



St Margaret's National School

Code of Behaviour

St. Margaret's National School is justifiably proud of its excellent record of good behaviour amongst pupils. This record has been achieved through our enlightened system of encouraging the best in our pupils. The parents/guardians, teachers, Principal and the Board of Management all work together to do the best for each child.

Discipline in school is an essential element in the socialisation of children in the formation of their characters and in the process of education. The Board of Management has ultimate responsibility for discipline in the school and must ensure that a fair Code of Good Behaviour and Discipline is applied. With this in mind, we aim to create an ordered and orderly environment in which pupils can, through developing self discipline, feel secure and make progress in all aspects of their development. We also aim to create a positive atmosphere in relation to pupil learning and achievement, and to prevent inappropriate behaviour by promoting positive behaviour in the school and classroom.

A high standard of behaviour requires a strong sense of community within the school and a high level of co-operation amongst staff and between pupils, parents and staff. Every effort will be made to ensure that the discipline policy is implemented in a reasonable, fair and consistent manner.

Aims of the Code:

The aims of the Code of Behaviour of St. Margaret's N.S. are:

- To provide guidance for pupils, teachers and parents on behavioural expectations.
- To provide for the effective and safe operation of the school.
- To develop pupils' self-esteem and to promote positive behaviour.
- To foster the development of a sense of responsibility and self-discipline in pupils based on respect, consideration and tolerance of others.
- To facilitate the education and development of every child.
- To foster caring attitudes to one another and to the environment.
- To enable teachers to teach without disruption.

In devising the Code, the aim has been to ensure that the individuality of each child is accommodated while acknowledging the right of each child to education in a disruption free environment.

Every effort will be made by all member of staff to adopt a positive attitude to the question of behaviour in the school. The Code offers a framework within which positive techniques of motivation and encouragement are utilized by teachers.

The overall responsibility for discipline within th school rests with the Principal. Each teacher has responsibility for the maintenance of discipline in his/her classroom while sharing a common responsibility for good order within the school.

St. Margaret's National School needs the support of parents in order to meet legitimate expectations with regard to good behaviour and discipline. Parents can co-operate with the school by encouraging their children to abide by the school rules, by visiting the school when requested to do so by the Principal and by ensuring that homework is allocated due time and effort by the child. Parents play a crucial role in shaping the attitudes which produce good behaviour in school.

Implementation:

Every member of the school community has a role to play in the implementation of the Code of Behaviour. Rules will be kept to a minimum, emphasis will be placed on positive behaviour and will be applied in a fair and consistent manner, with due regard to the age of the pupils and to individual difference. Good behaviour will be encouraged and rewarded. Where difficulties arise, parents will be contacted at an early stage.

The Rights of Pupils, Teachers, Staff and Parents:

St. Margaret's National School's expected standards of behaviour express the kinds of behaviour and relationships that will create a positive environment for teaching and learning. Central to this is the expectation that all members of the school community behave in ways that show respect for others and that they have an understanding of their rights and responsibilities in relation to the Code of Behaviour.

Pupils' Rights:

Pupils have the right:

- To be educated in a safe, happy and secure environment
- To grow intellectually, emotionally, morally, spiritually and physically with an understanding of special needs and difference
- To be treated as an individual with due respect and regard for others within the school community
- To be listened to
- To express their emotions, doubts and beliefs
- To be free for all forms of abuse, whether physical, emotional, mental or sexual.
- To receive information about topics and concerns affecting their lives including information on the Code of Behaviour.

Teachers' Rights:

Teachers have the right:

- To educate in an environment free from disruption
- To be respected and held in proper esteem
- To full and open communication with parents
- To information on the pupil, their family background and access to parents where necessary
- To voice concerns about the pupil's safety, behaviour and academic progress
- To expect backup, support and co-operation from parents and other members of staff for their work
- To confidentiality
- To be listened to
- To appeal to a higher authority e.g. the Board of Management, Department of Education, INTO
- To receive adequate facilities and resources appropriate to their teaching duties.

Staff Rights:

Staff have the right:

- To work in an environment free from disruption
- To be respected and held in proper esteem
- To voice concerns about the pupil's safety and behaviour
- To expect backup, support and co-operation from parents and other members of staff for their work
- To confidentiality
- To be listened to
- To be appeal to a higher authority e.g. the Board of Management, Department of Education, Trade Union
- To receive adequate facilities and resources appropriate to their duties.

Parents' Rights:

Parents have the right:

- To informative communication with and access to the Teacher/Principal
- To respect, understanding and confidentiality
- To updates on the progress of the pupil/s
- To be listened to
- To be consulted about disciplinary action at an early stage
- To appeal to a higher authority e.g. the Board of Management, Department of Education.
- To have access to the Code of Behaviour of the school.

Responsibilities fo Pupils, Teachers, Staff and Parents:**Pupils' Responsibilities:**

Pupils are responsible for:

- Their class work and homework.
- Knowing and complying with school and class rules
- Their behaviour in class and on the school premises

- Their belongings
- Their classroom
- School property
- Their environment
- Playing safely
- Not excluding others from their games
- Helping and caring for others, in particular the younger pupils in the school
- Behaving in accordance with the Code of Behaviour at all times including when representing the school and on school outings.

Teachers' responsibilities:

Teachers are responsible for:

- The pupils in their care
- Creating a positive atmosphere/environment for learning
- Being firm and fair
- Promoting a culture and practice of equality which values all children equally
- Being prepared for class work
- Giving attention to all pupils
- Communicating with parents on issues concerning their child's learning and behaviour
- Having positive expectations for pupils
- Ensuring opportunities for disruption are minimised
- Assigning, checking and correcting homework in accordance with the Homework Policy
- Informing pupils what is expected from them in terms of behaviour.

Staff Responsibilities:

Staff are responsible for:

- The pupils in their care
- Assisting in the creation of a positive atmosphere, culture and environment for learning.
- Participating in the culture and practice of equality which values all children equally
- Having positive expectations for pupils.

Parents' Responsibilities:

Parents are responsible for:

- Providing firm guidance and positive role models to pupils
- Pupil's behaviour in school
- Becoming involved in their child's learning
- Ensuring homework is completed
- Ensuring pupils come on time to school
- Ensuring pupils come prepared for school with pencils, books, etc.
- Ensuring pupils have had adequate rest and nourishment
- Keeping in touch with school about all aspects of pupil's learning, progress and behaviour
- Communicating to school/teacher any problems which might affect pupil's learning
- Ensuring pupils comply with all school policies

Pupils with Special Educational Needs:

While all pupils in the school are subject to the school's Code of Behaviour, some pupils come to school with special educational needs. Staff at St Margaret's National School have an appreciation and awareness of these complex and individual needs. These needs are taken into account during the implementation of the school's Code of Behaviour. Where a pupil with special needs is in breach of the school's Code of Behaviour the teachers will use their professional judgment in relation to regularity and level of sanctions. While teachers must be seen to be fair in the eyes of other pupils who may have exhibited the same type of misdemeanours, they may also show leniency in relation to pupils with specific learning/behavioural difficulties. Parents of these pupils will be kept informed of their child's behaviour on a regular basis and may be requested to work with the school in devising effective strategies to help the pupil to improve his/her behaviour. The devising of such strategies may also entail contacting and meeting with relevant out of school agencies.

General Guidelines for Positive Behaviour:

- Pupils are expected to treat all adults and fellow pupils with respect and courtesy at all times. Behaviour that interferes with the rights of others to learn and to feel safe is unacceptable.
- Pupils will be encouraged to develop and nurture their own self-esteem and learn to accept responsibility for their own actions.
- Pupils are expected to show respect for all school property and to keep the school environment clean and litter free
- Pupils are expected to take pride in their appearance, to have all books and required materials and to be in the right place at the right time
- Pupils are expected to obey a teacher's instructions, to work to the best of their ability and to present assignments neatly
- Pupils are expected to be honest and fair in their dealings with their fellow pupils and teachers
- Pupils are expected to attend every day unless there is a genuine reason for absence, in which case the school must be informed in writing, stating the reason for absence.

Affirming Positive Behaviour:

Positive reinforcement of good behaviour leads to better self-discipline and we place a greater emphasis on rewards and incentives than on sanctions.

Strategies/Incentives:

- A quiet word or gesture to show approval
- A comment on a child's exercise book
- A visit to another class or the Principal for commendation
- Praise in front of class group
- Individual class merit awards, points awards or award stamps
- Delegating some special responsibility or privilege
- Written or verbal communication with parent.

Strategies for promoting positive behaviour:

The following is a list of some **whole school strategies**:

- Exploring with pupils their rights and responsibilities
- Employing a variety of age appropriate strategies within the classroom setting that take into account the needs of all pupils
- Using the curriculum, in particular SPHE, we enable the pupils to understand why the code is important and their part in making it work. We also enable them to see that the code works in a fair way
- Focusing on and promoting specific themes within the curriculum e.g. good manners, friendship, buddy systems, relationships and how pupils treat each other
- Using reward systems both in a whole school and classroom setting (see below)
- Setting standards for pupil behaviour that incorporate high expectations and ensuring that they are clear, consistent and widely understood
- Promoting positive relationships with parents to encourage effective learning and good behaviour
- Adults modelling the behaviour that is expected from pupils
- Engaging in positive every interactions between staff and pupils
- Maintaining good school and class routines
- Helping pupils themselves to recognise and affirm good learning behaviour
- Recognising and giving positive feedback about behaviour
- Giving pupils' responsibility in daily activities in the school
- Involving pupils in the consultative process in the development of the Code of Behaviour
- Setting clear boundaries and rules for pupils
- Involving pupils in the preparation of the school rules
- Involving pupils in the preparation of classroom rules and class charters at the beginning of each school year
- Using displays throughout the school to visually reinforce good behaviour

Classroom strategies for encouraging good behaviour:

- Golden Rules (see below)
- Circle time
- Pupils are involved in setting up class charters based on school rules and understand why these rules need to be enforced
- Creating time to listen and discuss issues with pupils
- Teaching of rules and responsibilities
- Reinforcement of rules
- Class routines
- Teaching of good manners
- Individual behaviour plan
- Individual reward systems
- home/school behaviour contract

Reward Systems for good behaviour:

Whole School:

- Praise
- Encouragement
- Value cards across whole school
- Monthly assemblies

Class:

- Praise
- Encouragement
- Value Cards
- Homework passes
- Golden Time (Activity session which takes place in all classes usually on Friday afternoon)
- Reward stickers, stars and stamps
- Best table
- Marble Jar
- Individual reward systems
- Note in journals
- Positive note home
- Individual reinforcers

Whole School and Classroom Routines:

The following is a list of some of the routines that the pupils are taught and or reminded of at the beginning of each school year and during the school year if the need arises.

Entering school/classroom each morning:

- Entering the school grounds
- Lining up
- Entering the building in the morning
- Hanging up coats in classroom
- Storing away school bags and lunch boxes
- Roll-call
- Getting chairs reading
- Explaining absences
- First task of the day
- Speaking to teacher - notes from home, money, other issues
- Latecomers
- Morning activity time in classrooms

Seating arrangements:

- Moving places regularly throughout the year
- Moving seats for various subject areas
- Use of seating in specific areas
- Moving seats to improve concentration, work flow

Break Times:

- Eating before going to yard - no food on yard
- No movement in classroom when eating or on wet days
- Routine for leaving class for yard
- Routine for rainy days - remain in seat
- Routine for entering classroom after break - line up quietly, return to classroom quietly and straight to our assigned seats

Leaving the classroom:

- Leaving the classroom to go on a message in pairs
- Routine for visiting the office
- Fire drills
- Leaving the class for learning support or resource
- Lining up procedures which may include who lines up first - class leader, table by table, with or without partners

End of day:

- Tidying up individual areas and packing bags
- Tidying up the classroom
- Retrieving coats/other belongings stored away
- Lining up to leave the class
- Pupils leave school via the school gate and wait outside beside parents upon collection

Golden Rules:

We are gentle

We don't hurt others.

We are kind and helpful

We don't hurt anybody's feelings

We listen

We don't interrupt

We are honest

We don't cover up the truth

We work hard

We don't waste our own or others' time

We look after property

We don't waste or damage things.

Reference: 'Quality Circle Time in the Primary Classroom', Volume 1, Jenny Mosley, LDA, 1996.

Kind hands, kind feet, kind words, sharing, taking turns, being polite and gentle, we are all friends, we all play and work together, we listen to teacher, smile, share a smile and be happy.

Bullying:

Please see school's Bí Cinéalta Policy.

Responding to Inappropriate Behaviour:

In St Margaret's National School a whole school approach is used in response to inappropriate behaviour. Elements of this approach include the use of restorative practice questions, a problem-solving approach when dealing with inappropriate behaviour, agreed ways of describing behaviour, a ladder of intervention, agreed arrangements for recording behaviour and the use of sanctions.

Restorative Practice Questions and Problem Solving Approach:

This is an approach used by the teacher and/or school to respond to the unwanted behaviour using some or all of the following steps, not necessarily in the order outlined below.

- Gather information. (Use restorative questions) Try to understand the context and the factors that may be affecting behaviour.
- Generate ideas about possible solutions to take account of the reasons why it may be happening.
- Decide and agree on specific strategies
- Implement the agreed strategy consistently
- Review progress: evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the intervention
- Throughout, keep the relationship with the pupil as positive as possible; involve the pupil and parent.

Examples of minor, serious and gross misbehaviours:

Minor Misbehaviours:

- Breaking the agreed class rules, including during lunchtime
- Interrupting classwork which prevents others from learning
- Leaving seat without permission at lunch time
- Running in school building
- Not following recycling code
- Leaving litter around the school
- Not responding to the school bell in a timely manner
- Failing to line up correctly when requested to do so
- Time delaying and chatting in toilets
- Being discourteous and unmannerly
- Not completing homework without good reason
- Isolated acts of disrespect/unkindness to any member of staff/pupil/parent/visitor
- Isolated instances of being unable to abide by accepted conventions due to special educational/behavioural needs

Serious Misbehaviours:

- Regular acts of disrespect/unkindness to any member of the school community
- Regular instances of speaking out of turn, interrupting others and being inattentive
- Regularly preventing others from learning
- Deliberately refusing to co-operate with instructions
- Using a mobile phone during school hours
- Vandalism of school property
- Answering back to any staff member/pupil/parent/visitor
- Consistently not completing homework without good reason (Age appropriate)
- Constantly disruptive in class
- Persistent minor misbehaviours
- Telling lies (age appropriate)
- Stealing
- Deliberately endangering self or fellow pupils during all school activities
- Wilful damage to the property of another child/children
- Frequenting school premises after school hours without appropriate permission
- Leaving school premises during school day without appropriate permission
- Using unacceptable language
- Verbal abuse or discriminatory remarks
- Bringing weapons to school or using objects as weapons in school e.g. knives of any form, catapults, guns of any form
- Inappropriate touching and displaying of body parts (age appropriate)

Gross Misbehaviours:

- Aggressive, threatening or violent behaviour towards any staff member/pupil/parent/visitor
- Any act of assault against any staff member/pupil/parent/visitor
- Wilful damage to property

Ladder of Intervention:

As part of the whole school approach, there is an agreed ladder of intervention which the Principal and teachers use in response to inappropriate behaviour. The three levels at which intervention may take place are outlined below.

Tier 1 - Support for all: Most pupils behave appropriately, with the help of consistent and clear rules and routines in class and in school. Occasional, minor misbehaviour should be attended to routinely and effectively through the skill of the classroom teacher.

Tier 2 - Support for Some Pupils (Targeted Interventions) - Some pupils need more active intervention to help them to manage their behaviour. Without additional help, they may be at risk of failing behaviourally, socially and educationally. Additional inputs or interventions may include:

- Referral to another teacher or adult who can work with the pupil
- Involving the Pastoral Care Team (In School Leadership Team)
- Setting targets for behaviour and monitoring them with the pupil in a supportive way

- Behaviour contracts.

Tier 3 - Specialised support for a small minority of pupils (Intensive Interventions): A small minority of pupils may show particularly challenging behaviour. They may have great difficulty in learning new behaviour and may not respond to low-level interventions. These pupils will need a sustained and systematic response involving the important adults in their lives, in school and at home. The Principal and staff, in so far as possible, will build good links with any local support services that may be able to assist in responding to the needs of a pupil with behavioural difficulties.

Discouraging Misbehaviour:

The purpose of sanctions and other strategies is to promote positive behaviour and discourage misbehaviours. Sanctions will be applied according to the gravity of the misbehaviour, with due regard to age and emotional development.

The following is a list of sanctions that are used not necessarily in the order outlined below.

- Verbal reprimand, in private where practicable, to include reasoning and advising how to improve
- Misbehaviours at break time may result in 'Time Out' in the yard
- Withdrawal of privileges, for example, golden time, football at yard time, extra yard time reward. Parents may be informed depending on the seriousness of the sanction.
- A pupil will not be deprived of access to a curricular area as a sanction. However, if a pupil is misbehaving during a particular lesson they may be given a cooling off period in which they are removed from the lesson.
- The pupil is reprimanded and/or given 'Time Out' by being separated from peers in the classroom, either changing places with another pupil or moving to an isolated desk. During this time they will still partake in class work.
- The pupil may be removed to a separate place for a 'cool down' period. The pupil may be given class work during this time and/or be encouraged to reflect on their behaviour and/or write about it.
- In the case of serious incidents a pupil may be removed from their class for a longer period.
- Pupil apologises sincerely (in writing where appropriate).
- Parents/guardians will generally be informed by letter or by a note in homework diary. Parents will be informed as soon as it is perceived that difficulties are developing with regard to their child's behaviour.
- Detention at lunch time may be used for serious misbehaviours in consultation with the Principal. The pupil will be given time to eat their lunch, go to the toilet and will be supervised at all times. Parents will be informed of detention.
- Pupils are sent to the Principal for continually occurring or serious misbehaviours.
- Personal contact may be made with parents by the teacher and/or Principal in the form of a letter or a phone call.
- Parents may be requested to meet with the teacher and/or Principal.

- Referral made by Principal to the Chairperson of the Board of Management to arrange a meeting between them and the parents.
- Referral to the Board of Management
- In the event of a serious incident of misbehaviour or where a pupil is continuously disruptive he/she may be suspended by the Principal/Board of Management for a minor fixed period (one to three school days).
- Expulsion.

Recording Inappropriate Behaviour:

Inappropriate behaviour by a pupil or pupils may be recorded at each class level. Incidents of serious misbehaviour during break times must be reported by the teacher on yard duty or Special Needs Assistant (SNA) to the class teacher at the end of yard time. Depending on the nature of the misbehaviour these records may include a description of the behaviour, the context of the behaviour, action taken and sanctions incurred, interventions tried if any and how the pupil has responded to them, and copies of any correspondence with parents. These records will be stored in a class folder which will be returned to the Principal at the end of each school year and filed appropriately.

The Principal will record and retain all records of suspension.

Suspension:

Suspension is defined as 'requiring the pupil to absent himself/herself from the school for a specified, limited period of school days'. During the period of a suspension, the pupil retains their place in the school.

Grounds for Suspension:

- The pupil's behaviour has had a seriously detrimental effect on the education of other pupils.
- The pupil's continued presence in the school at this time constitutes a threat to safety.
- The pupil is responsible for serious damage to property.
- A single incident of serious misbehaviour may be grounds for suspension.

Procedures for Suspension:

Where a preliminary assessment of the facts confirms serious misbehaviour that could warrant suspension, the school will observe the following procedures:

- The pupil and their parents will be informed about the complaint, that it will be investigated and that it may result in suspension. Parents will be informed in writing and where practical by phone.
- The parents and pupil will be given an opportunity to meet with the Principal to discuss the incident and respond before any sanction is imposed.
- If a pupil and their parents fail to attend a meeting, the Principal will inform them in writing advising them of the gravity of the matter, the importance of attending a rescheduled meeting, and failing that, the duty of the school authorities to make a decision to respond to the negative behaviour.
- Any decision to suspend will be given in writing to the parents.

Immediate Suspension:

In exceptional circumstances, the Principal and Board of Management may consider an immediate suspension to be necessary where the continued presence of the pupil in the school at the time would represent a serious threat to the safety of pupils or staff of the school, or any other person. Where an immediate suspension is considered by the Principal to be warranted for reasons of the safety of the pupil, other pupils, staff or others, a preliminary investigation will be conducted to establish the case for the imposition of the suspension. The formal investigation will immediately follow the imposition of the suspension. All of the conditions for suspension apply to immediate suspension. No suspension, including an immediate suspension, will be open-ended. In the case of an immediate suspension, parents will be notified and arrangements will be made with them for the pupil to be collected. The school will have regard to its duty of care for the pupil. In no circumstances will a pupil be sent home from school with first notifying parents.

Appealing a Suspension:

The Board of Management has placed a ceiling of three days on any one period of suspension imposed by it. The Board will formally review any proposal to suspend a student, where the suspension would bring the number of days for which the student has been suspended in the current school year to twenty days or more. Any such suspension is subject to appeal under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998.

Expulsion:

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

The authority to expel a student is reserved to the Board of Management.

Grounds for Expulsion

Expulsion of a student is a very serious step, and one that will only be taken by the Board of Management in extreme cases of unacceptable behaviour. A proposal to expel a student requires serious grounds such as:

- 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 the seriousness and the persistence of the behaviour, a key difference is that, where expulsion is considered, the Board of Management will have tried a series of other interventions, and believe they have exhausted all possibilities for changing the student's 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
- Actual violence or physical assault
- Supplying illegal drugs to other students in the school
- Sexual assault.

Procedures for expulsion:

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 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.

It is a matter for the Board of Management to decide which of the tasks involved in these procedural steps requires separate meetings and which tasks can be accomplished together in a single meeting, consistent with giving parents due notice of meetings and a fair and reasonable time to prepare for a Board hearing. Steps 1 to 6 as outlined above and detailed in 'Developing a Code of Behaviour - Guidelines for Schools', issued by the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) Pages 83 - 86 will be followed. In the event of an appeal the appeals process under section 29 of the Education Act 1998 will be followed.

Review of use of Expulsion:

The Board of Management will review the use of expulsion in the school at regular intervals to ensure that its use is consistent with school policies, that patterns of use are examined to identify factors that may be influencing behaviour in the school and to ensure that expulsion is used appropriately.

Implementing and Communicating the Code:

Parents will be provided with a copy of the Code of Behaviour prior to registering their child in the New Pupil Parents' Information pack and at the new Infants Induction meeting held annually. Time will be allocated at the meeting for answering any queries that parents may have concerning the Code of Behaviour. The code will be communicated to the school community in a variety of ways including:

- Through the New Pupil Information Pack for new parents and incoming pupils
- On the school website
- At Information Meetings for parents
- In the school newsletter
- At Staff Meetings.

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure continued success and effective implementation.

Ratified and accepted by the Board of Management in September 2015.

