

# Coláiste Mhuire, Askeaton, Co. Limerick.

## Code of Behaviour

### Introduction

The aim of the Code of Behaviour is to promote good behaviour and respect for all members of the school community. This can only be achieved when the whole school community works in partnership to promote good behaviour, which will involve regular planning and reviewing of the behaviour policy.

### Aims of the Code

- To promote good behaviour and respect for all members of the school community. All members of the school community have the right to be treated with respect and to work in a calm, safe, well-disciplined environment.
- To promote standards of behaviour which reflect the standards and expectations of adult life such as respect, punctuality, consideration, cooperation, application and adaptability.
- To encourage students to take responsibility for their own behaviour and to understand the implications of their behaviour for themselves and others.

### Scope of the Code:

This Code of Behaviour applies to all students during the school day, while on the school grounds and while on school-related activities outside of school.

### Principles of Managing Behaviour

- To create a climate where teaching and learning can flourish.
- To protect the basic rights of safety, learning and respect.
- To set the boundaries in which students can achieve and feel successful.
- To encourage students to behave in a socially appropriate manner and to make acceptable choices.
- To promote positive behaviour.
- To provide a transparent framework for the fair, consistent and equal treatment of all students.

### Fair Procedures and Natural Justice

- Schools are required by law to follow fair procedures in respect of proposals to suspend or expel a student. Any failure on the part of the school Board of Management to ensure that these procedures are observed would breach the school's legal obligations.

- Any investigation should be free of bias. A principal, class or subject teacher, or other staff member involved in the behaviour matter in the first instance, should not be involved in conducting the investigation of the alleged misbehaviour or making a decision to impose a sanction.
- The **absence of bias in the decision maker** would mean for example:
  - The right of reply and to appeal are central to fair decision making.
  - Both the parent/guardian and the student should be facilitated in presenting their views on the allegations made.
  - The Board should take steps to ensure that the procedures and the proceedings are understood by the parent/guardian.
  - It is also preferable that, if at all possible, in terms of the principle of **impartiality in decision making** different people or groups carry out the task of investigating misbehaviour and that of deciding whether a serious sanction is warranted.

### **The School's Plan for Promoting Positive Behaviour**

The key features of a positive approach are:

- To acknowledge improvement in behaviour.
- An emphasis on positive rather than negative statements.
- Regular and sustained use of praise and rewards.
- Teaching students the social skills they need to be successful.
- Redirecting students towards success rather than highlighting their mistakes.

### **Rules**

Rules provide a framework for reasonable and responsible behaviour.

**We expect:**

#### **1. That you come to school every day and arrive on time**

This means

- That you attend every day unless it is absolutely unavoidable.
- That you arrive before 8.45 a.m., and be punctual for all remaining classes.
- That lateness is explained by a note in the journal from parents or guardians.
- That, in accordance with the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, absences must be explained by a note in the journal from parents or guardians. This note must be presented on the day you return to school.

Because

- Time missed is hard to make up.
- Punctuality displays courtesy to your teachers and fellow students and is a life-skill for adulthood and the world of work.
- Good attendance and good timekeeping helps everyone to do well.
- The school must be given a written explanation for absence by the parent/guardian as per Section 18 of the Education Welfare Act 2000.
- The school is responsible for you during school time.

## **2. That you come to school in full uniform, clean and tidy**

This means

- That you wear the school shirt tucked in and the school tie properly tied and visible above the 'V' of the school jumper.
- That you do not wear jewellery except for stud earrings.
- That you do not display visible piercings or visible tattoos.
- That you do not wear non uniform tops, scarves and accessories.

Because

- The school uniform is agreed to by parent/guardians, students and the school authorities.
- We all have a responsibility to maintain the image of the school.
- We must all contribute to and maintain high standards of Health and Safety in the school.

## **3. That you come in properly prepared for your subjects**

This means

- That you go to your locker at official break times only.
- That you have correct books, completed homework, pens, copies and exercises.
- That you bring any special equipment needed e.g. school PE gear, drawing equipment etc.
- That you respect your school journal and use it appropriately.

Because

- You waste class time if you are not properly prepared for class.

- You cannot participate fully without the appropriate books, materials and equipment.
- The journal is a means of communication between school and home.

#### **4. That you co-operate in the classroom and have a positive attitude to classwork, homework and all extra-curricular activities**

This means

- That you listen to your teachers.
- That you do not disturb the class.
- That you always carry your journal and note your homework for each subject.
- That you do your homework each night and hand in assignments on time.
- That you do not eat or drink in class. (except in exceptional circumstances).

Because

- The teacher has a right to teach.
- The other students have a right to learn.
- Your journal helps you to organise your homework so that you will succeed in school.
- Homework builds on the work done in class.

#### **5. That you have respect and consideration for other students**

This means

- That you are fair and honest with everyone.
- That you help other students if they need support e.g. younger students finding a classroom.
- That you do not pick on, victimise or bully others and that you report any incidents of bullying to the Year Head. [Bullying is repeated aggression, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against others. Victimisation is the singling out of a person for cruel or unjust treatment.
- That you do not make offensive remarks.
- That you do not fight or threaten to fight in or out of school.
- That you respect the property of others and that of the school.

Because

- Mutual respect and support helps to make a positive school experience for everyone.
- You would like to be shown respect and consideration by others.
- Bullying and victimisation can cause fear, hurt and misery. We want our school to be a safe space.
- Aggressive behaviour could cause serious injury or accidents.
- Damaging school property is destructive and shows a lack of respect for the school community of which you are a member.

## **6. That you have respect, consideration and good manners in your dealings with teachers, other staff members, visitors and local residents**

This means

- That you cooperate fully and willingly in the classroom.
- That you are not aggressive in behaviour or language.
- That you carry out instructions in a co-operative manner.
- That you show courtesy, consideration and good manners in your behaviour and language.

Because

- Mutual respect and support helps to make a positive school experience for everyone.
- Positive behaviour contributes to a positive school experience for everyone.
- Aggressive behaviour or language has no place, and will not be tolerated, in our school community.

## **7. That you respect the school environment**

This means

- That you contribute to keeping the school clean and free of litter.
- That you place litter in appropriate bins.
- That you do not chew gum or eat crisps or popcorn while in school.
- That you do not bring Tippex or correction fluid to school.
- That cans or bottles of fizzy drinks are not allowed.
- That lunch is eaten in designated locations only.
- That you do not return to the school grounds outside of school hours without the school's explicit permission.

Because

- Everyone benefits from working in a safe, pleasant and clean environment.
- We are all responsible for maintaining a clean school.
- Chewing gum, Tippex and correction fluid are difficult and costly to remove.
- The school is private property.

## **8. That you abide by the school's mobile phone/technology policy**

This means:

- That you keep your mobile phone switched off and out of sight at all times unless otherwise directed by a teacher.
- That you do not bring digital / electronic devices to school unless otherwise directed by a teacher.

Because:

- The Office phone is available if you need to make an essential call or if your parent/guardians need to contact you during school hours.
- Students who contact home via mobile do so without office knowledge and this may become a health and safety risk.
- It is important that students are in a safe environment free from distraction, bullying (through texting).
- Teachers are entitled to teach without interruptions.
- The use of digital video/photos and other recording devices can lead to an invasion of privacy.
- Use of electronic devices during break time can lead to isolation and limit the opportunity for socialisation.
- Use of electronic devices can increase peer pressure to have the latest model.

## **9. That you do not use addictive/intoxicating substances**

This means:

- That you do not use, distribute or sell cigarettes, alcohol, stimulating or illegal drinks/substances/solvents at any time on school campus or during school related activities.

Because:

- The use and sale of addictive substances is illegal and poses a serious Health and Safety concern.

- It is illegal to smoke in all public places under the Public Health (Tobacco Acts).
- The school is responsible for the protection and safety of all the school community.

Note: If anyone is found using or in possession of illegal substances, parent/guardians will be contacted immediately and where deemed necessary, the Gardaí may also be contacted.

## **10. That you do not bring into the school or have on your person objects likely to cause injury or harm.**

This means:

- That you do not bring, or facilitate the bringing into the school campus, or on any school related activity, any object likely to cause injury such as knives, syringes, fireworks, bangers, stink bombs etc.  
This also includes jewellery likely to pose a threat to safety.

Because

- Such objects can present a serious threat to the Health and Safety of the School community.

### **Rewards**

Promoting good behaviour is the main goal of this policy. Rewards have the ability to change behaviour. Examples of rewards are:

- Signal/sign e.g. thumbs up.
- Smile/nod of approval.
- Verbal praise - one to one.
- Explain why a compliment is given- "Good, you have waited your turn to speak".
- Acknowledge/praise outside the classroom.
- Class competition.
- Positive comments on written work.
- The use of merit stickers.
- Written praise to tutor/year head/parent/guardian.
- Record in homework journal.

- Display of students work throughout school.
- Award of a commendation e.g. improved result.
- Public recognition at class/school assemblies when its more than one student.
- Referral of praise to principal/deputy principal.
- Use of school newsletters to give congratulations.
- Certificates for attendance, punctuality and other areas of effort and achievement.
- Prizes.
- Watching a video.

## **CONSEQUENCES (Sanctions)**

Good practice in the use of sanctions ensures that:

- They are a part of a plan to change behaviour i.e. they are transformative responses.
- They are used consistently, proportionately and appropriately.
- Students and parent/guardians know and understand that there are consequences for unacceptable behaviour and that students must take responsibility for their own behaviour.

Thresholds for unacceptable behaviour are:

- Rights being disrespected.
  - Somebody threatening to harm or actually harming another person (including bullying, harassment, discrimination and victimisation).
  - Property threatened, damaged or stolen.
  - Inability to take responsibility for behaviour/actions.
  - Use and/or distribution of illegal substances.
- (Please see substance misuse and bullying and harassment policy).

**The approach to student's inappropriate behaviour is a problem-resolving approach where the teacher and school respond. The following actions are included in the spectrum of the school's behavioural management strategy.**

- Students will be reminded of the class/school rule.
- Students may be directed to work elsewhere in the room.
- Students may be directed to take cool-off time or five minutes to sit quietly and calm down in a quiet area of the room.



- Students may be asked to stay back and work out a solution with their teacher, or fix things up or put things right.
- Teachers may send another student to the office for management support or help of another teacher.
- Parents/guardians may be notified.
- Lunchtime detention.
- After school detention on Thursday.
- Students may be referred to the Care Team or Student Support Team or Counsellor or Chaplain.
- A student Behaviour Plan may be drawn up.
- Restorative practice and peer mediation may be used.
- School community tasks or detention may be undertaken.
- Students may be placed on a Report Card.
- Suspension.
- Expulsion.

*This list is not exhaustive, consequences may be reviewed depending on circumstances and context.*

## **Policies and Procedures for Suspension**

Suspension is defined as:

*Requiring the student to absent himself/herself from the school for a specified, limited period of school days.*

The School will follow fair procedures when proposing to suspend a student. Where a preliminary assessment of the facts confirms serious misbehaviour that could warrant suspension, the following procedure will be observed:

- The student and their parents/guardians will be informed about the complaint.
- Parents/guardians and student will be given an opportunity to respond.
- The student and parents/guardians have the right to be heard.
- The student and parents/guardians have the right to impartiality.
- In the school, fair procedures apply to:
  - The investigation of alleged misbehaviour that may lead to suspension or expulsion.
  - The process of decision-making as to (a) whether the student did engage in the misbehaviour and (b) what sanction to impose.

## **Schools or Colleges established or maintained by an ETB**

The ETB holds the authority to suspend a student. Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board has devolved this authority under Section 31 of the *Vocational Education (Amendment) Act 2001* to the Board of Management of a school. (The education officer or designated person should be informed by the school of the intention to suspend to ensure that legal requirements are being adhered to.)

The Board of Management has the authority to suspend a student. Where this authority is delegated to the Principal, the delegation should be done formally and in writing. **Suspension will be a proportionate response to the behaviour that is causing concern.** In considering whether to suspend a student the Board of Management will be presented with a report prepared by the Principal following a thorough investigation where views of all parties will be elicited containing the following:

- The nature and seriousness of the behaviour.
- The context of the behaviour.
- The impact of the behaviour.
- The interventions tried to date.
- Whether suspension is an appropriate response.
- The possible impact of suspension.

Parents/guardians will be notified by phone and in writing (of the decision to suspend). The letter will contain the following:

- The period of the suspension and the dates on which the suspension will begin and end.
- The reason for the suspension.

Students should not be suspended for more than three days, except in exceptional circumstances where the principal considers that a period of suspension longer than three days is needed in order to achieve a particular objective. If a longer suspension is being proposed by the principal, the matter will be referred to the Board of Management for consideration and approval.

However, the Board of Management can authorise the Principal with the approval of the chairperson of the board, to impose a suspension of up to five days in circumstances where a meeting of the Board cannot be convened.

### **Immediate Suspension**

Where an immediate suspension is considered by the Principal to be warranted for reasons of the safety of the student, other students, staff and others, a preliminary investigation should be conducted to establish the case for the imposition of the suspension. The formal investigation should immediately follow up the imposition of the suspension. No suspension, including an immediate suspension, should be open-ended.

## **Appeals**

The Board of Management should offer an opportunity to appeal a Principal's decision to suspend a student. In the case of decisions made by the Board of Management an appeal can be made to the CE/EO under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998 to Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board where the number of days of suspension reaches twenty days in an academic year.

## **Clean Slate**

When any sanction, including suspension, is completed, a student should be given the opportunity and support for a fresh start. Although a record is kept of the behaviour and any sanction imposed, once the sanction has been completed the school should expect the same behaviour of this student as of all other students.

On return to school following a suspension, a student will meet with the Principal and be placed on a reflective Report Card.

## **Policies and Procedures for Expulsion**

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

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

- The student's behaviour is a persistent cause of significant disruption to the learning of others or to the teaching process.
- The student's continued presence in the school constitutes a real and significant threat to safety.
- The student is responsible for serious damage to property.
- The grounds for expulsion may be similar to the grounds for suspension. In addition to factors such as the degree of seriousness and the persistence of the behaviour, a key difference is that, where expulsion is considered, school authorities have applied interventions according to the Code of Behaviour, and

believe they have exhausted all possibilities for changing the student's behaviour.

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The procedural steps leading to consideration of expulsion are:

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 recommendations and the holding of a hearing
4. Parent/guardians are invited to attend with a minimum of ten days and fair and reasonable time to prepare for the hearing
5. Board of Management deliberation and actions following the hearing
6. Consultations arranged by the Education Welfare Officer
7. Confirmation of the decision to expel

### **Section 29 Appeal**

If the total number of days for which the student has been suspended in the current school year reaches twenty days, the parents/guardians, or a student aged over eighteen years of age, may appeal the suspension under Section 29 of the *Education Act 1998*, as amended by the *Education (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2007*.(when commenced)

At the time when parent/guardians are being formally notified of such a suspension, they and the student should be told about the right to appeal. The appeal must be made in the first instance to the education officer of Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board or designated officer. Where an appeal to the ETB is concluded, parent/guardians, or a student aged over eighteen years, may appeal to the secretary general of the Department of Education and Science.