



# Code of Discipline

## Introduction

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

The children bring to school a wide variety of behaviour. The ethos of our school establishes and supports a strong sense of community within the school between School, Board of Management and Parents / Guardians.

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

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

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

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

## Aims of the Code

- To create a positive learning environment that encourages and reinforces good behaviour.
- To promote self-esteem and positive relationships.
- To encourage consistency of response to both positive and negative behaviour.
- To foster a sense of responsibility and self-discipline in pupils and to support good behaviour patterns based on consideration and respect for the rights of others.
- To 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.
- To ensure that the school's expectations and strategies are widely known and understood through the parent's handbook, availability of policies and an ethos of open communication.
- To encourage the involvement of both home and school in the implementation of this policy.

These sentiments are contained in the 7 Golden Rules for our school listed as follows:

1. I will be gentle - I will not hurt anyone.
2. I will be kind and helpful - I will not hurt people's feelings.
3. I will be honest - I will not hide the truth.
4. I will listen - I will not interrupt.
5. I will look after property - I will not waste or damage things.
6. I will work hard - I will not waste time.
7. I will show respect to everyone

The emphasis in St. Mary's N.S. is on the positive. Our catch phrase is:

*Catch them when they're being good!*

### **Content of Policy**

The policy is addressed under the following headings:

1. Introduction
2. Guidelines for behaviour
3. Whole School Approach to promoting positive behaviour
4. Rewards and acknowledgement of good behaviour
5. Responses and sanctions available to teachers and school
6. Suspension and Expulsion
7. Children with Special Needs
8. Keeping Records
9. Procedure for notification of a pupil's absence from school
10. Parents as Partners
11. Reference to other Policies

### **Guidelines for Behaviour**

The following rules and sanctions have been put in place to cover the areas of:

- Classroom
- Yard
- Transition areas (Corridor, Cloakroom etc.)
- Computer Room
- P.E. Hall

- Toilets

### **Classroom Rules**

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

- I will sit on my chair when requested to do so and do my work well.
- I will listen. I will let others speak.
- I will always walk and never run.
- I will help to keep a tidy classroom.
- I will use the toilet properly and wash my hands.
- I will keep my copies, books, desk and school bag clean and tidy.
- I will raise my hand and not shout out.
- I will have my own stationary - pencils, copies etc.

Good behaviour will be praised and rewarded. Unacceptable behaviour will not be tolerated.

### **Yard Rules**

- I will walk quietly and promptly to my line when bell rings.
- I will let others join in my games.
- I will be gentle. I will not push, kick or punch.
- I will not use bad language or call names.
- I will be fair.
- I will treat others as I would like them to treat me.

### **Corridor Rules**

- Always walk quietly, never run.
- I will let adults pass
- I will not push or shove in the line.
- I will stand back for adults, teachers, priest, visitors etc.
- I will open the door for Staff, Priest etc. if convenient to do so.

### **Rules of P.E. Hall**

- Walk in, do not run.
- Sit down quietly.
- Listen to what the teacher is saying.
- Freeze on Whistle (“Statues”) and listen.
- Line up quietly.
- Return to class in orderly fashion.

## Rules of Computer Suite

- No food or drinks in the computer room at any time.
- No school bags in the computer room.
- Make sure hands are clean before using computers.
- Leave the computers and accessories as you found them, ready for the next student to use.
- All programs should be closed, space should be tidy and chairs pushed in.
- Do not touch or tamper with cables or switches.
- Be gentle with all equipment.
- Children should:
  - be in the computer room **only** under the supervision of a teacher.
  - treat the computer room as a library and be quiet, not talk or make any distracting noises.
  - not alter the computer settings with their own backgrounds or screen savers.
  - ask the teacher before printing anything.

Parents are reminded that the staff of the school will not accept responsibility for pupils before the official opening time of 9.20 a.m. or after the official closing time of 3.00 p.m. except where pupils are engaged in an extra-curricular activity organised by the school. Pupils involved in such activities are expected to behave in accordance with the school Code of Behaviour during these times.

## Whole School Approach to Promoting Positive Behaviour

Rather than listing all the possible behaviours that might be unacceptable there are instead clear definitions of the differing roles and expectations of the people involved in the everyday life of the school.

- To promote equality and fairness for all
- To promote good behaviour and self-discipline among the pupils
- To promote the safety and happiness of all pupils and staff in the school

### Expectations in this School

<b>The school expects that pupils will:</b>	<b>Teachers expect that pupils will:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• attend school regularly and not miss days without good reason. A written explanation is necessary for all absences</li><li>• arrive on time</li><li>• not leave during the day without permission</li><li>• respect all school property</li><li>• wear the school uniform</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• show all staff members courtesy and respect</li><li>• accept his/her authority and responsibility and his/her right to teach and impose sanctions on those who misbehave</li><li>• come to school on time and have all necessary materials</li><li>• do homework carefully and</li></ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• show respect for themselves and others</li> <li>• avoid swearing, fighting or name-calling</li> <li>• listen to messages given and do as requested</li> <li>• participate in school activities</li> <li>• move quietly around the school and avoid causing disturbance</li> <li>• keep the school tidy and litter-free</li> </ul>	<p>completely</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• listen when others are talking</li> <li>• avoid distracting behaviour</li> <li>• participate to the best of their ability in all class activities</li> <li>• follow the rules drawn up by their class</li> </ul>
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<b>Your fellow students expect that you will:</b>	<b>Children expect that school will be:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• not bully them</li> <li>• treat others, as you would like to be treated</li> <li>• never insult or belittle them because of differences</li> <li>• respect their property</li> <li>• listen to them</li> <li>• share</li> <li>• allow them to be part of the group</li> <li>• speak to them with kindness and respect</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• safe</li> <li>• happy</li> <li>• suited to their learning style</li> <li>• encouraging and supportive</li> <li>• affirming of children of all abilities</li> <li>• able to deal with bullying</li> <li>• a place where teaching and learning are at the core of all we do</li> <li>• a place where they will be listened to</li> </ul>

<b>Parents expect that there will be:</b>	<b>Teachers expect that there will be:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a safe and happy environment for their child</li> <li>• recognition and provision for the individual differences of pupils</li> <li>• support for children who need it</li> <li>• fairness and consistency in the way children are dealt with</li> <li>• an atmosphere of support and inclusion rather than criticism</li> <li>• contact at an early stage to inform them of any problems</li> <li>• a willingness to listen to their viewpoint</li> <li>• suggestions and support from school staff regarding problems in school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mutual support and encouragement</li> <li>• co-operation to achieve the schools aims and objectives as indicated in Enrolment Policy</li> <li>• a fair and consistent implementation of the school discipline policy</li> <li>• a consistent approach to handling children with challenging behaviour</li> <li>• an atmosphere that encourages professional development and a willingness to learn and change</li> </ul>

## **Rewards and Acknowledgement of Good Behaviour**

The emphasis within the school at all times is on the acknowledgement of effort and achievement. Part of the vision of St. Mary's N.S is to help children achieve their personal best - academically, intellectually and socially. We recognise that there are many different forms of intelligence and that similarly children use a variety of approaches to solve problems. Reward systems which are based on academic merit or particular extrinsic goals continuously apply to only a limited number of children and undermine the individuality of children. All children deserve encouragement to attain their own best. Children will be encouraged, praised and listened to at all times by adults in the school. Praise is earned by the maintenance of good standards as well as by particularly noteworthy personal achievements. Rates of praise for behaviour should be as high as for work.

The following are some samples of how praise might be given:

- A quiet word or gesture to show approval
- A comment in a pupil's exercise book
- A visit to another member of Staff or to the Principal for commendation
- A word of praise in front of a group or class
- A system of merit marks or stickers
- Delegating some special responsibility or privilege
- A mention to parent, written or verbal communication.
- Golden Time
- Points System – Individual/Groups (Class Dojo)
- Stickers
- Lucky Dip
- Treat
- Acknowledgement by Pupils/Other classes/Teacher/Other teachers/Principal
- Comments in homework journal
- Display work
- Reward – Best effort/Most improved/Good behaviour/Kind gesture etc.

## **Responses and Sanctions available to Teachers and School**

Three levels of misbehaviour are recognised: Minor, Serious and Gross. All everyday instances of a minor nature are dealt with by the class teacher. In cases of repeated serious misbehaviour or single instances of gross misbehaviour, parents will be involved at an early stage and invited to meet the teacher and/or the Principal to discuss their child's behaviour.

The degree of misdemeanors 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 misdemeanors. Parents will be kept fully informed from the outset of instances of serious misbehaviour on the part of their children.

### **Unacceptable Behaviour**

Examples of serious misbehaviour:

- Behaviour that is hurtful (including bullying, harassment, discrimination and victimisation)
- Behaviour that interferes with teaching and learning
- Threats or physical hurt to another person

- Damage to property
- Theft

Examples of gross misbehaviour:

- Assault on a teacher or pupil
- Serious theft
- Serious damage to property

## **Sanctions**

The use of sanctions or consequences should be characterised by certain features:

- It must be clear why the sanction is being applied
- The consequence must relate as closely as possible to the behaviour
- It must be made clear what changes in behaviour are required to avoid future sanctions
- Group punishment should be avoided as it breeds resentment
- There should be a clear distinction between minor and major offences
- It should be the behaviour rather than the person that is the focus

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

1. Reasoning with pupil
2. Verbal reprimand including advice on how to improve
3. Temporary separation from peers within class and/or temporary removal to another class
4. Writing out the story of what happened and a behaviour contract signed ensuring such behaviour doesn't occur again.
5. Loss of privileges
6. Detention during break
7. Communication with parents
8. Referral to Principal
9. Principal communicating with parents
10. Exclusion (Suspension or Expulsion) from school (in accordance with Rule 130 of the Rules for National Schools as amended by circular and Education Welfare Act 2000)

However sanctions should relate as closely as possible to the behaviour. Therefore a child, who does not do his work in class or has not completed his homework, may be detained at break time to finish the work.

Pupils will not be deprived of engagement in a Curricular Area, except on the grounds of health and safety. Pupils who misbehave frequently may not be allowed to participate in school outings / extra-curricular activities for their own safety and that of other pupils.



## **Suspension and Expulsion**

Before serious sanctions such as suspension or expulsion are used, the normal channels of communication between school and parents will be utilised. Where it is proposed to detain a pupil after school hours, the parents or guardians will be notified. Communication with parents may be verbal or by letter depending on the circumstances.

For gross misbehaviour or repeated instances of serious misbehaviour suspension may be considered. Parents concerned will be invited to come to the school to discuss their child's case. Aggressive, threatening or violent behaviour towards a teacher or pupil will be regarded as serious or gross misbehaviour.

Where there are repeated instances of serious misbehaviour, the Chairperson of the Board of Management will be informed and the parents will be requested in writing to attend at the school to meet the Chairperson and the Principal. If the parents do not give an undertaking that the pupil will behave in an acceptable manner in the future the pupil may be suspended for a period. Prior to suspension, where possible, the Principal may review the case in consultation with teachers and other members of the school community involved, with due regard to records of previous misbehaviours, their pattern and context, sanctions and other interventions used and their outcomes and any relevant medical information. Suspension will be in accordance with the Rules for National Schools and the Education Welfare Act 2000.

In the case of gross misbehaviour, where it is necessary to ensure that order and discipline are maintained and to secure the safety of the pupils, the Board may authorise the Chairperson or Principal to sanction an immediate suspension for a period not exceeding three school days, pending a discussion of the matter with the parents.

Expulsion may be considered in an extreme case, in accordance with the Rule for National Schools and the Education Welfare Act 2000. Before suspending or expelling a pupil, the Board shall notify the Local Welfare Education Officer in writing in accordance with Section 24 of the Education Welfare Act.

### **Procedures in respect of Suspension**

The Principal shall notify the parents and the student 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
- The provision for an appeal to the BOM
- The right to appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science

When any sanction, including suspension, is completed, a student shall 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 shall expect the same behaviour of this student as of all other students.

## **Procedures in respect of Expulsion**

(As per Guidelines for Schools NEWB)

- A detailed investigation is carried out under the direction of the Principal
- A recommendation is made to the Board of Management by the Principal
- The B.O.M. considers the Principal's recommendation and a hearing is held
- The B.O.M. deliberate and acts following the hearing
- Before expelling a pupil, the Board shall notify the Local Welfare Education Officer in writing in accordance with section 24 of the Education Welfare Act
- B.O.M. confirms the decision to expel
- A parent may appeal a decision to expel to the Secretary General of the Dept. of Education and Science (Education Act 1998 section 29)

## **Removal of Suspension (Reinstatement)**

Following or during a period of suspension, the parent/s may apply to have the pupil reinstated to the school. The parent/s must give a satisfactory undertaking that a suspended pupil will behave in accordance with the school code and the Principal must be satisfied that the pupil's reinstatement will not constitute a risk to the pupil's own safety or that of the other pupils or staff. The Principal will facilitate the preparation of a behaviour plan for the pupil if required and will re-admit the pupil formally to the class.

## **Children with Special Needs/Challenging Behaviour**

All children are required to comply with the code of behaviour. However the school recognises that children with special needs may require assistance in understanding certain rules. Specialised behaviour plans will be put in place in consultation with parents and the class teacher, learning support/ resource teacher, and or Principal will work closely with home to ensure that optimal support is given. Cognitive development will be taken into account at all times. Professional advice from psychological assessments will be invaluable.

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

The following steps are taken to assist children with special needs to comply with the Code of Behaviour.

1. The classroom teacher seeks a solution by adopting various strategies within the classroom context e.g.:

### Rewards

Short-term rewards during the day

Explain to child pattern of rewards.

Catch Child when good.

Bringing attention to positive behaviour.

Being specific about inappropriate behaviour.

Putting sanctions in place e.g. Loss of privileges as previously outlined.

Circle Time, if appropriate.

2. Differentiation - all efforts will be made to match the curriculum to the abilities, aptitudes and interests of each pupil. This should help to reduce boredom, lack of interest, lack of progress and subsequent misbehaviour.

3. Programme for behaviour devised i.e. Individual Behaviour Programme.
4. Teacher is requested to record behaviour daily so as to make detailed evaluation (ABC assessment and observations recorded)
5. Principal may look for advice from others i.e. Psychologists, Social Workers or other outside agencies involved.
6. Feedback from parent / guardian - e.g. recording notebook, telephone, weekly communication if effective. Individual child's home background will dictate this.
7. Discipline for challenging pupils will ultimately be the responsibility of class-teacher. S.N.A.s are there to assist and monitor pupil under the leadership of class-teacher. All incidents in the yard will be reported to class teacher who will take the necessary procedures.

## **Records**

Class teachers' individual records and the School Behaviour File, kept by the Principal, allow the school to track a student's behaviour, and to check whether efforts to change behaviour are working. Positive responses by a student and evidence of changed behaviour are also recorded.

Students are told when a record is being made about their behaviour, and the reasons for keeping a record.

All records are kept in accordance with Data Protection Act 1988 and the Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2003.

## **Procedures for Notification of Pupil Absences from School**

St. Mary's expects a reasonable level of attendance from its pupils (as per the school calendar year). Class teachers monitor the attendance level and are responsible for fostering an appreciation of learning among the pupils and encouraging regular attendance at school by creating a stimulating and attractive school environment.

Under the Education Welfare Act 2000, the parents must inform the school if their child is absent and why. It is best to do this in writing. The school must notify the National Educational Welfare Board if it is concerned about a child's attendance. This will generally happen if a child has missed a total of 20 days in the school year, even if those absences are accounted for by letter. Very often there will be good reasons for the absences. A child may be sick or there may have been a family difficulty. If there is a worry that a child is missing out on his/her education, an Educational Welfare Officer may visit the home to discuss the matter. He or she will work with the home and the school to see what needs to be done to ensure that the child gets every chance to enjoy school.

## **Parents as Partners**

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

A high level of co-operation and open communication is seen as an important factor

encouraging positive behaviour in the school. Structures and channels designed to maintain a high level of communication among staff and between staff, pupils and parents have been established and are being reviewed regularly.

Parents should be encouraged to talk in confidence to teachers about any significant developments in a child’s life, in the past or present, which may affect the child’s behaviour.

The following methods are to be used at all levels within the school:

- Informal parent/teacher meetings and Formal parent/teacher meetings
- Through children’s homework journal (infants do not have a homework journal-check bags)
- Letters/notes from school to home and from home to school
- Telephone calls

<b>School Expectations of Parents/Guardians</b>	<b>Your child expects that you will:</b>
<p>The school expects that you will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be familiar with the various policies and codes of the school and the expectation of the pupils</li> <li>• show support for teachers in their implementation of the schools behaviour policy</li> <li>• support your child in his/her school work and ensure he/she has the necessary materials</li> <li>• ensure the punctuality and regular attendance of your child</li> <li>• ensure your child has a positive attitude to and abides by the school and class rules</li> <li>• never undermine the authority of the school or teachers and promote respect for teachers and other school personnel</li> <li>• give a contact number where you can be reached in an emergency and be available to discuss a problem</li> <li>• feel free to notify the school of changes in circumstances that may affect the child’s behaviour/learning.</li> <li>• make an appointment through the secretary if you wish to speak to a teacher giving an indication of the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• look after his/her basic needs</li> <li>• be interested in, support, praise and encourage his/her work in school</li> <li>• show fairness</li> </ul> <p><b>Other parents expect that you will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• support the school in implementing its code of behaviour</li> <li>• exert firm discipline in cases where your child’s behaviour is having a negative impact on behaviour/learning of others</li> </ul>

matter to be discussed	
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The above expectations may vary from time to time depending on circumstances and as the need arises. In our school, we treat all children with respect and dignity. There is a strong sense of community and cooperation among staff, pupils and parents and all are agreed that their focus is primarily on the promotion and recognition of positive behaviour.

The school's SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education) 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.

This Code of Behaviour was drawn up in 2012 and reviewed in September 2017.

### **Approved and Ratified**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Chairperson (Board of Management)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Chairperson (Parents' Association)