

CODE OF BEHAVIOUR at St Mary's, Star of the Sea B.N.S.

Introductory Statement

This Code of Behaviour has been devised by the school principal in consultation with a PDST advisor, all staff members, the members of the Board of Management, the student council and the parents committee. It was revised in March 2010.

Rationale

- The Board of Management of Star of the Sea, Sandymount decided to review the Behaviour Policy to ensure that it is in compliance with legal requirements and good practice as set out in *Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools, NEWB, 2008*.
- It is a requirement under the Education Welfare Act, 2000, Section 23 (1) which refers to *the obligation on schools to prepare a code of behaviour in respect of the students registered at the school*. It details in Section 23(2), that the code of behaviour shall specify:
 - A. The standards of behaviour that shall be observed by each student attending the school;
 - B. The measures that shall be taken when a student fails or refuses to observe those standards;
 - C. The procedures to be followed before a student may be suspended or expelled from the school concerned;
 - D. The grounds for removing a suspension imposed in relation to a student; and
 - E. The procedures to be followed in relation to a child's absence from school.

Relationship to Characteristic Ethos

Star of the Sea BNS seeks to enable each child to develop his potential in a caring environment where the talents of each child are nurtured and valued. The school climate and atmosphere are created by the actions and behaviour of everyone in the school. The behaviour of adults in a child's life, including parents and teachers, is a significant influence on how a child acts. The code will be most effective where there is a high level of openness and co-operation between staff, parents and pupils. A clear understanding among all the partners of the standards of behaviour required and the procedures to be adopted where there are breaches of the code also helps ensure a harmonious environment where all can work effectively.

In our school Mission Statement "The School will endeavour to enhance the self-esteem of everyone in the school community, to imbue in the pupils respect for people and property and to encourage in them the idea of being responsible."

This poem is taught to all pupils and recited at Assembly on a regular basis

**I'm important, so I am!
Don't call me names or tell me to "scram"!
I belong here just like you!
I may be different, but you are too!
We're all different – no two the same
So please don't exclude me from your game.
Just because I'm fat or thin
Doesn't mean I shouldn't be let in.
Just because I'm black or white
Doesn't mean that you've more right.
We're all equal in God's eyes
Men and women, girls and boys.**

**We're all God's children, can't you see?
So you be you, and I' be me!**

Aims

In devising this code, consideration has been given to the particular needs and circumstances of this school. Our aim is to achieve an efficient and stimulating learning environment and the development of self discipline in pupils based on consideration, respect and tolerance for others. Our aim is 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.

This code of behaviour describes the school's expectations about how each member of the school community will help to make the school a good place for teaching and learning. Every effort will be made by all members of staff to adopt a positive approach to the question of behaviour in the school and the over-riding aims will be –

- To ensure an educational environment that is guided by our mission statement;
- To promote positive behaviour and self-discipline recognising the differences between children and the need to accommodate these differences;
- To create an atmosphere of respect, tolerance and consideration of others;
- To enhance the learning environment and allow the school to function whereby children can make progress in all aspects of their development;
- To ensure the safety and well being of all members of the school community;
- To assist the parents and children in understanding the systems and procedures that form part of the Code and to seek their co-operation in the application of these procedures;
- To ensure that the system of rules, rewards and sanctions are implemented in a fair and consistent manner throughout the school.

Guidelines for Behaviour in the School

The school recognises the variety of differences that exist between children and the need to tolerate these differences. It is agreed that a high standard of behaviour requires a strong sense of community within the school and a high level of co-operation among staff and between staff, parents and pupils. Every effort will be made to ensure that the code of behaviour is implemented in a reasonable, fair and consistent manner. The limits of behaviour are clearly defined and children become familiar with the consequences of behaviour beyond these limits. The over-riding principle governing this code is respect - respect for ourselves and others and their property.

The school expects the highest standard of behaviour from its pupils including the following:

- Each pupil is expected to be well behaved and show consideration for other children and adults;
- Each pupil is expected to show respect for the property of the school, other children's and their own belongings;
- Each pupil is expected to attend school on a regular basis and to be punctual;
- Each pupil is expected to do his best both in school and for homework.

We have adopted Positive behaviour through whole school approach based on the Jenny Mosely's Quality Circle time model. This approach promotes positive behaviour through consistent and effective whole school model. It is a "joined- up" approach to behaviour management, running throughout the school, that children can understand from an early age.

Circle time sessions are a democratic system of speaking, listening and enjoyable activities held in a supportive and inclusive environment.

School Rules

- 1. We are kind**
- 2. We are honest and fair**
- 3. We listen to others**
- 4. We show respect for ourselves and others**
- 5. We take care of property**
- 6. We work hard**
- 7. We are always silent on the line.**

Each class is required to draft their own class rules or charter, through consultation and discussion within the class and they will reflect the age and maturity levels of the students in the class. These rules will be kept to a minimum, they will be recorded in simple language and they will be stated positively, telling students what to do as well as what not to do. The rules will be referred to regularly and will form part of SPHE lessons. These rules will be displayed on the wall in the classroom.

Whole School Approach to Promoting Positive Behaviour

The Board of Management and the Principal have overall responsibility for the implementation and on-going monitoring of this policy. However, all staff members have responsibility for their own classes and for the general school population when on yard duty or on any organised out-of-school activity. Senior students have a role to play and parents or other members of the school community may make comments or suggestions through their representatives on the Board of Management or directly to the Principal. The school values the support and co-operation of parents in the promotion of this strategy. The policy shall apply to all students during all school related activities.

If the school is to be a happy, secure environment which children can develop to their full potential, it is necessary to provide a framework which promotes constructive behaviour and discourages unacceptable behaviour. The school code places a greater emphasis on rewards than on sanctions and the ideal is that all pupils will acquire the skills of self discipline. There are times however when it may be necessary to impose sanctions in order to maintain good order, and to discourage offenders. The school recognises the variety of differences which exist between children and the need to accommodate these differences

If the school is to function efficiently, it is necessary that rules are clearly stated and enforced consistently and wisely. This is done very effectively at weekly assembly when the school rules are restated and good behaviour is highlighted and acknowledged. Disciplinary issues may also be discussed and addressed.

It is the policy of this school to actively promote good behaviour. Children learn best by being rewarded. It is more positive to praise a child doing the proper thing than to constantly scold the child who misbehaves. As part of our on-going efforts to promote positive behaviour, time will be allocated at one staff meetings per term for discussion regarding the implementation of the code. Staff will be given opportunities to share their experience of both positive and negative behaviour and to learn from collective wisdom.

Teachers will use various strategies to promote good behaviour including:

1. Acknowledgement of rewards, for example – merit stamps, merit stars, homework pass, treats, class video, extra computer time, quiz, class outing.
2. Class privileges (special tasks to do in the class: e.g.(classroom organization jobs)
3. Boy/ student of the week
4. A treat for all children who have no entry in class/yard book on a monthly basis
5. Golden Time (30 mins on a weekly basis)
6. Praise for specific acts of good behaviour
7. Feedback to parents of good behaviour – verbal or written in pupil's homework notebook.

Praise may be given by means of any one of the following:

- A quiet word or gesture to show approval;
- A comment in a child's exercise book;
- A visit to another class, to another member of staff or to the Principal for commendation;
- A word of praise in front of a group or the class;
- A reward system – student of the week/occasional treats;
- Special mention at assembly (Boy of the week in junior school and subject pass for senior boys);
- Delegating some special responsibility or privilege;
- A mention to parents - either written or verbal communication;
- End of year prize giving

To facilitate new members of staff become familiar with practices within the school, discussion regarding the implementation of the code will always form part of the first staff meeting held each September. A copy of the code will be included in the teachers folder on the common server. The code will also be given to parents whenever they enrol a child in the school and is also available on the school website. www.starofthesea.ie

SANCTIONS

The school manages unacceptable behavior by adopting the following strategies in a staged approach:

(Note: The nature of the behaviour and the age of the child will determine the nature of the strategies employed.)

- Reasoning with pupils including advising them about the consequences of their actions;
- Verbal reprimand (including advice on how to improve);
- Time out (Age appropriate including advising child about reflecting on their behaviour);
- Temporary removal from group;
- Prescribing extra work (kept on file by teacher)
- Reflection sheet (signed by parent and kept on file by teacher) This sheet is available in the Teacher's year Book
- Entry into the discipline book. Instances of repeated misbehaviour will be referred to the Principal;
- Verbal (Junior /Senior Infants) or Note in journal from class teacher to be signed by parent 1st -6th
- Detention during breaks- remain at wall or walk with supervising teacher or SNA
- Withdrawal of privileges;
- Formal written communication with parents/guardians;
- Referral to the Principal
- Referral to the Principal and the Chairperson or other member of the Board of Management;
- Formal meeting with parents/guardians
- Detention after school
- Suspension;
- Expulsion.

Classification of Misbehaviours

Misbehaviour falls into one of three categories – minor, serious or gross. Teachers and/or the Principal will make judgements based on a common sense approach having regard to the age or vulnerability of the child and the gravity and frequency of any misbehaviour as follows:

Minor Misbehaviour

The following are examples of minor misbehaviour:

Interrupting class work
Regularly arriving late for school
Running in the school building
Littering around the school
Being discourteous or unmannerly
Not completing Homework without good reason (to include a note from a parent/guardian)
Inappropriate behaviour or gestures
Minor infringement of the school rules
Talking out of turn.

Serious Misbehaviour

The following are examples of serious misbehaviour:

Constantly disruptive in class
Telling lies
Stealing
Name calling
Persistently not working to full potential
Damaging others' property
Bullying
Answering back a teacher
Endangering self or fellow pupils in the class or the yard
Using unacceptable language
Deliberate, continual disobedience.

All incidents of bullying will be dealt with as outlined in the school's Anti-bullying policy. (See separate policy)

Gross Misbehaviour

For gross misbehavior or repeated incidences of serious misbehavior, suspension will be considered. Aggressive, threatening or violent behavior towards a teacher will be regarded as serious or gross misbehavior, depending on circumstances.

Where there are repeated incidences of serious misbehavior, the Chairperson of the Board of Management will be informed and the parents will be requested in writing to attend at the school to meet the Chairperson and the Principal. If the parents do not give an undertaking that the pupil will behave in an acceptable manner in the future the pupil may have to be suspended for a temporary period. Suspension will be in accordance with terms of Rule 130 (5) of the Rules for National Schools. In the case of gross misbehaviour, where it is necessary to ensure that order and discipline are maintained, and to secure the safety of pupils, the Board shall authorise the Chairperson or Principal to sanction an immediate suspension, pending a discussion of the matter with the parents.

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 in consultation with the parents, the class teacher and the

student (if appropriate) will facilitate the preparation of a behaviour plan for the pupil, if required, and will re-admit the pupil formally to the class.

Where a satisfactory resolution of a problem is achieved, a pupil may be re-admitted to school within a suspension period at the discretion of the Chairperson of the Board and the Principal.

Expulsion

The Board of Management has the authority to expel a student in an extreme case (see p.81, Developing a Code of Behaviour; Guidelines for Schools) or where repeated incidents of gross misbehaviour interfere with the educational opportunities of fellow students or where there is a threat to the health and safety of either students or staff. This sanction would be imposed under the terms of the Education Welfare Act (2000). Suspension/expulsion procedures are in accordance with the Education Act (1998).

Involving Parents/Guardians in Managing Problem Behaviour

Parents/guardians are valued as partners in the school community and as such will be invited to participate in promoting positive behaviour both in school and in the wider community. Class teachers will refer to repeated episodes of minor misbehaviour in the pupil's Homework journal which parents/guardians are requested to sign each evening. In cases where pupils are required to complete some extra work as a sanction, parents/guardians will again be requested to sign the relevant work. Class teachers may occasionally request parents/guardians to visit them in school to discuss some aspect of a pupil's behaviour. The Principal will be informed of these meetings and may be invited to attend. Parents/guardians are encouraged to make appointments to meet with class teachers and/or the Principal at the earliest opportunity in an effort to prevent any escalation of inappropriate behaviour. The school will remind parents/guardians of the procedures for contacting the school at every opportunity.

Where pupils are found to be involved in more serious misbehaviour the Principal may phone or write to parents/guardians to request them to attend an informal/formal meeting at the school. Class teachers, or teachers who witness misbehaviour while supervising on yard duty, Principal and Chairperson of the Board of Management may also attend these meetings. The pupil may also attend all or part of these meetings if deemed appropriate.

Appeals

Under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998, parents (or pupils who have reached the age of 18) are entitled to appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science against some decisions of the Board of Management, including (1) permanent exclusion from a school and (2) suspension for a period which would bring the cumulative period of suspension to 20 school days or longer in any one school year. Appeals must generally be made within 42 calendar days from the date the decision of the school was notified to the parent or student. (See Circular 22/02)

Keeping records

In line with the school's policy on record keeping, and data protection legislation, records in relation to pupils' behaviour are kept in a secure filing cabinet. Copies of all communications with parents/guardians will be retained in the school. Records of more serious incidents are recorded in a specific Discipline journal and are retained until students reach 21 years. Class teachers should shred personal records at the end of each year.

- Discipline books- Junior, Middle and Senior school
- Teacher's year book for class teacher.

Procedures for notification of pupil absences from school

Parents must notify the school in writing of a student's absence and the reason for this absence.

Emotional and Behavioural Difficulty

The school recognises that the term EBD (Emotional and Behavioural Disorders) covers a wide range of Special Educational Needs. Teachers have a set list of strategies for teaching children with EBD. For a comprehensive list of these strategies, please refer to Appendix A.

Reference to other Policies

List and check other school policies that have a bearing on the code of behaviour e.g.

- o SPHE plan
- o Anti-bullying
- o Harassment
- o Enrolment
- o Record keeping
- o Health & Safety
- o Equality
- o Special Educational Needs

Success Criteria

This policy will be deemed to be successful when the following are observed:

- Positive behaviour in class rooms, playground and school environment
- Practices and procedures listed in this policy being consistently implemented by teachers
- Positive feedback from teachers, parents and pupils.

This policy will be reviewed annually or as deemed necessary

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20 Key Strategies for Teaching Children with EBD

1. *Routine*: Provide a structured routine with visual time clock. Ensure consistency across the school with morning/start of class routine. Auditory sound cues may be helpful in addition to visual cues to help students manage their time efficiently. Colour coding for subjects? Post schedule (e.g. on whiteboard) and refer to schedule on regular basis. Routines may take 6-8 weeks to establish or even more for this population of students. Have a class seating plan at all times.
2. *Changes in Routine*: Convey any changes of routine to students as soon as available. The sooner students are aware of changes the more time students have to adjust to the new routine.
3. *Rules need to be explicitly taught*. Telling pupils 'this is the rule' is not sufficient for pupils with EBD or any form of behavioural difficulty. Visuals e.g. photos of 'sitting properly', 'lining up correctly', 'listening attentively' should be used. Teaching rules and good behaviours can be integrated into drama lessons. Situations can be role-played where pupils can take on the role of teacher/pupil. This is an excellent method for reinforcing expected behaviours.
4. *Build self-esteem*. Offer encouragement, look for the positives, small though they may be at first. Be enthusiastic in what you say and do – it is contagious and raises the morale of those around you. Remember the crucial first step is consciously taking a positive, and willing, interest in the child. This involves taking time to listen to the child in order to *build trust*.
5. *Classroom Jobs Chart/Classroom Order Chart*: Classroom jobs offer an opportunity for student to show responsibility. In order to ensure success, make sure students have an opportunity to experience every job. One suggestion is having a chart with each student's name and according job. Every week rotate the jobs. The list can double as the order in which students line up or choose preferred activities. Students with EBD classification tend to be competitive and need specific procedures informing the order students line up and choose activities.
6. *Logical Consequences*: Students must fix what they break. If a student pushes over a desk, he or she must pick it up. If a student runs in the hall, she must practice walking the correct way. If the student talks during the lesson, student must make up the work on his time. Be **consistent** with consequences so students know what is expected of them. **Consistency** across the school in addressing behaviour is also crucial.
7. *Collect data on Behaviour*. It is crucial to keep detailed notes on incidents of misbehaviour, including what happened just before the behaviour and how the situation may have escalated. This can help to identify the trigger for a particular behaviour. Keeping a log of instances of good behaviour also works well to identify over time which occurrences/situations/environments lead to particularly positive behaviour from the child. When collecting behaviour data, note
 - Frequency of particular behaviours
 - Duration of behaviours (more than just a 'bad day')
 - How general are the behaviours?
 - How intense are the behaviours?

Develop an Individual Behaviour Plan if a pattern of behaviours is noted (*see attached sheet*). This is completed in consultation with the class teacher, Principal, parents and Learning Support Teacher or Psychologist if applicable.

8. *Target Behaviors*: After taking data on students' observable behavior, determine which behavior or behaviors to direct attention. Work with student to develop a

- plan to replace undesirable behavior with a more suitable behavior. If student throws desks and pencils when angry, have student work on communicating anger to an adult or trusted peer and how to be assertive without being aggressive.
9. *Small Flexible Grouping*: Students with EBD may have difficulty establishing relationships with peers. Abusive language and other behaviors may interfere with learning. Smaller groups decrease distractions and student-to-teacher ratio. Differentiation of instruction is more manageable with smaller groups.
 10. *Audience*: During a serious behavior episode, the most effective strategy may be to remove the audience. The audience typically is other peers but may be other adults. The audience can be removed by moving the student if he or she is willing. However, moving the audience may be necessary in some cases. Develop a procedure with your class which will function as an "everybody out" drill. Behaviors amplified with an audience may be reduced or completely stopped when an audience is removed. Alternatively, the spot may be used after a behavior occurs to give the student a chance to refocus.
 11. *Choices*: Students may frustrate easily when doing work. Giving students an option of when to complete the work is a powerful tool. For example, a teacher may say, "You need to get this done today. Would you rather do it now or during your free time?"
 12. *Do not excuse a child's behaviour because he has EBD.*
 13. *Time Out/ Cooling Off Time*. 5 minutes is enough. 10 minutes is the absolute maximum amount of time which should be allowed for 'cooling off'. This generally has a shelf life of 2-3 occasions before losing effectiveness as a disciplinary technique. This time can be used for reflection. (*See attached sheet*)
 14. *Effective Questioning*. If you use a question, never use 'why' e.g. Why are you talking? Why are you shouting out? Or 'Are you talking down there?' The child either cannot reasonably answer this or else it's a pointless question. Use direct questions only...what/where/when. Use approaches and terminology such as 'John, you're talking. Do you remember our rule about chatting during quiet time?' or 'I'm not using a nasty tone with you and I don't expect you to use a nasty tone with me'.
 15. *Communicate calmness at all times*. Remember: the first person to calm in an emotionally fraught situation is yourself.
 16. *Avoid an over-stimulated classroom environment*. Children with EBD should not be seated next to windows or doors or near lights or areas with a lot of footfall. Minimise charts on walls, too many bright colours and clutter in the room. In a classroom where an SNA is present, be conscious of two people moving around at the same time, speaking to each other etc.
 17. *Tactical ignoring*. Tactically ignore the secondary behaviour but not the primary behaviour e.g. The pupil has hit another child on yard. This behaviour must be dealt with. However, as this behaviour is being dealt with, we tactically ignore secondary behaviours such as sulkiness, attitude or tone of voice. Addressing all these behaviours leads to an escalation of the situation and confusion in the child's mind over which behaviour is being addressed.
 18. *'Separate the behaviour from the person'*. This is difficult when a child's behaviour is rude, arrogant, lazy, hostile or aggressive. As teachers, we need to advocate appropriate discipline and consequences for disruptive or wrong behaviour. However, we should not hold grudges, but rather repair, rebuild and move on with the child, work with the child within.
 19. *Allow feedback from the pupils themselves*. As well as reflection by the pupil on his behaviour, this also includes giving opportunities for the greater student body, perhaps through the school council, to discuss and make recommendations about behaviour, including bullying, and the effectiveness of rewards and sanctions.

20. *Do not think you can always handle the situation on your own.* The support of colleagues is a crucial factor in all that we do to enable, and work with, challenging children and their families.