consult with them where necessary. We ask that parents make an appointment to see the class teacher if they have concerns about their child's behaviour or progress.
- We acknowledge positive behaviour in a variety of ways.
- Teachers ensure that the class timetable is as varied as possible and present a balanced and interesting educational programme for the pupils.
- Problems are dealt with as soon as they become apparent.
- Teachers, in discussion with the pupils, develop clear and simple classroom rules based on the school rules.
- Pupils are aware that misbehaviour and failure to adhere to school and class rules will incur clear, consistent consequences.
- Staff members treat pupils with respect and build up positive relationships with them.
- SPHE is used as a structure within which to address the teaching of social skills, self-esteem and respect and care for others.

INCENTIVES

Our school places greater emphasis on rewards than on sanctions in the belief that this will, in the long run, give best results. We think that it is important to reward class groups as well as individuals because this encourages the development of co-operative behaviour. Our system of positive motivation includes:

- A quiet word of praise about a specific aspect of a child's work or behaviour
- A word of praise in front of a group
- A visit to another member of staff for commendation
- Informing parents- written/verbal communication. This could be a chat with a parent, a phone call, a note in the pupil's homework journal or a note home.
- Extra privileges such as extra break-time
- Grid book achievement stamps, stickers, medals
- No homework/treat passes
- Certificates
- Weekly Awards Ceremony
- Class treats such as extra break.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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.

Role of School Staff

- To create a positive climate with realistic expectations
- To promote, through example, honesty and courtesy
- To provide a caring and effective learning environment
- To encourage relationships based on kindness, respect and understanding of the needs of others
- To ensure fair treatment for all regardless of age, gender, race, ability and disability
- To show appreciation of the efforts and contribution of all
- To teach the school rules in a way that is appropriate to each class level
- To discourage physical aggression and encourage "Kind Hands, Kind Feet, Kind Words".

Role of Parents/Guardians

- To ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually
- To inform the school in writing of the reason for any absences
- To model positive behaviour
- To talk to their child about good behaviour and treating others well
- To encourage their child to keep the school rules
- To co-operate with the school in the implementation of this and other policies

Pupils

In order to create a happy school environment in which pupils can feel secure and make progress, every pupil is expected to:

- Attend school regularly and punctually
- Show respect for self and for others
- Look after his/her own belongings and respect the property of others
- Show respect for other pupils and their learning
- Be kind to everybody
- Be polite and well-mannered at all times
- Have regard for his/her own safety and the safety of others
- Follow instructions from staff members
- Do his/her best in class
- Take responsibility for his/her own work
- Follow the school and classroom rules

CLASSROOM RULES

At the beginning of each academic year, the class teacher will draft a short list of class rules with the children. These reflect and support the school rules and are presented age appropriately for each age group. The rules are devised with regard for the health, safety and welfare of all members of the school community. Class rules may be revised during the year if the need arises.

UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR

The teachers and/or Principal, based on a common sense approach and with regard to the gravity/frequency of such misdemeanours, will judge the degree of misdemeanours i.e. minor or serious.

It is important to note that these lists consist of examples only. They are not meant to be fully comprehensive lists and other types of misbehaviour will also incur sanctions.

Examples of minor misdemeanours:

- Interrupting class work
- Running in the classroom
- Not responding to the school bell in a timely manner
- Talking in class line
- Leaving seat without permission
- Leaving litter around school
- Being discourteous, unmannerly or answering back
- Not completing homework without a good reason
- Using bad language or making hurtful remarks

Examples of serious misdemeanours

- Persistent minor misdemeanours
- Telling lies
- Stealing

- Behaviour that interferes with teaching and learning
- Endangering self/other pupils in the yard at break-time
- Threats or physical hurt to another person
- Hurtful behaviour -includes bullying, harassment, discrimination and victimisation
- Damage to school/other person's property
- Smoking
- Consuming alcohol

Examples of very serious misdemeanours (These may lead to suspension):

- Assault on a pupil or member of staff
- Serious theft
- Serious damage to school property
- Possession or use of prohibited drugs

UNDERSTANDING BEHAVIOUR

The Staff at St. Francis' N.S are aware of the factors that affect behaviour. These factors include external and interpersonal factors (such as parent and family patterns and relationships, peer groups/friends and neighbourhood and community factors) and within-person factors (including age and stage of development, personality and temperament, physical and medical characteristics and ability to learn). We also believe that students' behaviour can change and we will endeavour to assist pupils to modify their behaviour. Examples of supports and interventions, which may be used for pupils, are outlined below.

INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORT

(Some or all of the following may be used depending on the needs of the child.)

- Parents will be informed as soon as it is perceived that difficulties are developing with regard to their child's behaviour. They will be encouraged to work with the school in enabling the child to modify his/her behaviour
- Classroom management plan as agreed with all pupils at the start of the school year
- Social skills programme as part of SPHE.
- Use of Circle Time
- Building up the child's self-esteem using for example multiple intelligence checklists for child and parents to fill in re. what type of learner the child is.
- Yard games/activities are encouraged if the behaviour is taking place on the yard
- Reward systems
- Referral to another teacher or adult for support
- Use of a behavioural checklist (e.g. learning environment checklist from the NEPS booklet "Special Educational Needs – a Continuum of Support") to evaluate whether any modifications could be made to the learning environment
- Use of a Behaviour Contract
- A behaviour plan may be considered when a child consistently exhibits challenging and disruptive behaviour. A behaviour plan will focus on a limited number of behavioural targets. The class teacher, parents, support teachers and the child may be involved in the setting of targets.
- For pupils who exhibit particularly challenging behaviour, support services may be requested to assist in responding to the needs of the pupils. Sources of support may include the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), HSE Community Psychology Services the National Council for Special Education and Enable Ireland.

SANCTIONS

When sanctions are imposed -

- It must be clear why the sanction is being applied
- There should be a clear distinction between minor and major offences

- The sanction must be proportionate to the behaviour in question
- It must be made clear what changes in behaviour are required to avoid future sanctions

The school recognises that all pupils are individuals. Teachers will use their professional judgement and their knowledge of each child's individual needs and circumstances in selecting the appropriate sanction.

SANCTIONS USED BY THE SCHOOL

- Reasoning with pupil
- Verbal reprimand including advice on how to improve
- Temporary separation from peers/friends within classroom
- Temporary removal to another classroom
- Referral to another teacher or to the Principal
- Detention during break-time (outside office window)
- Prescribing extra work
- Completing a Behaviour Worksheet
- Work to be done at home (and signed by a parent)
- Tasks to undo damage caused
- Loss of privileges e.g. Golden Time, Participation in outings or trips
- Communication with parents
- Meeting with parents
- Suspension
- Expulsion

SUSPENSION

Normally, other interventions will have been tried before suspension and the school staff will have reviewed the reasons why these have not worked. Suspension can provide a respite for staff and the pupil, give the pupil time to reflect on the link between their action and its consequences and give staff time to plan ways of helping the pupil to change unacceptable behaviour. The decision to suspend a pupil will follow from serious misbehaviour:

- 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 school property

The Board of Management and Staff of St. Francis' N.S. will follow the procedures for suspension and expulsion outlined in the Guidelines for Schools on Developing a Code of Behaviour (Chapters 10 – 12). Fair procedures (i.e. the right to be heard and the right to impartiality) will be applied at all times. Accordingly, pupils and their parents will be fully informed about the alleged misbehaviour and the processes that will be used to investigate and decide the matter and they will be given an opportunity to respond to an allegation before a decision is made and before a serious sanction is imposed.

In exceptional circumstances, the Principal/Board may consider an immediate suspension to be necessary when 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.

Automatic suspension will apply in the event of a student engaging in very serious misbehaviour. (see above)

In determining the appropriateness of suspending a pupil the Staff and the Board of Management will refer to the factors to consider before proposing to suspend a pupil. These factors include – the nature and seriousness of the behaviour, the context of the behaviour, the impact of the behaviour, the interventions tried to date, whether suspension is a proportionate response and the possible impact of suspension.

PROCEDURES IN RELATION TO SUSPENSION

- Communication to parents regarding the suspension of a pupil or the possibility of suspension will be in writing and copies of all correspondence will be retained. In some circumstances it may be necessary to contact parents by phone.
- The parents/guardians and the pupil will be invited to meet with the Principal and/or Board of Management to discuss the proposed suspension.
- The Board of Management has delegated responsibility for suspension to the Principal in the event that immediate suspension of a pupil is warranted. The parents/guardians and child will be invited to discuss the matter with the principal and the procedures governing suspension will be applied.
- Where parents do not agree to meet with the Principal, written notification will serve as notice to impose a suspension.
- A written statement of the terms and date of the termination of a suspension will be given to parents/guardians. A suspension will not be for more than three school days, except in exceptional circumstances where the Principal considers that a period of suspension longer than three days is necessary in order to achieve a particular objective. 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 programme of study to be followed
 - The arrangements for returning to school, including any commitments to be entered into by the student and the parents (for example, the pupil and parents might be asked to reaffirm their commitment to the Code of Behaviour)

It will also confirm, if applicable,

- 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 1988 Section 29)
- The suspension will be recorded on the Tusla "Student Absence Report Form" (when applicable)
- When a period of suspension ends, the pupil will be re-admitted formally to the class by the Principal. The school will help the pupil catch up on work missed and the pupil will be given the opportunity and support for a fresh start.
- Where a satisfactory resolution of a problem is achieved, a pupil may be re-admitted to school within a suspension period at the discretion of the Principal and/or the Chairperson of the Board of Management.
- If a pupil continues to misbehave s/he may be suspended for a major fixed period (up to ten days) to allow for consultation with both the pupil and the pupil's parents/guardians to address the issues.
- As outlined above, parents/guardians and pupil will be given the opportunity to discuss the issues with the Principal/Board of Management.
- The Education Welfare Officer will be informed when a student has been suspended for six days or more cumulatively.
- Section 29 Appeal - when the total number of days for which the student has been suspended in the current school year reaches 20 days the parents may appeal the suspension under Section 29 of the Education Act and will be given information about how to appeal.

PROCEDURES FOR EXPULSION

Subsequent to the above suspension procedures and meetings with parents/guardians, if serious/very serious incidents of misbehaviour continue, the pupil will be recommended for permanent expulsion by the Board of Management. The grounds for expulsion include the following:

- The pupil's behaviour is a persistent cause of significant disruption to the learning of others or to the teaching process.
- The pupil's continued presence in the school constitutes a real and significant threat to safety.
- The pupil is responsible for serious damage to property.

Authority to expel is reserved for the Board of Management.

In determining the appropriateness of expelling a pupil the Board of Management will refer to the factors to consider before proposing to expel a pupil. These factors are similar to those mentioned above in relation to suspension.

In exceptional circumstances, a pupil may be expelled for a first offence. This may apply in the event of

- A serious threat of violence against another pupil or a member of staff
- Actual violence or physical assault
- Supplying illegal drugs to other pupils in the school
- Sexual assault

PROCEDURES IN RESPECT OF EXPULSION – SIX STEPS

Step 1 - A detailed investigation carried out under the direction of the Principal

Step 2 - A recommendation to the Board of Management

Step 3 - Consideration by the Board of Management of the Principal's recommendation: and the holding of a hearing

Step 4 - Board of Management deliberations and actions following the hearing

Step 5 - Consultations arranged by the Educational Welfare Officer

Step 6 - Confirmation of the decision to expel

Note: A detailed outline of each of these steps is available in Chapter 12 of the Guidelines for Developing a Code of Behaviour. This is available in the school office or can be accessed on the TUSLA Website – www.TUSLA.ie

Section 29 Appeals: A parent may appeal a decision to expel to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills (DES). A form for such an appeal is available from the DES.

KEEPING RECORDS

Class Level

- Teachers keep notes on the behaviour and progress of individual pupils in their class. This enables the teachers to track a child's behaviour. The records can be used to inform parents of their child's behaviour and progress at parent-teacher meetings. The records are kept in locked filing cabinets and are passed from teacher to teacher as the child moves up the school. When a child finishes school the records are added to the child's file.
- The school has devised a system for documenting problem behaviour. This includes recording the nature and seriousness of the behaviour, the context of the behaviour, the impact of the behaviour and the interventions tried to date. Incidents of bullying or sexual harassment may also be recorded in this way.

Playground

- The teacher on yard duty informs the class teacher and/or the principal of incidents of misbehaviour in the yard.
- Minor incidents are noted in the yard book.

- The teacher on duty records serious incidents in the pupil's individual file.

School Records

- A record is kept of letters or phone calls to parents in relation to a pupil's behaviour. A record is also kept of communication with outside agencies and with the Board of Management. These records are stored in the pupil's individual file.
- Documentation pertaining to Section 29 appeals are kept and stored in a locked filing cabinet.

Records and Reports of Suspension

- Records will be kept of the investigation and decision-making. These will include written records of the investigation (including notes of all interviews held), the decision-making process, the decision and rationale for the decision, the duration of the suspension and any conditions attached to it. These records will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the school office.
- The Principal will report all suspensions to the Board with reasons for and the duration of each suspension.
- A report will be made to the NEWB in accordance with the Tusla reporting guidelines.

Records and Reports of Expulsion

All data, letters etc. will be kept as above.

PUPILS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Pupils with special needs will be required to follow the school's "Code of Behaviour" but teachers will use their professional judgement in relation to regularity and level of sanctions. While teachers must be seen to be fair in the eyes of other children who may have exhibited the same type of misdemeanours, they will also show leniency and understanding in relation to children with specific learning/behavioural difficulties. Parents of these children will be kept informed of their child's behaviour on a regular basis and may be requested to work with the school in devising effective strategies to help the child to improve his/her behaviour. This may involve working and co-operating with a Special Needs Assistant (SNA), if an SNA is deployed to assist a pupil/class. The devising of such strategies may also entail contacting and meeting with relevant out of school agencies.

METHODS OF COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS

A high level of co-operation and communication with parents is an important factor in encouraging positive behaviour in the school. Structures and channels designed to maintain a high level of communication among staff, pupils and parents have been established. Parents are 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 of communication are used throughout the school

- Informal parent/teacher meetings
- Formal parent/teacher meetings held once a year
- Notes in homework journals
- Letters/notes/phone calls from school to home
- Letters/notes/phone calls from home to school

SCHOOL OPENING AND CLOSING TIMES

The school opens to receive pupils at 8.40 a.m. No responsibility is accepted for pupils arriving before that time. Pupils may not come inside the school gate until the bell rings at 8.40 a.m. Classes commence each day at 9.00 a.m. and pupils should be at their desks ready to start work at that time.

Classes end at 1.20 p.m. for Junior and Senior Infants and at 2.20 p.m. for all other classes. Junior and Senior Infants are escorted to the gate by their teacher at 1.20 p.m. and must be collected punctually. Parents of children in other classes who wish to have their children escorted home should make their own arrangements to have them met at the school gate at 2.20 p.m. as the school cannot accept responsibility for looking after children after that time.

NOTIFICATION OF A CHILD'S ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL

- Regular attendance at school is very important and children should attend school every day unless there is a very good reason for not doing so. A list of holidays for the year is circulated in September and family holidays and trips should be arranged to fit in with the school holidays.
- If a child is absent from school, parents/guardians must inform the school in writing of the reason for the absence. (Education Welfare Act 2000, Section 23(2)(e) and Section 18) Forms for this purpose are sent out at the beginning of the school year. These forms will be kept on file.
- Since the introduction of the Education Welfare Act all children who are absent for an aggregate of 20 or more school days in any school year have to be reported to the Educational Welfare Officer. The school also has the right to notify the Educational Welfare Officer if, in the opinion of the principal, a child is not attending regularly. (Section 21 (4)(d) of Education Welfare Act 2000)

PROCEDURE FOR RESOLUTION OF COMPLAINTS

In Ireland, the 1998 Education Act provides the legal framework for the delivery of education to children.

Under the 1998 Act, legally, all schools are owned by the school patrons or trustees. Legally all schools are managed by school Boards of Management who also employ the teachers at the school. Accordingly, whereas the Minister for Education and Science provides funding and policy direction for schools, the Minister and the Department does not have the power to instruct schools to follow a particular course of direction with regards to individual complaint cases.

Hence, ideally all complaints should be resolved at a local level.

Agreement has been reached between teacher unions and school management bodies about the procedures which should apply when investigating and resolving complaints at a local level. A copy of the procedures is available from the school office or online at www.education.ie and should be used as a guide to you if making a complaint about a teacher or the school.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

This code was first implemented at the beginning of the 2010/2011 school year.

COMMUNICATION OF THE CODE

All parents will be given a copy of the code.

TIMETABLE FOR REVIEW

The Staff and Board of Management will review this policy every two years.

RATIFICATION

This Code of Behaviour was reviewed and then ratified by the Board of Management on 21st September 2023

Signed _____ Date _____
Chairperson, Board of Management