



Code of Behaviour

SCOIL MHUIRE, CLONDRA

Introduction

This policy was updated in May 2015 in order to ensure that we are following best practice in our school. This policy is implemented in conjunction with our BÍ Cineálta policy. A review was held in September 2016 November 2018, March 2021, and September 2023. This current and substantive review takes place in March 2025 to align our Code of Behaviour with the *Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour* and our new BÍ Cineálta Policy which will be implemented at the beginning of the 2025-26 school year.

SCHOOL MISSION/VALUES STATEMENT

Vision for Code of Behaviour

We aim to nurture a partnership approach with regard to promoting positive behaviour in our school. We aim to nurture the potential of all the children in our care and to promote co-operation between staff, parents and pupils.

We will endeavour to create an environment for children to learn, grow and thrive, within a safe framework. Children benefit from boundaries being set for them in order to feel secure and develop the skills for cooperation. Therefore, any rules will be age-appropriate, with clear agreed consequences. We will strive to ensure that appropriate, effective strategies are in place to foster cooperation and good behaviour.

Purpose of the Code

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. Rules are essential in order to ensure the smooth running of a school. No real educational progress can be made unless there is order in our school community. Promoting positive behaviour is a central component of the social and moral education of children so that they can be adequately prepared for the responsibilities of adulthood and citizenship. We must work towards standards of behaviour based on the basic principles of honesty, respect, consideration and responsibility.

Parents can support and cooperate 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.

In devising this code the school recognises the variety of differences that exists between children and the need to accommodate these differences while acknowledging the right of each child to education in a relatively disruptive free environment.

Every effort will be made by all members of staff to adopt a positive approach to the question of behaviour in the school. The code offers a framework within which positive techniques of motivation and encouragement are utilized by the teacher.

Aims of the Code are to:

- **Create** a positive and supportive learning environment that encourages and reinforces good behaviour and mutual respect.
- **Promote** self-esteem, positive relationships and caring attitudes to one another
- **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
- **Facilitate** the education and development of every child
- **Enable** teachers to teach without disruption
- **Ensure** that the school's expectations and strategies are widely known and understood through the availability of our policies
- **Encourage** the involvement of both home and school in the implementation of this policy
- **Foster** respect for other children's belongings, school property, facilities and surroundings and the wider environment
- **Support** and ensure the well being of all members of our school community.
- Nurture and honour relationships and to provide guidance for pupils/teachers/SNAs/other staff and parents on behavioural expectations.
- Aid in the efficient operation of the school and the structuring of in-class expectations so that there exists a safe, encouraging, productive and stimulating learning environment.
- Develop self-discipline, self-responsibility and wellbeing in pupils based on consideration, respect and tolerance of others.
- Facilitate the education and development of each child.
- Foster caring attitudes to one another and to their school community.
- Enable teachers to teach and children to learn.
- Promote the use of positive language whenever possible.

WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH TO PROMOTING POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR

Shared Responsibilities of the School Community

We have a team approach to promoting positive behaviour, and are committed to our important responsibility to model high standards of behaviour, both in our dealings with the children and with each other. The Wellbeing Framework supports and promotes positive behaviour. It aims to help our children develop communication skills and appropriate ways of interacting and behaving along with the development of conflict resolution skills.

We aim to:

- Provide a comfortable, safe school environment
- Support, implement and follow the school's Code of Behaviour
- Encourage an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust: adult to adult, adult to child, child to child, child to adult.

Board of Management Responsibilities

- Ensure the Code of Behaviour is clearly linked to and inspired by the Mission Statement of Scoil Mhuire, Clondra.
- The Board of Management has a duty of care to safeguard and protect all staff and pupils, both physically and in terms of well-being.
- Support the Principal and staff in implementing and ratifying the Code of Behaviour.

Principal's Responsibilities

- To promote a whole-school approach to developing positivity and maintaining a culture and an environment of kindness, friendship and awareness of others.
- Ensure that the Code of Behaviour is implemented in a fair and consistent manner.

- The overall responsibility for discipline within the school rests with the Principal. Each teacher has responsibility for the maintenance of discipline within his/her classroom while sharing a common responsibility for good order within the school premises. A pupil will be referred to the principal teacher for serious breaches of discipline and for repeated incidents of minor misbehavior.

Teachers' Responsibilities

- Create a safe learning environment for all pupils
- Recognise and encourage good behaviour.
- Recognise and encourage a high standard of work.
- Recognise and provide for individual talents and differences among pupils.
- Model appropriate behaviour and be courteous, consistent and fair.
- Encourage older pupils to be good role models for younger pupils.
- Deal appropriately with misbehavior.
- Keep a record of instances of serious misbehavior.
- Model and teach appropriate skills when resolving conflict.
- Provide support to colleagues.
- Communicate with parents when necessary and provide reports on matters of mutual concern

SNA Responsibilities

- Deal appropriately with misbehavior during times of supervision.
- Record and communicate (when necessary) misbehavior in daily logs.
- Support students with additional needs.

Parents/Guardians' Responsibilities

- Read carefully the Code of Behaviour and provide constructive feedback/input as part of the valued partnership between the school, Board of Management, and home and support its implementation.
- Ensure their children attend school regularly and punctually.
- Foster in your children a respect for their teachers, SNAs and fellow pupils.
- Show interest in, support and encourage children's schoolwork and completion/presentation of homework.
- Provide a healthy lunch for your child.
- Ensure your child has necessary materials for school including a full uniform and tracksuit for PE/Sports days or events and that all items of clothing are clearly labelled.
- Co-operate and support teachers in instances where your child's behaviour is causing difficulties for others.
- Encourage your child not to retaliate verbally or physically to hurtful/angry/aggressive behaviour and provide them with alternative strategies to address this behaviour
- Communicate with the school in relation to any problems which may affect your child's progress/behaviour.
- Ensure your child does not bring a mobile phone or any other banned items to school. Children are not permitted to have a mobile phone on the school grounds. An exception may be made in the case of a medical need. In other exceptional circumstances an arrangement may be made between the principal and parents for a child's phone to be stored in the school office for use after school hours.
- Should you wish to make a complaint to the school you are advised to follow the school's Parental Complaints Procedures.
- Encourage their children to do their best and to take responsibility for their work.
- Be aware of and cooperate with the school's rules and system of rewards and sanctions.
- Attend meetings at the school if requested.

- Help their children with homework in an appropriate manner and ensure that it is completed to the best of their child's ability.
- Communicate with the school in relation to absences or any concerns they may have.

Pupils Responsibilities/Expectations

Every child in the school has the right to be treated with dignity and respect and avoid behaviour that is in any way hurtful.

- Pupils are involved in devising classroom rules and playground rules. This is done at the start of the school year and reiterated in Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE).
- Follow school and class rules.
- Listen to your teachers/SNAs and follow instructions/advice.
- Tell the truth straight away.
- Always try to be kind and respectful to everyone in the school.
- Bullying of any kind will not be tolerated. Avoid commenting on people's looks, belongings, etc.
- Always try to include each other in games and activities.
- Use Kind hands and kind words' – physical harm to others/offensive language of any sort is unacceptable.
- Maintain a calm environment indoors. Always walk and use indoor voices.
- Respect school property, the property of others and always keep the classroom clean and tidy.
- Take personal responsibility for your own learning and behaviour.
- Behave appropriately while engaging in school activities and school trips.
- Make sure not to have any banned items in the school
- Speak up for other students if something is not right

Examples of strategies that may be used by teachers to show disapproval of unacceptable behaviour.

- Reasoning with/reprimanding pupil.
- Child completes restorative reflection sheet explaining the undesired behaviour which may be signed by class teacher/principal./parents.
- Temporary separation from their classmates/peers.
- Detention during break for school/home work not being completed.
- Time out in school yard for misbehavior in the yard.
- Referral to Principal.
- Communication with parents.

Other strategies that may be used by the Board of Management

- Exclusion (Suspension or Expulsion) from school in accordance with Rule 130 of the Rules for National Schools as amended by Circular and Education and Welfare Act 2000 – check this legislation).
- Before resorting to serious sanction, e.g. suspension/expulsion, the normal channels of communication between school and parents will be utilized. Parents will be involved at an early stage rather than as a last resort.

Class Values/Rules

At the beginning of each academic year, the class teacher will draft a list of class values with the children. These will be devised with regard to the health, safety and welfare of all members of the school community. They emphasise positive behaviour, with due regard to the age of the pupils and to individual differences.

School property

Pupils must respect all school property and treat all books and equipment with care. Any pupil who willfully damages or vandalises school property will be held accountable for the cleaning, repair or replacement of such property.

School Environment

Pupils are encouraged to keep the school environment clean and litter free. Pupils are expected to cooperate fully in any organised clean-up activity.

Children with Special Needs

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 for these children in consultation with parents and the class teacher. The Special Education 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 in formulating individual behaviour plans.

Children in a 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.

POSITIVE STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING BEHAVIOUR

- Teachers have behavioural expectations in each class that are consistent with the ethos as expressed in the Code of Behaviour and which set a positive atmosphere for learning.
- Teachers ensure that pupils understand and are frequently reminded of how they are expected to behave.
- Teachers use a variety of activities and methodologies to sustain pupils' interest and motivation: a quiet word or gesture to show approval; a comment on a child's exercise book; a visit to another class or principal for commendation; praise in front of class or group.
- Reward systems, both group and individual. For example we may use: points system; stamps for homework, night off homework; traffic light system; raffle tickets to exchange for prizes; extra art/PE; homework passes after certain goals are met, class Dojo, etc. 'Student of the Week' to acknowledge and encourage positive behaviour.
- School awards, certificates etc

There is a school yard supervision rota in operation and this is on display in the staff room. There are designated areas within the playground for the different age groups.

Pupils are expected to:

- mix and play within their own age group
- Play within their designated play area

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- At certain times of the school year, specific sports/games e.g.: rounders, soccer league, are played and this promotes inclusiveness.
- Remain indoors on wet days and play with various indoor games e.g.: Knex, Lego, etc.
- Ask permission to leave the playground to go to the toilet, etc.
- Observe for safety reasons, the rule that children are not allowed around the back of the school building or front of the school.
- Ask a teacher to retrieve a ball when it goes over the fence.

The Code of Behaviour applies during all extra-curricular activities e.g.: school tours, swimming, etc.

Incentives and Rewards

Part of the vision of Scoil Mhuire 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. Rewards can help promote and support good behaviour. We use a variety of age appropriate rewards to recognise good effort in both school and home assigned tasks and also for good behaviour. We take into account the individual needs and efforts of the child.

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

Examples of rewards and how praise might be given:

- Stickers and merit marks, small prizes, e.g. pencils, rubbers, bookmarks.
- Homework Pass
- Some may use group/class of the week
- Extra art/play/computer work/playground.
- A special comment of praise in a pupil's exercise book or to the pupil's parent/guardian – Happy Gram.
- Visit to another member of Staff or to the Principal for commendation
- Delegating some special responsibility or privilege
- Accounts of good effort in all areas are conveyed to parents at Parent/Teacher meetings and informally whenever possible.
- Class Dojo points system
- Sweets/treats
- Students of the Week
- Positive notes sent home to parents/guardians.

Responding to Inappropriate Behaviour

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.

Examples of serious misdemeanours:

- Behaviour that is hurtful, including bullying, harassment, discrimination and victimisation. Please refer to our Bí Cinéalta Policy
- Behaviour that interferes with teaching and learning
- Threats or physical hurt to another person
- Damage to property
- Theft

Examples of extremely serious misdemeanours

- Serious intimidation or threats of violence against another student or member of staff.
- Physical assault on a teacher or pupil
- Serious theft
- Serious damage to property
- Supplying illegal drugs or alcohol to other students in the school
- Sexual assault

This list is not exhaustive.

SANCTIONS

In the implementation of any sanctions, it should be noted that it is the behaviour that is rejected and not the child.

We adopt a staged approach when dealing with inappropriate behaviour. Minor misdemeanours are dealt with by the class teacher or the teacher on yard duty. On occasion a child/children may be referred to the principal. Parents will be informed if necessary to address incidents of misbehaviour. The parents concerned will be invited to the school to discuss their child's case. Before resorting to serious sanctions, the normal channels of communication between school and parents will be utilised. Parents will be involved at an early stage, rather than as a last resort.

The following steps will be taken when a child or 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. The aim of any sanction is to prevent the behaviour occurring again and if necessary to help the pupils devise strategies for this;

1. Listening to all parties/pupil/s involved individually. If more than one child was involved, listen to all parties.
2. Reasoning with pupil
3. Discuss what has happened and what could have been done differently/how we could improve.
4. If needed, a break from time with peers to reflect on their behaviour.
5. Prescribing extra work/ writing out the story of what happened for reflection.
6. Loss of privileges
7. Lose part of break time/'Time out' during play time.
8. Communication with parents
9. Involvement of Principal
10. Principal communicating with parents
11. In cases of serious misdemeanours and where applicable it may be necessary to move to 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)

SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION

The legal context

The entitlement to education is protected in a range of constitutional and legal provisions and in human rights conventions. These legal protections for the individual student's right to education mean that decisions to suspend or expel a student are open to appeal and may be subject to judicial review by the High Court.

Schools are required, under section 23(2) of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, to include their procedures for suspension and expulsion in their code of behaviour.

The school will follow fair procedure when suspending a pupil. Fair procedures have two essential parts:

- The right to be heard
- The right to impartiality.

General suspension

Suspension should be a proportionate response to the behaviour that is causing concern. Normally, other interventions will have been tried before suspension, and school staff will have reviewed the reasons why these have not worked. The decision to suspend a student requires serious grounds such as that:

- 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.
- A single incident of serious misconduct may be grounds for suspension, e.g. assault of staff member, setting fire to school property.

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.

Procedures in respect of suspension

Schools are required by law to follow fair procedures when proposing to suspend a student. Where a preliminary assessment of facts confirms serious misbehaviour that could warrant suspension, the school should observe the following procedures:

- Inform the student and their parents about the complaint.
- Give parents and students an opportunity to respond.

Parents and students will be given an opportunity to respond before a decision is made and before any sanction is imposed.

A meeting with the student and their parents provides an 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.

Procedures in Relation to Immediate Suspension

In the case of an immediate suspension, parents will be notified, and arrangements made with them for the student to be collected from school. The school will have regard to its duty of care for the student.

The period of suspension:

A student shall not be suspended for more than three days, except in exceptional circumstances. However, a Board of Management may wish to authorise the Principal, with the approval of the chairperson of the Board, to impose a suspension of up to five days. At the discretion of the Board of Management, a three-day suspension can be extended to five days and then to a maximum of ten days.

Appeals

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 may appeal the suspension under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998, as amended by the Education (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006.

Implementing the Suspension

Written notification

In normal circumstances there will be a written notification but in the case of risk to safety to staff or students, suspension will be immediate. 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

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.

After the suspension ends

When any sanction, including suspension, is completed, a student should be given the opportunity and support for a fresh start.

EXPULSION

The Board of Management has the authority to expel a student. As a matter of best practice that authority is reserved to the Board of Management and should not be delegated. Expulsion is an action that will only be taken in extreme cases of unacceptable 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:

- A serious threat of violence against another student or member of staff
- Physical assault
- Supplying illegal drugs to other students in the school.
- Sexual assault.

Procedures in respect of expulsion

Schools are required by law to follow fair procedures as well as procedures prescribed under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, when proposing to expel a student. 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.

These procedures assume that the Board of Management is the decision-making body in relation to expulsions.

These guidelines are in line with the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) and Tusla: NEWB: Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools 2008 guidelines and all schools must include these in their Code of Behaviour.

Thankfully, we have a positive school atmosphere and we continue to promote this and hope that suspension/expulsion will not become an issue.

KEEPING RECORDS

In line with data protection legislation, records are kept in relation to pupils' behaviour and any accidents that occur. Incidents and accidents are recorded in our general book and are written in a practical and impartial manner. Where ongoing behavior problems are occurring the class teacher will keep a record and a copy of this will go on the child's file at the end of the school year.

Class level: Individual class records are kept. This includes emerging behavioural patterns. Information will be recorded as incidents occur.

PROCEDURES FOR NOTIFICATION OF PUPIL'S ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL

The Education Welfare Act, 2000, Section 23(2)(e) states that the Code of Behaviour must specify, 'the procedures to be followed in relation to a child's absence from school'. Section 18 stipulates that parents must notify the school of a student's absence, date of absence and the reason for this absence. Under the Education Welfare Act we must advise Tusla (formerly the National Education Welfare Board) if a pupil has missed 20 days at school. A written note must be supplied for each day/days a child is absent from school explaining reasons for the child's absence. These notes are kept on record and entered into our School Management Attendance system. If a child leaves the school early or arrives late, this is noted in the 'Sign In/Out Book' and also recorded on the Aladdin (online school management) system.

Methods of Communicating with Parents

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
- Letters/notes from school to home and from home to school
- Aladdin schools system
- School notice board
- Termly newsletter
- School website

(Matters relating to discipline/behavior will be communicated confidentially)

SUCCESS CRITERIA

We will judge success as we always have on:

- Observation of positive behaviour in classrooms, playground and school environment
- Practices and procedures listed in this policy being consistently implemented by teachers.
- Positive feedback from teachers, SNAs, parents and pupils.

TIMETABLE FOR REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed in two years, (~~September 2025~~ March 2027) or as the need arises.

RATIFICATION AND COMMUNICATION

This policy was ratified on _____

Signed: _____

Ms Mary Duignan, Chairperson, Board of Management, Scoil Mhuire, Clondra.