St. Mary’s S.N.S.



Code of Behaviour

***Reviewed September 2023***

**Code of Behaviour Policy**

**Background**

St. Mary’s S.N.S. is a designated DEIS Band 1 School. The original Code of Behaviour was drawn up in 1997. At that time increasing problems of indiscipline were preventing teaching and learning in many classes, resulting in greatly increased stress levels among staff and a dispirited atmosphere prevailing the school. The decision to implement a new discipline code coincided with the requirement of the Department of Education and Skills that all schools draw up such a code. However, in St. Mary’s case, the decision to implement the new code was taken, not because it was mandated from outside, but as a response to an internal need.

Following extensive investigation of approaches to discipline in similar areas, a programme called ‘Discipline for Learning’ was chosen. The staff took a whole school approach to drawing up the code, involving all the education partners. The experience proved rewarding and set a precedent for such an approach to the implementation of further policies.

The discipline code is now central to the ethos of the school. It is reviewed annually and amended as required. The original structure of Discipline for Learning remains more or less in place.

**Rationale**

* The Code of Behaviour is a requirement under Section 23 of the Education Welfare Act 2000.
* The Code of Behaviour should minimise incidents of misbehaviour.
* It promotes an orderly environment necessary for quality teaching and learning to take place.
* The overall aspiration would be to develop an internalised self – discipline, not an externally manipulated regime.
* This policy was reviewed in June 2010 to ensure it is in line with the NEWB’s Guidelines for Schools (2008) and to align it with the Continuum of Support. (introduced in 2009)

**Ethos**

The school mission states –

*St. Mary’s S.N.S., working with home and community aims towards a positive and happy place of learning for everyone. While working together as a school community, the school also strives to ensure that the individual needs of its pupils are catered for.*

In this school children will be encouraged to reach their full potential mentally, physically, spiritually, emotionally and socially, in an atmosphere and environment in which they feel safe, valued and secure and in which respect for self and others is the norm.

Central to this philosophy is the creation of a positive school climate fostered by the values of respect, courtesy, honesty, safety and responsibility which underpin ‘Discipline for Learning’, our school code of discipline.

The involvement of the wider school community will be encouraged through a ‘whole school’ approach whereby every individual is involved in the development of a school environment where each person is respected and valued.

This Code of Behaviour policy will describe the standard we, at St. Mary’s S.N.S. aspire towards and the methods we use to achieve these standards.

**Goals**

* To enable all members of the school community to feel valued, to have their achievements valued and to behave appropriately towards each other.
* To guide children towards internalised self – control.
* To create a climate that encourages and reinforces good behaviour.
* To create a positive and safe environment for teaching and learning.
* To encourage students to take personal responsibility for their learning and their behaviour.
* To build positive relationships of mutual respect and mutual support among students, staff and parents.
* To ensure that the school’s high expectations for the behaviour of all the members of the school community are widely known and understood.

**Standard of Behaviour**

The standard of behaviour we aspire to for the whole school community reflect the following values:

* Safely
* Honesty
* Responsibility
* Courtesy
* Respect

**Code of Behaviour**

The ‘Discipline for Learning’ (hereafter referred to as D.F.L.) programme takes a positive, preventative approach to discipline. The central concept is the basic fact that no child has to misbehave. Children can always choose to ‘behave’. D.F.L. is used at all times during the school day and for all school activities and clubs e.g. School Tours/outings, breakfast club, homework club, choir, football, cross country racing etc.

**The plan has 3 chief elements**

* **Rules** – These are relevant, clear, and concise.
* **Rewards** – a system of rewards is in place to encourage the children to follow the rules.
* **Sanctions** – Children who break a rule will have automatically chosen one of a list of sanctions.

Most importantly children are taught all aspects of the plan and the classroom expectations and rules remain the same for all the children and teachers too. Classroom Support Plans (Stage 1, Continuum of support) will be drawn up to assist children experiencing behaviour difficulties. Pastoral support or, in cases of extreme behavioural difficulties, help from outside agencies will be sought where difficulties persist.

**Consistency**

Consistency of approach by all staff is a cornerstone of the code. To ensure this consistency all teachers have a D.F.L. folder which contains:

* Details of the D.F.L. philosophy
* Copies of the school rules.
* Teaching points for the rules.
* Teaching points on behaviour checks.
* Suspension procedures
* All relevant paperwork
* Records of misbehaviour and actions taken.

The code is explained to new members of staff. Experienced teachers facilitate new teachers to observe them implementing the code in their classrooms. The D.F.L. co-ordinator (Anne Bower) monitors the use of the code by such teachers to ensure consistency especially in regards to sanctions thus ensuring fairness.

All members of staff, teachers, secretary, SNA’s, caretakers and ancillary staff work together to create a harmonious, orderly environment. The school community strives to promote a sense of ownership. This is our school. We take enormous pride in St. Mary’s.

**Preventative Approach**

* Relationships between teachers and pupils
* Routines
* Rules
* Curriculum
* Home / School Link
* Emotional Intelligence
* Reward System

**Relationships between teachers and pupils.**

We, in St. Mary’s, believe that developing positive relationships, based on respect, is the basis for good classroom management. Teachers model such behaviour in their interactions with children and other adults. If pupils are to take responsibility for their own learning they will need structured support at first. Self – control is learned through experiencing the consequences of actions. It is the teacher’s responsibility to help children control themselves and teach them the importance of taking responsibility for their own behaviour, leading ultimately to self – control and respect for others.

**Routines**

Teachers establish routines – the way things happen in the classroom. These routines offer a framework of security in which children can work. This is especially necessary for children with behaviour problems. Classroom Support Plans (Stage 1, Continuum of Support) are drawn up to support children experiencing behaviour problems.

Routines for lining up, entering and exiting the school and movement within the school are agreed among teachers and taught to the children.

**Rules**

Our rules were developed to ensure an orderly environment where high quality learning and teaching can occur. The rules provide clear boundaries. They describe in simple terms how to behave in order to learn well and to develop into mature and responsible individuals.

The rules were drawn up in consultation with the whole school community. They are explained, discussed and taught to the children. Teachers enforce the rules consistently. The rules are displayed in all classrooms and are constantly referred to.

*Classroom Rules:*

1. Be silent and listen to the person speaking
2. Be on time and be prepared for class
3. Do as you are told immediately.
4. Raise your hand and wait quietly for attention.
5. Always do your best and allow others to do the same.
6. Stay seated and be quiet when your teacher is out of the room.
7. Respect everyone and their property.

**Curriculum**

We aim to pre-empt and prevent difficulties by ensuring that the curriculum is relevant to the children’s daily life. Teachers plan to organise and present the curriculum in ways that are stimulating, interesting and relevant. The curriculum is differentiated to match the needs of the children in the class. The process of teaching and learning might need to be differentiated to meet the needs of some children. Teachers use opportunities to reinforce behaviour through the curriculum. Through experiencing success in learning, self – esteem is enhanced. Positive behaviour management is an integral part of curriculum planning.

**Home / School Links**

We, in St. Mary’s, acknowledge that parental involvement is the cornerstone of an effective school discipline policy. Parents were involved in drawing up the original policy. Parents provided feedback and input into subsequent reviews.

To ensure continued positive parental involvement the following strategies are effective.

* Teachers provide parents with regular positive feedback on their child’s behaviour
* Weekly ‘Bonus Stamps’ totals are recorded in the child’s journal.
* Regular positive notes are sent home when children meet targets.
* Effort and achievement are acknowledged across the curriculum.
* Teachers have a welcoming attitude towards parents.
* Informal, friendly encounters are encouraged.
* All teachers work to establish good two way communication.

**Parental Support**

Parents support the school by:

* Maintaining good two way communication with the school.
* Ensuring their child comes to school on time and prepared for the day.
* Ensuring their child wears the school uniform.
* Signing the child’s homework journal which is the usual means of communication between class teacher and parent.
* Ensuring that all homework is done.
* Positively acknowledging their child’s good weekly ‘bonus stamps’ scores
* Contacting the teacher if ‘Bonus Stamps’ scores start to drop.
* Informing the teacher, in confidence, of issues that might impact on their child’s behaviour in school.
* Informing the school if their child is absent.
* Modelling the standards that pupils are asked to respect.

Children should be aware that teachers and parents work together for their good.

**Reward System.**

All children in St. Mary’s are taught that good behaviour will be acknowledged. Our reward system is individual and all children earn ‘Bonus Stamps’ and rewards in measure of their efforts.

Children can earn a maximum of two ‘Bonus Stamps’ daily for choosing to keep the rules. These ‘Bonus Stamps’ are recorded on cards displayed on classroom walls. Each time pupils earn 20 stamps they receive a treat – pencil, book mark, certificate home etc. The cards are numbered. Upon completion of cards children are awarded Bronze, Silver and Gold medals. The Principal awards the medals and the recipients are acknowledged for behaviour that is valued and wanted.

Parents are encouraged to recognise their child’s achievement in keeping the rules and enabling the school to be a happy, harmonious place of learning and teaching.

*Special Awards*

Special awards allow teachers acknowledge examples of kindness, respect, helpfulness, thoughtfulness or special effort. These rewards are used at the teacher’s discretion.

*Star of The Week*

Each teacher chooses a ‘Star of The Week’ and they are acknowledged at a special weekly assembly. Pupils are called forward in front of the school and told the reason why they were chosen that week.

*Student Council*

A student council is in place and working very effectively. There is at least 1 elected representative from each class.

**Responsive Dimension**

* The 2:1 Rule
* Sanctions
* Suspension out of school
* Expulsion

**2:1 Rule**

Teachers strive to draw attention to appropriate behaviour before commenting on inappropriate behaviour. This strategy often has the desired effect of achieving appropriate behaviour.

**Sanctions**

When pupils choose to break a rule they automatically choose one of the range of sanctions. The system of sanctions is taught to all children. They are clearly understood and consistently applied. They are used to help children understand that they have choices about their own behaviour and all choices have consequences.

The sanctions are:

* Immediate
* Focus on behaviour, not on the pupil as a person
* Are perceived as fair.
* Geared to give an opportunity for putting things right.

Afterwards:

* Every day is a fresh start.
* The slate is wiped clean.

*Behaviour Checks – Sanctions:*

* Verbal Warning
* Written Warning Card
* Isolation in Class
* Isolation in Class (Lines sent home)
* Exclusion from Class (sent home during Covid 19 restrictions)
* 2nd Exclusion from Class (sent home during Covid 19 restrictions)
* Suspension.

*Behaviour on School outings / educational trips / representing the school e.g. Football , Cross Country Running , Choir etc*

The standards and rules contained in the code of behaviour apply in any situation where children, although outside the school, are still the responsibility of the school. Children are taught that misbehaviour is such situations is totally unacceptable and will result in them receiving a Behaviour Warning Letter (or higher step if deemed necessary). They might also be excluded for similar trips in the future.

**One Off Incidents of Serious Misbehaviour**

*N.B. Remember to ‘stay calm’, step back and consult others before using these behaviour checks.*

**A) Behaviour Warning Letter**

***These letters are used where 1 sanction is deemed to be insufficient:***

* Aggressive behaviour on the yard
* Disrespect towards a member of staff
* Behaviour which is a risk to health and safety.
* On a trip – not coming immediately when called, disrespect towards other schools
* Being disrespectful in the church
* Chewing gum
* Having a mobile phone (not handed to a teacher)

**B) Behaviour Warning Letter (Identity Based Incident)**

* Identity based name-calling. Repeated offence will be dropped to **Step 5**.

*\* Behaviour Warning Letters should not be overused*

*\* Signed Behaviour Warning Letters are kept in the D.F.L. folder*

*\* There is an amnesty each term*

**C) Instant Step 5***N.B. Consult with another staff member before using!*

***Instant Step 5 is only used for serious one off behaviour, such as:***

* Serious disrespect towards an adult
* Vandalism
* Personal assault on another pupil
* Cyber –bullying (Placing a one-off offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement on a social network site or other public forum where that message, image or statement can be viewed/ repeated by other people)
* Being on the school grounds when they should not be e.g. when suspended or when the school is officially closed.

**D) Instant Step 6**

* Breaking of a ‘No-Blame’ Anti-bullying Contract

**E) Instant Step 7**

***In the following circumstances, the principal and staff have agreed that immediate suspension may be warranted:***

* Leaving the school grounds without permission
* Serious verbal abuse of a member of staff (i.e. repeated use of insulting or foul language)
* Deliberate aggressive, threatening or violent behaviour towards another pupil or member of staff (targeted and sustained)
* Where the continued presence of the pupil in the school at this time constitutes a threat to the safety of pupils or staff of the school or any other person
* Where a pupil is responsible for serious damage to property
* Where the student’s behaviour has had a seriously detrimental effect on the education of the other pupils

**E) During Covid 19 Pandemic:**

During the restrictions due to the Covid 19 pandemic, we have temporarily amended the steps to our code as follows:

* Purposeful coughing, spitting or sneezing on another pupil or staff member will result in an immediate one day suspension for a first offence and a three day suspension for any subsequent offences.
* Pupil on Step 5 or 6 will be sent home as they will not be able to safely complete their Step 5/ Step 6 in another classroom.

**Procedures in relation to immediate suspension**

* A preliminary investigation will be conducted to establish the case for the imposition of the suspension.
* A formal investigation will follow the imposition of the suspension.
* Parents will be notified and arrangements made with them for the pupil to be collected. A child may only go home accompanied by a parent or adult designated by the parents
* We will follow fair procedures in all cases. The procedures in respect of suspension as outlined in NEWB’s Guidelines for schools (11.5 – 11.11) will be adhered to.

**Expulsion**

The Board of Management of St. Mary’s S.N.S. may initiate the expulsion of a pupil in compliance with the provisions of Section 24 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000. The Board will initiate such procedures

* In extreme cases of unacceptable behaviour, where all other possibilities have been exhausted and where fair procedures and due process have been followed.
* Expulsion for a first Offence

There may be exceptional circumstances where the Board of Management forms the opinion that a pupil should be expelled for a first offence. The kind of behaviour that might result in a proposal to expel on the basis of a single breach of the code could include:

* Serious threats of violence against another pupil or a member of staff
* Carrying a weapon which could cause serious harm to another pupil or a member of staff.
* Actual violence or physical assault
* Supplying illegal drugs to other pupils in the school
* Sexual assault

At all times the Board will ensure that fair procedures and those prescribed in the Education Act will be followed when proposing to expel a pupil.

**School Tours and D.F.L**

If a pupil reaches **Step 5 or higher** twice in any given term, they will not be allowed to go on school trips.

There will be an amnesty each term.

Note: Where there is a concern by a class teacher for a pupils’ own safety or for the safety of other pupils if they are taken out of the school grounds, a decision may be made by the principal/ class teacher not to allow a pupil to attend a school trip.

**Recording Behaviour**

**Behaviour Record Sheets (Sanction Sheet)**

Class teachers have a weekly Behaviour Record Sheet on their tables. Incidents of misbehaviour are recorded by noting the rule that was broken. These sheets are kept as a record of pupil’s behaviour.

The Behaviour Record Sheet shows:

* Pupils with good behaviour
* Patterns of misbehaviour allowing teachers target areas of difficulty for some children.
* Highlights absenteeism.

The record for each child is shown to parents at parent / teacher meetings, allowing good behaviour to be acknowledged and misbehaviour highlighted. They heighten teachers’ awareness of patterns of behaviour, allowing them to reinforce patterns of positive behaviour and pre-empt misbehaviour before it becomes serious.

**Suspension Book**

All suspensions are noted in the ‘Suspensions Book’ A record of the behaviour leading up to the suspension/ incident causing an instant Step 7 is recorded and signed by the staff involved.

The Board of Management is notified about the number of suspensions each term.

* **Notification of a child’s absence from school**

- Parents are encouraged, where possible to phone the school if a child is going to be absent.

* When the child returns to school he/she is required to have a note in the homework journal explaining the absence.
* The class teacher will record any absences on the Aladdin System. Parents are then notified of the absence via text.

**Dealing with concerns and complaints**

* We strive to maintain good two way communication between home and school.
* Where parents wish to meet a teacher or the Principal they are requested to write a note in the child’s school journal or phone the school to make an appointment.
* All efforts will be made to deal professionally with concerns or complaints.
* Should a parent wish to deal with the Board of Management, all contact must be made in writing in the first incidence.

**Other relevant policies**

* Anti – Bullying Policy
* Sexual Harassment Policy
* RSE & SPHE Policy
* Child Safeguarding Statement
* Health and Safety Policy

**Review**

To ensure that the Code of Behaviour can maintain the best possible educational environment in the school, it is reviewed and amended annually.

Co-ordinator:

Maura Forde -Principal, co-ordinates the Code of Behaviour.

Ratification.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on

Signed : Date:

Chairperson of the B.O.M.