



Rathmichael Parish National School

Code of Behaviour and Discipline Document 2021

The matter of maintaining a satisfactory level of discipline and etiquette for the well being and dignity of all the teachers, ancillary staff, volunteers and pupils inside and outside the classroom is among our highest priorities.

We expect parents to educate children to show respect for others, fellow pupils and in particular, respect for teachers. We strongly advise that all parents show full and positive support of the teachers' decisions, which are taken in the best interests of the children concerned. We consider it the duty of parents to support teachers' decisions openly to their children. Should they have reservations on a particular matter, an appointment should be made to discuss it with the teacher concerned.

Mission Statement

The school's mission is to provide a well-ordered, caring, happy and secure atmosphere where the intellectual, spiritual, physical, moral and cultural needs of the pupils are identified and addressed. The characteristic spirit of the school is a reflection of the ethos of the Church of Ireland incorporating a balance of faith and culture. It is manifest in the positive school climate where pupils' self esteem and self-confidence are nurtured within an atmosphere of mutual respect and appreciation.

Our aim is to encourage, reinforce and promote positive behaviour among the pupils and to reward good behaviour, good attitude and courtesy. The aim of this document is not to dictate to but rather to make parents aware of the need for maintaining a satisfactory level of discipline. Prevention rather than cure is our aim. The following text should be noted carefully.

Banned Items and content

Potentially harmful items (e.g. weapons, lighters, etc.) are not permitted in school.

Parents are discouraged from permitting toys or similar personal belongings that may cause distraction, to be brought to school.

Wearing nail polish, hair dye, make-up, jewellery etc. that may cause distraction is not permitted.

Inappropriate material of a sexual or bullying nature in any medium.

Bullying and Harassment

Bullying, including cyber bullying, and harassment are matters which the school finds unacceptable and take extremely seriously. The school maintains



a policy on the prevention of bullying and harassment, breaches of which will be subject to the disciplinary procedures set out herein.

Disciplinary Procedure

The teacher of any particular pupil/s will deal with minor problems in a manner considered most appropriate. Possible consequences may be:

- Confiscation
- Deprivation of special activity
- Extra work in areas where the pupil has not been diligent
- Time spent indoors under supervision during lunchtime.

Minor Problems

The class teacher will deal with issues such as verbal abuse to teachers/other pupils, disobedience, vulgarity, inappropriate gestures and behaviours.

Persistence in the above behaviours will require the Principal's attention and may as deemed necessary by the teacher and/or the Principal require involvement of the parents/guardians of the pupil/s concerned.

Aggressive behaviour, intimidation or actual physical violence towards fellow pupils/teachers may be dealt with at class level but with the knowledge of the Principal and parents/guardians may be involved.

Some incidents may require speaking with a parent/guardian immediately. This is at the discretion of the teacher.

Daily, weekly or monthly meetings may be required with parents/guardians. (The Principal may also be involved). Pupil/s may be formally spoken to following such a meeting.

Pupil/s may be required to go on a daily or weekly report in order to improve behaviour. Such report card, to be signed by parent/guardian, the pupil and the teacher, may be used to reinforce and encourage positive behaviour. A diary or written record may be kept by the teacher on matters related to the misconduct.

The Principal may at any stage bring issues to the attention of the Board of Management for consideration.

Further Disciplinary Action

Normally, where other interventions have been tried and not worked, and school staff have reviewed the reasons why they have not worked,



Suspension or Expulsion from the school may occur in accordance with procedures set out hereunder. That aside, in some circumstances there may be grounds for immediate suspension.

Suspension

Suspension from school means a total ban from classes, from the school grounds, from all school related activities such as hockey, football matches, tours, trips and evening functions organised by school bodies – e.g., Board of Management, P.T.A.

Suspension of a pupil may take place following a serious breach of school rules, e.g., deliberate acts of violence or aggression, or threatening or intimidating behaviour towards a fellow pupil, member of staff or other person, or deliberate damage to school property, and/or where there is evidence that exclusion of pupil/s from the school pending remedial action is necessary to protect the health and safety of others in the school, and/or where behaviour has had a seriously detrimental effect on the education of other pupil/s.

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

Various factors will be considered before suspending pupil/s in accordance with NEWB guidelines, including:

- 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 an appropriate response
- The possible impact of suspension

Except in the case of Immediate Suspension (see below), the following procedures will apply to suspension:

Notification and Opportunity to respond

Pupil/s and parents/guardians will be informed (this may be either verbally and/or in writing) about the complaint, how it will be investigated, and that it could result in suspension. Every effort will be made to write to the parent/guardian to ensure there is a formal and permanent record of having let them know what their child is alleged to have done. This letter will normally confirm:

- Period of suspension and dates
- Reason for suspension



- Any study programme to be followed

Pupil/s and parents/guardians will be given an opportunity (usually at a meeting to which they will be invited) to respond before a decision is made and before any sanction is imposed.

Period of Suspension

10 days is generally the upper limit placed by the Board of Management on any period of suspension it imposes, except in extraordinary circumstances where a longer period may for compelling reasons be required. The Board of Management will, however, having regard for all the issues at hand, seek to keep the period of suspension to the absolute minimum number of days required to achieve the desired outcome of the sanction.

Normally, suspension will last for a period of one to three days depending on the severity of the offence, except in circumstances where the Principal considers that a suspension of longer than three days is needed in order to achieve a particular objective.

If a suspension of more than 3 days is being proposed, the Principal refers the matter to The Board of Management for consideration and approval, giving the circumstances and the expected outcomes.

However, the Board of Management authorises the Principal, with the approval of the Chairperson of the Board, to impose a suspension of up to five days in circumstances where a Board meeting cannot be convened in a timely fashion.

A decision by the Principal to suspend may be appealed to the Board of Management.

Immediate suspension

Where an immediate suspension is considered by the Principal to be warranted for the safety of the pupil/s, other pupil/s, staff and/or others, a preliminary investigation will be conducted to establish the case for the imposition of the suspension.

In this case parents will be notified and arrangements made with them for pupil/s to be collected.



The period of an immediate suspension will be communicated to parents/guardians. Such period is deemed to be provisional and subject to review by the Board of Management.

A formal investigation will immediately follow the imposition of such a suspension, and normal suspension procedures, insofar as they can be observed in these circumstances, will apply.

Removing/Curtailing suspension

A suspension may be removed if the Board of Management decides to remove it for any reason, or if the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science directs that it be removed after an appeal under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998. (such appeals only apply where a pupil has been suspended for more than 20 days in the school year – see below)

Report to NEWB (National Educational Welfare Board)

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

Appeals

Where the total number of days for which pupil/s have been suspended in the current school year reaches 20 days, the parent/guardian may appeal the suspension under section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

Return/Reintegration

On returning to school following suspension, the parents/guardians of the erstwhile-suspended pupil/s must give written guarantee of good behaviour and agree to pay the costs of any damage to property if relevant. Pupil/s must agree to adhere to all school policies and rules governing them. The Board of Management reserves the right to set out other appropriate conditions that it deems reasonable in facilitating a return to school. The school will help pupil/s to take responsibility to catch up on work missed. The class teacher will provide support to pupil/s during the reintegration process. Pupil/s will be given the opportunity and support for a fresh start.

Expulsion

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Pupil/s are expelled from school when the Board of Management makes a decision to permanently exclude him or her from school.

Expulsion of pupil/s is a very serious step and one that will only be taken by the Board of Management after the school has taken significant steps to address the misbehaviour and to avoid expulsion of pupil/s including, as appropriate:

- meeting with parents/guardians and pupil/s to try to find ways of helping the pupil/s to change his or her behaviour
- attempting to ensure that pupil/s understand the possible consequences of his or her behaviour, if it should persist.
- seeking the assistance of support agencies (e.g. National Educational Psychological Service, Health Service Executive Community Services, the national Behavioural Support Service, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, National Council for Special Education).

A proposal to expel pupil/s requires serious grounds such as that:

- their behaviour is a persistent cause of significant disruption to the learning of others or to the teaching process or
- their continued presence in the school constitutes a real and significant threat to safety or
- they are responsible for serious damage to property or injury to persons.

Where expulsion is considered, school authorities will have tried a series of other interventions and believe that they have exhausted all feasible possibilities for changing the pupil's behaviour as per details set out in section 12.3 (page 82) of the NEWB Developing A Code Of Behaviour: Guidelines For Schools.

Expulsion for a First Offence

The Board of Management may form the opinion that pupil/s 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 pupil or member of staff
- actual violence, physical assault or intimidation
- Possession, use or supply of illegal drugs, alcohol or other potentially harmful substances to other pupil/s in the school
- sexual misconduct



Procedures in respect of Expulsion

Where a preliminary assessment of the facts confirms serious misbehaviour that could warrant expulsion, the procedural steps will include:

1. A detailed investigation carried out under the direction of the Principal.
2. A recommendation to the Board of Management by the Principal.
3. Consideration by the Board of Management of the Principal's recommendation and the holding of a hearing.
4. Board of Management deliberations and actions following the hearing.
5. Consultations arranged by the Educational Welfare Officer.
6. Confirmation of the decision to expel.

(Details of steps 1 – 6 can be found in section 12.4 on Pages 83 – 86 of NEWB – Developing a Code of Behaviour Guidelines for Schools)

Appeals

A parent/guardian may appeal a decision to expel to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science (Education Act 1998 section 29). The National Educational Welfare Board on behalf of a pupil may also bring an appeal.

The appeals process

The appeals process under section 29 of the Education Act 1998 begins with the provision of mediation by a mediator nominated by the Appeals Committee (Department of Education and Science). For further details about the Appeals process, including requirements for documentation and the steps in the process, refer to current DES guidance. (Developing a Code of behaviour: Guidelines for Schools. NEWB2008)

This policy will be reviewed every three years.

Ratified by Board of Management.

Revd. Seán Hanily

11th May 2021