



ST. MUREDACH'S COLLEGE

Sligo Road, Ballina, Co. Mayo

Code of Behaviour Policy

This Code of Behaviour Policy is inspired by the mission statement of St. Muredach's College and should be read in conjunction with Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools (National Educational Welfare Board, 2008), now administered by Tusla Education Support Service.

History and Mission Statement: Aims

St. Muredach's College is a Catholic voluntary school under the trusteeship of Archbishop Francis Duffy.

The educational ethos of St. Muredach's College is inspired by Jesus Christ's Teachings in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew's Gospel 5.7).

The school seeks to promote a caring and inclusive community where the values of honesty, loyalty, self-esteem and enjoyment of learning are encouraged.

Students and staff work in co-operation with each other to promote an atmosphere of learning, fairness and justice for all.

Under section 23 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, the Board of Management of St. Muredach's College has prepared and has made available this Code of Behaviour for our students and parents. This school's Code of Behaviour is prepared in accordance with the Guidelines issued by the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB), whose functions are now carried out by Tusla Education Support Service.

The Code of Behaviour

This Code of Behaviour is the set of programmes, practices and procedures that together form the school's plan for helping students in the school to behave well and learn well.

This Code of Behaviour helps the school community to promote the school ethos, relationships, policies, procedures and practices that encourage good behaviour and prevent unacceptable behaviour. The Code of Behaviour helps teachers, other members of staff, students and parents to work together for a happy, effective and safe school.

This code expresses the vision, mission and values of St. Muredach's College and its Patron. It translates the expectations of staff, parents and students into practical arrangements that will help to ensure continuity of instruction to all students. It helps to foster an orderly, harmonious school where high standards of behaviour are expected and supported.

This Code of Behaviour enables our school authorities to strike an appropriate balance between their duty to maintain an effective learning environment for all and their responsibility to students whose behaviour presents a challenge to the teaching and learning

process. This Code of Behaviour is a key tool in enabling the school authorities to support the learning of every student in the school.

The content of the Code of Behaviour

The Education (Welfare) Act 2000 sets out certain matters that must be included in a code of behaviour. In order to comply with these requirements, and in order to have the best chance of achieving its objectives, this Code of Behaviour will address:

- The standards of behaviour expected in the school
- The plan for promoting good behaviour
- The ways in which the school responds to unacceptable behaviour
- The plan for implementing the code of behaviour
- School procedures for the use of suspension and expulsion

Relevant legislation and legal instruments

The Code of Behaviour was formulated in accordance with relevant legislation:

- The Constitution of Ireland
- The European Convention on Human Rights (1950)
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
- Education Act 1998
- Education (Welfare) Act 2000
- Education (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2007
- Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2018
- Ombudsman for Children Act 2002
- Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 (EPSEN Act)
- Disability Act 2005
- Children First Act 2015
- Health and safety legislation
- Data Protection Acts 1988 to 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools (NEWB, 2008)

It is expected that this policy will be approved by the Board of Management, having been worked through by:

- The Patron
- The Board of Management
- The Principal
- The Staff
- The Parents' Association
- The Students
- The Educational Welfare Officer (Tusla Education Support Service)

This policy seeks to afford all of the students and staff a safe environment conducive to teaching and learning.

Objectives

Our objectives are to:

1. Afford all the students and staff a safe environment conducive to teaching and learning.
2. Ensure that effective teaching and learning can take place without disruption.
3. Clarify expectations on behaviour, sanctions and interventions.
4. Make students, parents and teachers aware of procedures for dealing with misconduct and infringement of school rules.
5. Hold students who infringe the school rules directly accountable through the principles of restorative justice.
6. Short-term discipline - to stop the inappropriate behaviour while explaining what is appropriate.
7. Long-term discipline - to help young people take responsibility for their own behaviour and to teach self-discipline.

School Regulations

A student's attendance at our school implies an agreement on his part and on the part of his parents/guardians that the school regulations are observed. A high standard of conduct is expected of all students. The following must be adhered to:

1. Respect for Teachers/School Staff

Students should have the highest standard of respect and courtesy for their teachers/school staff, bus drivers and those with whom they come in contact in school or on school-related activities.

All students have a right to education in a disciplined and orderly environment. Teachers have a right to conduct their classes in such an environment. Any behaviour infringing on their rights constitutes a grave injustice which cannot and will not be tolerated. In this context the following offences would be treated in a most serious manner:

- Disrespect, defiance, harassment or intimidation (whether verbal, written, text messaging, mobile phone images, publication on the internet or any other form) of a teacher/staff member inside or outside of the school.
- Disrespect towards families of teachers/staff members or interference in any way with their homes or property.
- Persistent disruptive behaviour in class and the refusal to co-operate with teachers.

2. Respect for Fellow Students

Students must show respect and courtesy to each other. Bullying or any intimidation of another student in school or on the way to or from school will be regarded as a very serious offence.

Bullying is targeted behaviour, online or offline, that causes harm. The harm caused can be physical (including damage to property), social and/or emotional in nature. Bullying

behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society (Bí Cineálta, 2024).

Bullying should be reported to any teacher, to the Year Head or to the Principal or Deputy Principal. Bullying behaviour is addressed in accordance with the school's Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour.

3. Respect for School Property

Students must respect school property. Accidental breakages or damage must be reported immediately to a teacher. Deliberate damage will be regarded as a very serious offence, and parents/guardians may be asked to meet the cost of repair.

4. The following are all strictly forbidden in the school

- The use of mobile phones during the school day, other than in accordance with the school's Mobile Phone and Electronic Device Policy. Students who require mobile phones in school must store them securely in their lockers. Any student found with a phone without consent will have it confiscated in accordance with that policy, and it may then be retrieved by a parent/guardian.
- The use of other personal electronic devices during the school day, including smart watches with messaging or camera functions, headphones/ear-buds and other audio devices, other than as permitted under the school's Mobile Phone and Electronic Device Policy. Such items may be confiscated and retrieved by a parent/guardian.
- Consumption of alcohol, substance abuse or possession of such substances in the school or on all school-related activities.
- Chewing gum, eating and drinking in classrooms.
- Smoking or vaping within the school and in or near the school grounds.
- Fighting will not be tolerated for any reason.
- Possession or use of 'bangers' or other explosive devices or the throwing of any object within the school grounds.
- Stealing is regarded as a very serious offence.
- Any activity by a student of the College which brings the good name of the College into disrepute will be treated in a most serious manner.

5. School Uniform

(a) All students must wear the official school uniform in school and on all school-related activities: school jumper, blue shirt, grey trousers and school uniform jacket.

(b) Students must be neat, tidy and clean-shaven; studs and earrings are strictly forbidden.

6. Student Journal

All students must have a school journal for recording homework, which should be regularly monitored by a parent/guardian.

7. Absences from School

All students are expected to attend school regularly.

- (i) A student who is absent from school for any reason must present a note (in the school journal) from his parent/guardian on the day of his return.
- (ii) A student requiring permission to leave during the school day must present a note from his parent/guardian (in the school journal) to the Principal/Deputy Principal prior to his departure from the school. A student who leaves the school grounds without the required permission will be subject to a serious sanction. In this respect, “mitching” from school will also be regarded as a very serious offence.

8. Punctuality

Strict punctuality for school in the morning and for each class must be observed at all times.

9. Parking

Permission is granted, subject to application, to senior students to park their cars in the designated student parking area in the school grounds subject to the following conditions:

- (a) The student must not use the car between the times of 8:55 a.m. and 3:40 p.m.
- (b) The student parking area must not be used as a recreational area at any time during the school day.
- (c) The car must be driven at a safe speed (15 km/hr) when entering and leaving the school grounds.
- (d) The driver must be a full licence holder and the car fully insured and taxed.

A student who fails to comply with any of the above will have this facility immediately withdrawn. The school accepts no responsibility for any damage to any vehicle parked on the school grounds.

10. Inspection of Bags and Lockers

In the interest of good order and safety, the school reserves the right to inspect students' bags and lockers as the need arises. Failure to co-operate would be regarded as a very serious breach of school discipline and will merit serious sanction.

Sanctions

To ensure a safe and happy environment for all students and for more effective teaching and learning, sanctions are necessary to show disapproval of unacceptable behaviour and to encourage acceptable behaviour. Corporal punishment is not permitted. Sanctions are viewed as the beginning of the discipline process and moving towards healthier decision-making and a specific plan and action for responsible change.

Restorative justice is holding offenders directly accountable to the people they have harmed, and providing a range of opportunities for dialogue, negotiation and problem-solving:

- Reasoning with the pupil
- Recognise wrongdoing
- Reprimand
- Take responsibility for actions
- Make amends

- Commit to change of behaviour — the school may facilitate and support this endeavour by influencing factors such as motivation, goals, skills, incentive/reward, parental, family, teacher and peer support
- Note in journal to be signed by parent/guardian
- Additional homework
- Communication with parent/guardian
- Referral to Year Head
- On Report
- Community service
- To engage with the Behavioural Review Programme after school
- Withdrawal of privileges
- In certain circumstances, where a student is in breach of school regulations, parents/guardians will be required to collect their son from the school
- Referral to the Principal
- Suspension
- Expulsion

School Rules

Rules are not invented by teachers to torment pupils or to make life miserable. A little sense will show that they are there to safeguard students' right to learn and teachers' right to teach in a caring, safe and respectful environment. Therefore we expect:

1. That you come to school every day and arrive on time.
2. That you come to school in full uniform, clean and tidy.
3. That you have respect for people and for property and that you will report any accidental damage that you may cause.
4. That you do your best in class and at your homework.
5. That you come in properly prepared for your subjects.
6. That you act in a proper manner around the school.

REMEMBER: Respecting your teachers means following the teachers' instructions first time asked.

When a serious situation arises in class

Whenever a serious situation arises, for example when a teacher is assaulted - verbally or otherwise - in his/her class, a note may be sent to the Principal/Deputy Principal by way of another student (not the offender).

A Whole-School Approach to the Code of Behaviour

Students' behaviour is influenced by school climate, values, policies, practices and relationships. The code of behaviour, on its own, cannot create the environment that makes it possible for students to learn and behave well. School climate, values, policies, practices and

relationships must support the code of behaviour. Aspects of school life that may impact on behaviour:

- Approaches to addressing educational disadvantage
- Making adjustments for, and valuing, diversity; and preventing any form of discrimination
- Availability of pastoral care teams and programmes
- Relationships among teachers and students
- Students' sense of belonging to the school community
- School and classroom environment
- Relevance of curriculum to students' lives
- Classroom management
- Ability grouping
- Timetabling
- Break-time management
- Extra-curricular and co-curricular activities
- Student participation
- Parental involvement

Procedures for Promoting and Implementing the School Code of Behaviour

The subject teacher has responsibility for the maintenance of good discipline within his/her class. Where breaches of discipline occur, the teacher will reason with the student, reprimand and advise on how to improve. If this proves unsuccessful in improving the student's behaviour, the teacher will make contact with the student's parents/guardian to seek to resolve the issue.

If, following the above procedures, repeated breaches of discipline occur, the student will be referred in writing to the Year Head. The student must be aware that referral to the Year Head is a serious progression in the disciplinary process. On completion of an investigation, the Year Head may caution the student, put the student On Report, inform parents/guardian or impose a detention. The Year Head may subsequently refer the student to the Disciplinary Committee.

The Disciplinary Committee will meet as necessary. The student and his parents/guardian must understand that referral to the Disciplinary Committee is a most serious step in the disciplinary process in our school. The Disciplinary Committee may impose sanctions or make recommendations such as suspension for implementation by the Principal.

Parents/guardians have the right to appeal the basis for a decision for a suspension to the Board of Management. However, in the meantime the suspension stands.

The Deputy Principal and the Principal are responsible for the overall management, organisation, administration and discipline of the school. In matters relating to the Code of Behaviour, they will consider recommendations from Year Heads and from the Disciplinary Committee. Cases warranting expulsion shall be referred by the Principal to the Board of Management.

The Board of Management oversees the Code of Behaviour in our school. Very serious cases of indiscipline are referred to the Board for investigation and adjudication. The Board shall make a decision regarding the expulsion of a student from our school. The Board shall deal with such cases in accordance with the Education Act 1998, the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the NEWB Guidelines 2008.

The school reserves the right to add to or amend the above Code of Behaviour if and when it is deemed necessary.

Promoting Good Behaviour

Promoting good behaviour is the main goal of the code. School management and staff actively foster the school ethos, policies and practices that help to promote positive behaviour and prevent inappropriate behaviour.

Strategies to affirm and promote good behaviour

The day-to-day excellence of school management and classroom teaching will enable most students to behave in ways that support their own learning and development. Teachers and other school staff also need a range of strategies for promoting good behaviour at class and school level. There should be consistency across the teaching team as to how best to promote good behaviour.

Students:

- Are given responsibility in the school and are involved in the development of the code of behaviour
- Understand why the code is important and their part in making it work
- Can see that the code works in a fair way
- Realise there are standards that set high expectations for student behaviour
- Realise the standards are clear, consistent and widely understood
- Realise parents support the school by encouraging good learning behaviour
- Realise there are good relationships between teachers, parents and students and a happy school atmosphere
- Realise adults model the behaviour that is expected from students

Other strategies to encourage and promote good behaviour include:

- Positive everyday interactions between teachers and students
- Good school and class routines
- Clear boundaries and rules for students
- Helping students themselves to recognise and affirm good learning behaviour
- Recognising and giving positive feedback about behaviour
- Exploring with students how people should treat each other
- Involving students in the preparation of the school and classroom rules

Relationships between students and teachers

The quality of relationships between teachers and students is one of the most powerful influences on student behaviour. For many students, their teachers are a major source of

support, adult empathy and pastoral care, and are hugely significant figures in their lives. As adults and professionals, teachers have a strong capacity to develop good relationships with students, and a greater responsibility for the relationship. Mutually respectful relationships balance warmth and empathy with objectivity, professional detachment, fairness and consistency.

The Award/Reward System

The Award/Reward System has been established to acknowledge and encourage hard work, commitment, enthusiasm, leadership qualities, sporting skills, full attendance, or any other laudable qualities not measured by the examination process. Encouragement is vital to success and achievement in life. At the end of each school year an awards ceremony rewards academic, sporting and extra-curricular achievement of students. Each year there is a special medal for “Leaving Certificate Student of the Year”. This is part of the tradition of the school and the nomination and election of this student is made by the Principal in conjunction with the Deputy Principal and teaching staff. Highest performance in the previous year’s Junior Cycle examinations is also rewarded.

Throughout the year, to encourage continued good behaviour, students are rewarded by giving them certain privileges, like spending time at break times in our snooker room.

Class or subject teacher

The class or subject teacher is the front-line source of help for students. As a leader of learning, and someone with an established relationship of trust, the teacher will have strong influence with students. The class teacher will deal with routine incidents of misbehaviour through classroom management strategies, thus minimising the need for other interventions.

Other members of staff and the staff team

As part of the whole-school plan, classroom or subject teachers need access, where possible, to support from another member of staff, whom they can ask for advice, or to whom they can refer a student for advice and support (as distinct from referral as a sanction). Opportunities for using other staff resources include:

- Teacher referral of a student to another designated member of staff (Deputy Principal, Year Head, Form Teacher, Class Tutor) as part of a planned intervention
- Referral to the Guidance Counsellor, Chaplain or other staff member who may have a specific role or skills in managing behaviour
- Peer support and mentoring for an individual class teacher
- The pastoral care programme

Members of staff, working as a team, can also support the classroom teacher in a number of ways:

- Helping a teacher to think about and analyse possible reasons for a student’s poor behaviour
- Helping to devise possible ways of changing the behaviour

The school's duty of care

The school, and every teacher, should ensure that, in applying any sanction, the duty of care to the student is maintained. The teacher's duty of care is a professional duty of care, reflecting the teacher's training, skill and knowledge. This duty requires, for example, that a student is appropriately supervised at all times while at school. Appropriate arrangements must also be made to ensure that child protection requirements are observed (see the Children First Act 2015, Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017, the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (revised 2023) and the school's Child Safeguarding Statement).

Records

A standardised record system will allow the school to track an individual student's behaviour and to check whether efforts to change behaviour are working. All interventions aimed at helping the student to deal with unacceptable behaviour should also be recorded, including contact with parents or referral to other agencies. Positive responses by a student, and evidence of changed behaviour, should be recorded, as should any sanction used, together with the reason why the sanction was imposed.

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

Records should be kept in accordance with the Data Protection Acts 1988 to 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The following GDPR principles apply to personal data kept in school:

1. Lawfulness, fairness and transparency: data is processed lawfully, fairly and transparently.
2. Purpose limitation: data is collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes only.
3. Data minimisation: data is adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary.
4. Accuracy: data is accurate and kept up to date.
5. Storage limitation: data is kept for no longer than is necessary.
6. Integrity and confidentiality: data is kept safe and secure.
7. Accountability: the school can demonstrate compliance with these principles. Students and parents/guardians may request access to their personal data in accordance with the GDPR.

Information for parents/guardians

As part of its responsibility to inform parents about matters relating to the operation and performance of the school, the Board of Management should include a report on behaviour in the school in its annual report to parents, teachers, other staff and the Student Council.

Suspensions

The Principal may suspend immediately in some circumstances, e.g. violence, threat of violence, presence of illegal drugs, presence of weapons, persistent refusal to obey an

instruction, persistent disruption of class, the use of foul or abusive language to a supervisor or teacher or other member of staff, leaving the College premises without prior permission from the College, or any grossly inappropriate behaviour.

In other circumstances suspensions will only occur after the Principal has ensured:

- All discipline options under the Code of Behaviour have been applied and documented
- All appropriate support personnel have been involved
- Communication has taken place with the student and parent/guardian regarding the breaches of discipline which the College considers may lead to suspension
- A written copy of previous breaches of discipline has been provided to the parent/guardian with advice that, if continued, they will lead to suspension

If a student is suspended for 6 days or more, the Principal shall inform the Educational Welfare Officer (Tusla Education Support Service). If a student is suspended for a cumulative total of 20 days or more in one school year, the Principal shall inform the Educational Welfare Officer (Tusla Education Support Service).

Grounds for removing a suspension

Section 23(2)(d) of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 requires schools to publish the grounds for removing a suspension. Such grounds may include:

- New circumstances which come to the Principal's notice
- An act of clemency

Formal appeal against a suspension

A parent, or a student aged 18 or more, may appeal against a suspension. For an appeal against a short suspension the Principal shall invite the parent/guardian to meet. Where the suspension is an immediate suspension as set out above, the Principal must also exercise his duty under the College's obligations to provide a safe environment for other students and teachers. For an appeal against the cumulative misbehaviour of the student, the Principal will take due cognisance of the new information brought by the parent.

For an appeal against a longer suspension, the parent shall appeal in writing to the Chairperson of the Board of Management, and a Disciplinary Committee (a subcommittee established by the Board) will be convened. The Committee will meet within three days of receipt of the appeal.

Expulsion

Expulsion is the ultimate sanction. Authority to expel is reserved to the Board of Management. It is a sanction to be used for an extreme case of indiscipline or a case of a student persisting in repeated disruptive behaviour even after warnings and short suspensions.

In the extreme case where the Principal considers that the student's indiscipline warrants a recommendation to the Board of Management that the student be expelled, he/she shall:

- Ensure that the Code of Behaviour has been applied and documented
- Ensure that the parents know of his/her intention to recommend expulsion to the Board

- Invite the parents to the Board hearing
- Invite the parents to make a written submission prior to the Board meeting
- Provide the parents in writing with the allegations against the student and a summary of the case being made at the Board hearing
- Make a formal expulsion recommendation to the Board with supporting documentation

Expulsion may only occur after the Board of Management has:

- Heard the Principal's case for expulsion; this case must be made at the Board meeting to which the parents have been invited
- Heard the parents' response, and the student's where he so desires
- Examined all the documentation presented
- Considered the student's total record in the College
- Considered all the factors listed under Suspensions above
- Made a final formal decision to expel
- Communicated the decision in writing to the parents/guardian formally through the Board Secretary
- Informed the Educational Welfare Officer (Tusla Education Support Service) under section 24(1) of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000

Appeal against expulsion (section 29 of the Education Act 1998)

Under section 29 of the Education Act 1998, a parent, or a student over eighteen, may exercise the right of appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Youth in a case where the Board of Management decides to expel a student. The Board shall advise the parents/guardian in writing of this right of appeal and shall furnish the parents/guardian with the appeal form.

If the Board of Management decides to expel a student from the school, it shall, before expelling the student concerned, notify the Educational Welfare Officer (Tusla Education Support Service) in writing of its decision and the reasons for the expulsion. An expulsion shall not take effect before the passing of 20 school days following the above written notification. The Board of Management may decide to suspend the student during this process.

The College takes into consideration the rights of the individual student and balances these with the common good and rights of other students.

Ratification

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on: 10-09-26

Signed: 

Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed: 

Principal

Date: 10-09-26

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This policy will be due for review in September 2027.