Suspension-Expulsion Policy

Coláiste Ghlór na Mara

2026-2027

DATE OF REVIEW: CONTINUOUS

Clodagh Ní Mhaoilchiaráin _____

Chairperson

Board of Management

Ratified by the Board of Management: 21st September 2026

Mission statement

Coláiste Ghlór na Mara is a coeducational multidenominational second level school. It is socially and culturally inclusive and provides excellence in educational standards through the medium of Irish. Positive self-image for students and respect for other people, for culture, community and environment are central to our ethos.

INTRODUCTION

This policy applies to sanctions which may be implemented by school management in dealing with serious breaches of the Code of Positive Behaviour. This policy has been developed in line with the ethos and philosophy of the school which has the care and wellbeing of all pupils at its core and provides a safe and secure learning environment for all members of the school community.

Rationale

All students have a right to learn in an orderly and caring environment. All members of the school community have a right to be treated fairly and with dignity in an environment free from disruption, intimidation, harassment and discrimination. The code of positive behaviour aims to provide a safe, secure learning environment. By enrolling in this school, each student and their parent(s) agree to uphold the Code of Positive Behaviour.

Objectives

The aims of our suspension and expulsion policy are:

- To maintain a safe, secure learning environment free from the disruption for all the members of our school community
- To outline the strategies to be used where students are in serious breach of our Code of Positive Behaviour

Suspension rationale

Suspension is defined as: requiring the student to absent themselves from the school for a specified, limited period of school days. During the period of a suspension, the student retains their place in the school. Suspensions can provide a respite for staff and the student, give the student time to reflect on the link between their action and its consequences and give staff time to plan ways of helping the student to change unacceptable behaviour.

Authority to suspend

The Board of Management of a Coláiste Ghlór na Mara has delegated the authority to suspend to the principal, Maedhbh Daltún and in her absence to the deputy principal, Fiachra Ó hEochaidh. This can be up to a maximum of five days, however the principal may recommend to the board of management to increase this time.

Grounds for suspension

The decision to suspend a student will be based on serious grounds such as that:

- **repeated breaches of the Code of Behaviour** (*Behaviour that is persistently disruptive to learning or potentially dangerous)*
- the student's behaviour has had a seriously detrimental effect on the education of other students
- the student's continued presence in the school at this time constitutes a threat to safety
- the student is responsible for serious damage to property
- the student's actions have caused the closure of the school

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

Suspension as part of a behaviour management plan

Suspension may be used as an agreed plan to address the student's behaviour.

The suspension will give the opportunity to:

- enable the school to set behavioural goals with the student and their parents
- give school staff an opportunity to plan other interventions
- impress on a student and their parents the seriousness of the behaviour.

Forms of suspension

Automatic Suspension

In certain cases, particular forms of misbehaviour will incur an automatic suspension as a sanction. Such forms of behaviours include: substance abuse, threatening behaviour, abusive language toward staff member, a physical altercation, causing school closure (this list is not exhaustive)

Immediate suspension

In exceptional circumstances, the Principal may consider an immediate suspension to be necessary where the continued presence of the student in the school at the time would represent a serious threat to the safety of students or staff of the school, or any other person or when the actions of a student have caused school closure.

Suspension during a state examination

- a threat to good order in the conduct of the examination
- a threat to the safety of other students and personnel
- a threat to the right of other students to do their examination in a calm atmosphere

Procedures in respect of suspension

Inform the student and parents

Let the student and their parents know about the complaint, how it will be investigated, and that it could result in suspension. Parents may be informed by phone or in writing, depending on the seriousness of the matter. If a student is aged 18 or over, communication will be with the student only unless the student has given explicit permission for their adult nominated person(s) to act on their behalf using the school's over 18 Request form.

Opportunity to respond

Give an opportunity to respond Parents and student should be given an opportunity to respond before a decision is made and before any sanction is imposed. At the meeting the facts will be presented and it will give an opportunity for the student or their parents to respond. If a student and their parents fail to attend a meeting, the Principal should write advising of the gravity of the matter, the importance of attending a re-scheduled meeting and, failing that, the duty of the school authorities to make a decision to respond to the negative behaviour.

Procedures in relation to immediate suspension

Where an immediate suspension is considered by the Principal to be warranted for reasons of the safety of the student, other students, staff or others, a preliminary investigation will be conducted to establish the case for the imposition of the suspension. The formal investigation will immediately follow the imposition of the suspension. In the case of an immediate suspension, parents must be notified, and arrangements made with them for the student to be collected.

Implementing the suspension

The Principal should notify the parents and the student in writing of the decision to suspend.

The letter should 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 (for example, parents might be asked to reaffirm their commitment to the code of behaviour)
- 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 1998, section 29) in the case of a suspension which exceeds 20 school days.

School work should be completed while on suspension. Work will be found on their OneNote scoile.

Appeals

The Board of Management will offer an opportunity to appeal a Principal's decision to suspend a student. In the suspension letter all information will be given on how to appeal to the board of management.

Section 29 Appeal

Where the total number of days for which the student has been suspended in the current school year reaches twenty days, the parents, or a student aged over eighteen years, may appeal the suspension under section 29 of the Education Act 1998, as amended by the Education (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2007. At the time when parents are being formally notified of such a suspension, they and the student will be told about their right to appeal and how to do so.

Grounds for removing a suspension

A suspension may be removed if the Board of Management decides to remove the suspension for any reason or if the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science directs that it be removed following an appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

After the suspension has ended

Depending on the circumstances surrounding the suspension, the students and parents may be asked to attend a meeting with the principal and/or another member of staff. The student may be asked to reaffirm their commitment to the code of conduct and/or be offered support on how to prevent a similar situation.

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

Records and reports

Formal written records will be kept of

• the investigation (including notes of all interviews held)

• the decision-making process

• the decision and the rationale for the decision

• the duration of the suspension and any conditions attached to the suspension.

The Principal will report all suspensions to the Board of Management, with the reasons for and the duration of each suspension.

The Principal will report suspensions in accordance with the NEWB reporting guidelines (Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, section 21(4)(a)).

Review of use of suspension

The Board of Management will review the use of suspension in the school at regular intervals to ensure that its use is consistent with school policies, that patterns of use will be examined to identify factors that may be influencing behaviour in the school and to ensure that use of suspension is appropriate and effective.

Expulsion

A student is expelled from a school when a Board of Management makes a decision to permanently exclude him or her from the school, having complied with the provisions of section 24 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.

Authority to expel

The authority to expel lies with the Board of Management of Coláiste Ghlór na Mara.

The grounds for expulsion

A proposal to expel a student requires serious grounds such as that:

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

The grounds for expulsion may be similar to the grounds for suspension. The key difference is the seriousness or persistence of the behaviour. However Coláiste Ghlór na Mara, where possible, will have tried numerous interventions and believe they have exhausted all possibilities for changing the student's behaviour

Expulsion for a first offence

There may be exceptional circumstances where the Board of Management forms the opinion that a student 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, but not limited to:

- a serious threat of violence against another student or member of staff
- actual violence or physical assault
- supplying illegal drugs to other students in the school
- sexual assault

Determining the appropriateness of expelling a student

Given the seriousness of expulsion as a sanction the Board of Management will undertake a very detailed review of a range of factors in deciding whether to expel a student. These factors will include

- The nature and seriousness of the behaviour
- The context of the behaviour
- The impact of the behaviour
- The interventions tried to date
- Whether expulsion is a proportionate response
- The possible impact of the expulsion

Procedures in respect of expulsion

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.

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

In investigating an allegation, in line with fair procedures, the Principal will:

- inform the student and their parents about the details of the alleged misbehaviour, how it will be investigated and that it could result in expulsion
- give parents and the student every opportunity to respond to the complaint of serious misbehaviour before a decision is made and before a sanction is imposed.
- Parents will be informed in writing of the alleged misbehaviour and the proposed investigation
- Parents and the student will be given every opportunity to respond to the complaint of serious misbehaviour before a decision is made about the veracity of the allegation, and before a sanction is imposed.
- Where expulsion may result from an investigation, a meeting with the student and their parents will be arranged. This will provide the opportunity for them to give their side of the story and to ask questions about the evidence of serious misbehaviour, especially where there is a dispute about the facts. It may also be an opportunity for parents to make their case for lessening the sanction, and for the school to explore with parents how best to address the student's behaviour.
- If a student and their parents fail to attend the meeting, the Principal will write advising of the gravity of the matter, the importance of attending a re-scheduled meeting and, failing that, the duty of the school authorities to make a decision to respond to the inappropriate behaviour.

Step 2: A recommendation to the Board of Management by the Principal

Where the Principal forms a view, based on the investigation of the alleged misbehaviour, that expulsion may be warranted, the Principal makes a recommendation to the Board of Management to consider expulsion.

The Principal will:

- inform the parents and the student that the Board of Management is being asked to consider expulsion
- ensure that parents have records of: the allegations against the student; the investigation; and written notice of the grounds on which the Board of Management is being asked to consider expulsion
- provide the Board of Management with the same comprehensive records as are given to parents • notify the parents of the date of the hearing by the Board of Management and invite them to that hearing

- advise the parents that they can make a written and oral submission to the Board of Management
- ensure that parents have enough notice to allow them to prepare for the hearing.

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

The Board to review the initial investigation and satisfy itself that the investigation was properly conducted in line with fair procedures. The Board will undertake its own review of all documentation and the circumstances of the case. It will ensure that no party who has had any involvement with the circumstances of the case is part of the Board's deliberations (for example, a member of the Board who may have made an allegation about the student).

Where a Board of Management decides to consider expelling a student, it will hold a hearing. The Board meeting for the purpose of the hearing should be properly conducted in accordance with Board procedures. At the hearing, the Principal and the parents, or a student aged eighteen years or over, put their case to the Board in each other's presence. Each party will be allowed to question the evidence of the other party directly. The meeting may also be an opportunity for parents to make their case for lessening the sanction.

Parents may wish to be accompanied at hearings, the Board must be notified in advance and will facilitate this.

After both sides have been heard, the Board will ensure that the Principal and parents are not present for the Board's deliberations.

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

Having heard from all the parties, it is the responsibility of the Board to decide whether or not the allegation is substantiated and, if so, whether or not expulsion is the appropriate sanction.

Where the Board of Management, having considered all the facts of the case, is of the opinion that the student should be expelled, the Board must notify the Educational Welfare Officer in writing of its opinion, and the reasons for this opinion. (Education (Welfare) Act 2000, s24(1)). The Board of Management will comply with National Educational Welfare Board reporting procedures for proposed expulsions.

The student cannot be expelled before the passage of twenty school days from the date on which the EWO receives this written notification (Education (Welfare) Act 2000, s24(1)). The Board will inform the parents in writing about its conclusions and the next steps in the process. Where expulsion is proposed, the parents will be told that the Board of Management will now inform the Educational Welfare Officer.

Step 5: Consultations arranged by the Educational Welfare Officer

Within twenty days of receipt of a notification from a Board of Management of its opinion that a student should be expelled, the Educational Welfare Officer will:

- make all reasonable efforts to hold individual consultations with the Principal, the parents and the student, and anyone else who may be of assistance
- convene a meeting of those parties who agree to attend (Education (Welfare) Act 2000, section 24). The purpose of the consultations and the meeting is to ensure that arrangements are made for the student to continue in education. These consultations may result in an agreement about an alternative intervention that would avoid expulsion. However, where the possibility of continuing in the school is not an option, at least in the short term, the consultation should focus on alternative educational possibilities.

Pending these consultations about the student's continued education, the Board of Management may consider it appropriate to suspend the student during this time if there is a likelihood that the continued presence of the student during this time will seriously disrupt the learning of others, or represent a threat to the safety of other students or staff

Step 6: Confirmation of the decision to expel

Where the twenty-day period following notification to the Educational Welfare Officer has elapsed, and where the Board of Management remains of the view that the student should be expelled, the Board of Management will formally confirm the decision to expel. Parents will be notified immediately that the expulsion will now proceed. Parents and the student will be told about the right to appeal and supplied with the standard form on which to lodge an appeal.

5 Appeals

A parent, or a student aged over eighteen years, may appeal a decision to expel to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science (Education Act 1998 section 29). An appeal may also be brought by the National Educational Welfare Board on behalf of a student.

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.

Review of use of expulsion

The Board of Management will review the use of expulsion in the school at regular intervals to ensure that its use is consistent with school policies, that patterns of use are examined to identify factors that may be influencing behaviour in the school, and to ensure that expulsion is used appropriately.