

Mary Help of Christians G.N.S.



Code of Behaviour

CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

Rationale

In adopting this Code of Behaviour it is our aim to provide a learning environment which facilitates the development of each child, and that provides for each child's well-being in a safe and respectful atmosphere where children are encouraged to cooperate in building the school community.

Aims/Goals of Policy

1. To create a climate that encourages and reinforces good behaviour
2. To create a positive and safe environment for teaching and learning
3. To encourage pupils to take personal responsibility for their learning and their behaviour
4. To help young people to mature into responsible participating citizens
5. To build positive relationships of mutual respect and mutual support among pupils, staff and parents
6. To ensure that the school's high expectations for the behaviour of all members of the school community are widely known and understood
7. To promote respect for both the immediate school environment and the wider learning environment encountered by our pupils and to encourage respect for one's own property and that of others.

Understanding Behaviour

It is important that parents understand the behaviour required in school and how their expectations and those of the school need to be in accord. This mutual understanding will allow for the parents and staff to approach issues around behaviour in an agreed and consistent way that will ultimately benefit the pupil. The school staff respond to the behaviour of pupils with an understanding that

- the quality of relationships affects behaviour
- effective teaching and learning are closely linked to good behaviour
- thoughtful planning that differentiates for various abilities and aptitudes helps keep pupils engaged with the learning process
- behaviour has meaning, it serves a purpose and has goals though these goals may not be obvious
- behaviour can be learned and can therefore be changed
- how others react/respond to the behaviour influences in turn the on-going behaviour of the pupil
- positive acknowledgement is a very effective way of influencing and promoting good behaviour
- behaviour occurs within a context and in relation to other people. The context can shed light on the resultant behaviour

Factors that influence behaviour are also taken into account. These include:

- age and development
- personal history and experience
- social, emotional and behavioural factors
- additional needs
- parental and family relationships
- social networks (friends and peers)
- external factors

Strategies for Promoting Positive Behaviour throughout the School and in Classrooms

Most pupils will behave in ways that support their own learning and development and which do not impinge significantly on their peers. This will be achieved mainly through efficient school management and through effective classroom teaching. Such teaching delivers a broad-based curriculum which differentiates in response to the multiple intelligences, learning styles, learning paces and personalities within a class group.

Staff will nurture self-esteem and develop warm and caring relationships with pupils that promote mutual respect. Parents will share in the school's Code of Behaviour and, being in accord with it, will help to reinforce the standards of behaviour expected in the school.

Pupils are at the centre of the school community and their contributions to all aspects of school life help to create and foster the ethos of the school. As such their input to the Code of Behaviour and their responsible discharge of daily chores (e.g. distribution of school lunches, roll sheets, leadership roles within the classroom and wider school etc.) around the school engages them in a meaningful way in the running of the school.

The high standards in the school are achieved and accepted as the norm by the majority of pupils. Expectations which apply in the classroom and in the school in general are regularly revised and discussed and are further explored through areas of the curriculum such as Social, Personal and Health Education, Religious Education and Drama. Good behaviour is acknowledged on a daily basis with words of praise, and with gestures. For some classes and for particular situations a more structured intervention system may be in place to help encourage some pupils to amend their behaviour. The type of intervention will depend on the age of the child and be meaningful to them. It will be used primarily to recognise effort rather than achievement. Rewards will include a star system, stickers, homework passes, certificates, golden time etc.

School Expectations

We expect behaviour that will maintain the safety of pupils and ensure that opportunities to learn and develop are not compromised by the negative behaviour of others. Respect for self and others underpins our school expectations with emphasis placed on tolerance, cooperation and clear, consistent communication.

See School Expectations Appendix A

Classroom Expectations

In September each year the teacher and their pupils discuss and set out the expectations for their own class. Classroom expectations identify what needs to prevail in the classroom in order for learning to take place. The children are encouraged to draw up their own guidelines for behaviour thereby taking ownership of same.

Behaviour Categories

Minor Misbehaviour

Examples of minor misbehaviour include:

- lack of adherence to School/Class Expectations
- interrupting lessons
- displaying bad manners
- name-calling and use of offensive language
- making faces at others/sneering/use of rude gestures
- failing to respond to the bell that signals the end of play
- re-entering the classroom during break time without permission of teacher

Serious Misbehaviour

Examples of serious misbehaviour include:

- persistent minor misbehaviour
- persistent disobedience/defiance/insolence
- disruption to teaching and learning
- telling lies
- stealing
- spitting
- deliberately damaging property
- interfering with fire extinguishers, smoke alarms etc.
- bullying, threatening and intimidating behaviour (all incidents of bullying behaviour will be dealt with under the school's Bí Cineálta Policy)
- physical aggression e.g. kicking, hitting etc.
- endangering self or fellow pupils
- leaving the school grounds during the school day without being collected from the School Office by an adult.

Gross Misbehaviour

Examples of gross misbehaviour include:

- persistent misbehaviours previously referred to as serious
- deliberate injury to any member of the school community
- aggressive, threatening or violent behaviour towards any member of staff or a pupil
- bringing weapons or dangerous or prohibited substances to school

Strategies for dealing with misbehaviour

All efforts will be made to intervene early in instances of misbehaviour to try to help the child to make more positive choices. The pupil will be given an opportunity to explain her behaviour. She will be reminded of, or encouraged to reflect on, the class and school expectations and why those expectations are important for creating a positive and supportive learning environment.'

Reasoning with pupils will include asking them to consider the consequences of their behaviour on themselves and others. Opportunities will be taken to discuss various aspects of behaviour and its consequences during S.P.H.E. lessons. Teachers will comment upon the positive behaviours of pupils and commend the efforts of those attempting to reform their behaviour.

When sanctions are invoked, it should be made clear to pupils that what they have done is unacceptable and that it is the misbehaviour and *not the child* that is unacceptable.

Minor misbehaviour is dealt with by the class teacher and by any member of staff who is supervising that pupil in the teacher's absence. This Code has identified 3 categories of misbehaviour and outlines below procedures and sanctions that may be used to show disapproval of unacceptable behaviour that fall within these categories. The particular sanction used will depend on the seriousness of the misbehaviour.

- Verbal reprimand with advice on how to improve (Minor)
- Confiscation (Minor)
- Temporary separation from peers
- Denial of participation in a class activity or privilege. (Access to any area of the curriculum should never be used as a sanction.) (Serious)
- Referral to another teacher for part of the school day (Length of time should be specific to a pupil's age) (Serious)
- Communication with parents by class teacher in person, by phone or on Aladdin. (Minor to Serious)
- Additional written work may be prescribed. This may include describing misbehaviour or completing a Reflection Sheet. Such work must be signed by a parent and returned to the school. (Minor to Serious)
- Logging of all behaviours in an Incident Book, recording the information in accurate and factual terms. The Incident Book will be reviewed by teachers regularly to look for patterns of behaviour, context, times and circumstances. (Minor to Gross)
- Denial of more significant privileges e.g. school tour especially if our concerns relate to the Health and Safety of others. (Serious to Gross)
- Referral to teacher with responsibility for discipline. (Serious to Gross)
- Meeting between class teacher and parents/guardians to discuss concerns. Agree a Support Plan for a child with on-going difficulty. (Serious to Gross)
- Principal is informed of on-going concerns and may intervene with pupil (Serious to Gross)
- Formal letter or phone call from school personnel informing parents of misbehaviour (Serious to Gross)

- Meeting with parents, class teacher, teacher with responsibility for discipline, Principal and/or Chairperson. (Serious to Gross)
- Referral to outside agencies e.g. N.E.P.S., H.S.E., N.C.S.E., Tusla (E.W.O.) or Gardaí. (Gross)
- Immediate referral of pupil to the Principal/Deputy Principal/Chairperson (Serious to Gross)
- Suspension (Gross)
- Expulsion (Gross)

Suspension and Expulsion

The principal has the authority to suspend a pupil for a period up to 3 days. If greater than three days the case is referred to BoM level.

In-class Supportive Interventions

- Positive note home from teacher affirming improved behaviour
- Verbal praise
- Individual teacher's reward system
- Visit to Principal to praise and reinforce good behaviour

Behaviours of Concern

Our school is committed to providing a safe, inclusive, respectful, and supportive environment for all pupils, staff and members of the school community. We recognise that behaviour is a form of communication and may reflect underlying needs, emotions or stressors.

We acknowledge and value neurodiversity and understand that pupils may experience and respond to their environment in different ways. The school is committed to responding to behaviour in a manner that is supportive, relational, trauma-informed and proportionate.

For the purpose of this Code, behaviours of concern are behaviours that:

- Place the pupil or others at risk of harm
- Significantly interfere with learning, wellbeing, participation or safety
- Indicate that a pupil may be experiencing significant distress or dysregulation

Examples may include:

- Persistent emotional distress
- Attempts to leave supervised area
- Verbal escalation
- Physical aggression
- Damage to property
- Shutdown, withdrawal or refusal linked to overwhelm or distress
- Behaviours arising during periods of heightened anxiety or dysregulation

The school recognises that pupils do well when they can and that supportive responses are more effective than punitive responses when a pupil is distressed or dysregulated.

Preventative and Supportive Approaches

The school will seek to prevent behaviours of concern through:

- Positive relationships and relational practice
- Predictable routines and clear communication
- Sensory aware and inclusive classroom practices
- Reasonable accommodations and supports
- Co-regulation and emotional support
- Collaboration with parents/guardians and, where appropriate, outside professionals
- Pupil voice and participation
- Restorative and solution-focused approaches

Staff will seek to understand the context and possible causes of behaviour before deciding on an appropriate response.

Responding to Distress and Escalation

Where a pupil becomes distressed or dysregulated, staff will prioritise:

- Safety
- Calm and respectful communication
- De-escalation
- Reducing demands where appropriate
- Offering regulation supports and time/space to recover
- Preserving the dignity of the pupil

Responses will be proportionate to the situation and take account of the pupil's age, developmental stage, additional needs, disability, communication profile and individual circumstances.

Individual Planning and Partnership

Where behaviours of concern occur repeatedly or present a significant safety concern, the school may develop an individual support, care, or safety plan in partnership with parents/guardians and relevant professionals, where appropriate.

The aim of such planning is to:

- Identify triggers and supportive strategies
- Reduce distress and risk
- Support participation and wellbeing
- Ensure consistent responses across settings

The school recognises that equality does not always mean treating every pupil in exactly the same way. Some pupils may require different supports, accommodations, or responses in order to access education safely and successfully.

Keeping Records

- Class level: each class teacher will be provided with an Incident Book at the beginning of each school year in which problem behaviour is documented. It is the responsibility of each class teacher to ensure that this Incident Book is stored in a secure location.
- When an incident occurs outside the child's own classroom e.g. yard, on school tour, SEN rooms, the supervising teacher reports to the class teacher who keeps a written account of reported incidents as described above.
- All such records will be GDPR compliant, kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1988 and the Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2003 and Data Protection Policy of the school.
- Records of Suspension/Expulsion:

When and Where Behaviour will be Subject to the Code

The Code of Behaviour always applies within the school and on those occasions when children are involved in school-related and school-organised activities off campus.

Communicating the Code

The Code of Behaviour will be made available in written form to the parents/guardians of each pupil/family in the school. It will be provided to the parents/guardians of all new pupils upon enrolment. Parents/Guardians will be required to sign to indicate their compliance with the Code. The Code is available on the school website

Communication with parents is facilitated in a number of ways:

- General Parent/Teacher meetings held at the start of the school year at some levels
- Individual Parent/Teacher meetings
- Admissions Meeting for parents of new Junior Infants
- Meeting between Principal and parents of prospective new pupils other than Junior Infants, prior to enrolment
- Written note in the pupil's Homework Journal or Aladdin Notice
- By appointment (instigated by either party) and through a recognised school structure, whereby a parent may arrange to meet, firstly with a class teacher and then with the Principal if warranted
- Events organised by our Parents' Association and through school initiatives to keep parents informed about particular issues. e.g. talks and workshops

All pupils are required to abide by the Code of Behaviour. However, particular care is taken to help the following pupils to understand the Code of Behaviour and what is expected of them in relation to it:

- those with Special Educational Needs
- those from different cultural backgrounds
- those for whom English is not their first language

Roles and Responsibilities

Each member of the school community is subject to the Code and is responsible for its implementation. These include the Board of Management, Principal, Class Teachers, Special Educational Needs Teachers, Special Needs Assistants, Ancillary Staff, Pupils and Parents.

The day-to-day responsibility for implementing the code lies with the class teacher, though it is incumbent on all staff to promote the ethos of the school embodied in the Code of Behaviour and to apply the expectations that underpin it. As such, a pupil may be subject to correction by any member of staff. It may be necessary at times to refer a pupil to the teacher with responsibility for Discipline or to the Deputy Principal. Overall responsibility rests with the Principal.

The **School Staff** carry out their responsibilities by:

- modelling acceptable behaviour
- applying the expectations of the pupils fairly and consistently and ensuring that the same standard is expected regardless of the personnel
- providing reminders at regular intervals of what the standards of behaviour are as stated in class and school expectations
- delivering a broad-based and differentiated curriculum and employing teaching methods that encourage children to engage in the learning process
- providing an inclusive environment where children feel valued
- Principal visits to classrooms to encourage acceptable behaviour and further endorse class and school expectations or upon request from the class teacher
- reinforcing positive behaviour with encouragement and praise
- encouraging children to develop self awareness and an ability to reflect on the effects of their behaviour on themselves and others
- helping develop in the pupils the skills necessary for negotiating and solving/settling disputes between them
- intervening when necessary to ensure the health and safety of all pupils
- dealing with routine misbehaviour in a professional manner through classroom management strategies
- referring pupils, in certain circumstances, to a member of staff with responsibility for discipline, the deputy principal or principal
- seeking the advice/support from colleagues or appropriate outside agencies
- referring to mediation, peer support, a pastoral care programme

Parents carry out their responsibilities by:

- ensuring punctual attendance at school and ensuring that their child is absent only when absolutely necessary
- familiarising themselves with this Code of Behaviour including Appendices & References
- discussing the School Expectations with their child
- informing the school of any serious issues that may affect their child
- encouraging the child to talk about school and to express any concerns she may have
- being aware of what the child is learning in school
- informing class teacher if the child is experiencing difficulties with homework or any school-related difficulties
- encouraging the child to speak to her teacher about any concerns she may have
- checking and signing the child's Homework Journal every evening
- reading, signing and returning all forms as requested by school office or by teachers
- modelling acceptable behaviour especially on school grounds
- supporting school staff in implementing this Code of Behaviour and in enforcing School Rules

Children are encouraged to identify with the school and to contribute to a sense of community by and through:

- formulating class expectations
- regular discussion about the values inherent in the Code of Behaviour and the reasons why certain behaviours are/are not acceptable
- engaging with curricular areas such as Social, Personal and Health Education, , Drama, Religious Education and strategies such as Circle Time where behaviour and relationships form a major focus and where skills are developed for managing their own behaviour
- strict adherence to the wearing of the school uniform
- participating in whole school activities/events, for example, sporting events
- putting forward their ideas and expressing their opinions on matters of concern to them/the school, for example The Student Council
- responsibly carrying out tasks that are of service to the school community, for example, distributing school lunches
- reporting breaches of the Code to any staff member especially when health or safety is at issue through SPHE programmes and active promotion of Bí Cineálta Policy

Implementation Date

This Code of Behaviour was first implemented on 1st September 2010.

Reviewed

May 2026

Patrick Reynolds
Chairperson

Next Review Date

May 2028

Reference to other School Policies & Documents

- Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools (N.E.W.B.)
- Education (Welfare) Act 2000
- Special Education Needs – A Continuum of Support
- Minutes of Staff Meetings where Code of Behaviour work was undertaken
- School Policies:
 - Bí Cineálta Policy
 - Homework Policy
 - Mobile Phone and Electronic Devices Policy
 - Healthy Lunch Policy
 - Admissions Policy
 - Health and Safety Policy
 - Acceptable Use Policy
 - Data Protection Policy
 - School Attendance Policy
 - Supervision Policy

Appendix A

School Expectations

Good manners and courtesy must be shown at all times.

Full school uniform is to be worn at all times and on occasions when children are representing the school.

Compulsory Uniform

Formal Green Uniform

- Green pinafore/skirt/trousers
- Green/Grey trousers
- Green cardigan or jumper
- White shirt
- White or green socks; white/green/black tights
- Green tie with red stripe
- School Crest
- Black shoes

P.E. Uniform (to be worn by all pupils on P.E. days)

- Runners (need to be shock absorbent and with adequate tread and securely fastened)
- School Tracksuit (Royal blue)
- White polo shirt
- School shorts (optional)
- Hair to be tied back every day

Optional Items

- Green tracksuit with red or white shirt for Infant classes only.

This green tracksuit may be worn instead of the green pinafore, shirt and jersey/cardigan. It may be bought in addition to the green pinafore. It is not meant for P.E. classes.

- School Jacket

Platform or high heeled shoes are not safe and should not be worn

Other aspects of appearance

No make-up, false nails or jewellery with the exception of a watch and stud ear rings (earlobes only) – one stud per earlobe only.

Healthy eating policy means no sweets, crisps, fizzy drinks etc. (See 'Healthy Eating Policy').

Sweets are not to be given as rewards by teachers.

First morning break should consist of one, small item of food, which must be eaten in the classroom. Wrappings must be disposed of before leaving the classroom.

Lunch is to be eaten in the classroom, therefore **no food** or papers in the yard. All wrappings and uneaten food should be brought home in lunch box. Milk and water are to be actively encouraged.

Current Safety Issues

- Under no circumstances may a child leave the school grounds during the school day without written permission from a parent/guardian.
- The parent/guardian must check in at the office before collecting child from the classroom and exit via the office where the sign-out book must be completed.
- Children may only re-enter school buildings during break-times with the permission of a teacher.
- Children are not permitted to remain on the school premises once school activities or after-school activities have ceased for the day.
- Walk at all times inside the school buildings, in corridors and on stairs. Pupils are to walk in single file at all times on the stairs.
- Cycling is prohibited on the school campus.
- Children should come off scooters, etc. at school gate and walk in.
- Children are to be deterred from swinging on the bars, from climbing on the window sills, walls, fences and basketball supports.
- Children are required to remain within the confines of our own yard and within full view of supervising teachers.
- Children are to line up promptly and orderly in their **own** line when the bell rings.
- Children are not allowed to lift other children, particularly Junior and Senior Infants.
- Personal mobile phones/cameras/electronic devices are not permitted in school.
- Money is not to be taken on school tours, except with prior discussion and agreement of class teacher.