

ST. PATRICK'S BOYS' NATIONAL SCHOOL

# School Policy Document

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## Code of Behaviour



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Mission Statement

The aim of St. Patrick's Boy's National School is to ensure that the individuality of each child is accommodated, acknowledging that each child is unique, while also acknowledging the right of each child to education in a safe and relatively disruption free environment. We recognise that each child has diverse talents and gifts. Our aim is identify, encourage and develop these.

St. Patrick's Boy's National School is a Roman Catholic School (which is established in connection with the Minister for Education and Skills) and aims at promoting the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the person of the student: intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual, including a living relationship with God and other people. The school promotes a philosophy of life inspired by God and the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

### The Spirit of the Code

As children of God we will work together in a spirit of mutual love and respect. Children who come to the school expect and deserve to be happy, loved, cared for and protected from harm. In every human endeavour difficulties and conflict arise. All members of the school community should be ready and willing to use respectful ways to resolve difficulties and conflict. Forgiveness is at the heart of the Christian message. Our code of behaviour will require that once difficulties have been resolved that we will be ready to forgive each other and move forward, leaving in the past what belongs in the past. We will of course keep appropriate records of incidents and outcomes but these will be used in a spirit of learning from the past and not in a spirit of retribution.

This code was developed through joint consultation with Staff, Students and the Parent body and with reference to all current documentation in this area.

### Guiding Principles

A high standard of behaviour requires a strong sense of community within the school and a high level of cooperation, courtesy and good manners among and between staff, students and parents.

This code of behaviour gives priority to promoting, affirming and rewarding good behaviour.

St. Patrick's BNS may use our Positive Behaviour (PBL) for Learning system, SALT programme or other systems to support it's Code of Behaviour.

The overall responsibility for discipline in the school rests with the principal.

Each teacher has responsibility for maintaining discipline within his/her class room, while sharing a common responsibility for good order within the school.

### Responsibilities of Students

Every Student is expected to:

- participate in all school activities to the best of his ability; this includes appreciating and applauding as well as actively performing
- respect the ethos of the school
- do his best to learn and to allow others to do likewise

- be diligent and work to the best of his ability
- treat all other students, staff and visitors with respect
- speak in respectful language to everyone he meets in the course of his day
- include other children in their games so that no child will ever be made to feel left out
- attend at school regularly and be punctual each day
- prepare well for school in terms of uniform, homework and requisites
- show respect for the property of the school, other children's and their own belongings

The following behaviour will not be tolerated:

- physical aggression in any form
- engaging in name calling or using nick names which are hurtful or demeaning. Derogatory terms for groups of people based on race, physical features, address, home or origin are particularly reprehensible
- temper tantrums; the school's response will depend on the age, maturity, additional needs of the child and may involve seeking the advice of the school's Psychologist
- use of mobile phones
- Bringing weapons to school, or any other items which are likely to pose a health and safety risk to students or staff
- bullying

### **Anti-Bullying Policy**

Bullying is defined as repeated aggression, verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against others in a systematic or ongoing way.

Bullying will not be tolerated and will be treated as serious or gross misbehaviour.

Cyber Bullying will not be tolerated and will be treated as serious or gross misbehaviour.

Less obvious intimidation of a child or children by another child or children will require a sensitive approach. The school will endeavour to create an atmosphere of friendliness and tolerance where incidents of bullying are unlikely to occur. However staff will be vigilant at all times to ensure that any attempted bullying is stopped as early as possible.

The following measures are intended to address this issue:

Children will be taught to tell another adult of their worries, anxieties and fears. The adult in question may be a teacher, another member of staff (secretary etc.) parent or guardian etc.

School staff will listen sympathetically to any child expressing worry or anxiety either on their own behalf or on behalf of another child.

School staff will also listen sympathetically to any adult who acts as spokesperson for the child - in many cases of anxiety and especially in young children the child will not be adequately able to articulate the problem.

All incidents of possible insidious bullying will be investigated and discussed with the child's parent where appropriate.

If necessary the "victim" will be referred for appropriate counselling help

Children who are bullying are frequently in need of care also.

Where a child is found to be bullying or attempting to bully another:

1. all necessary steps will be taken to ensure that the bullying behaviour stops
2. the effects of this behaviour on other children will be explained to him.
3. attempts will be made to find out why he resorted to this behaviour and these causes addressed where possible. Psychological counselling will be sought if necessary
4. appropriate sanctions will be applied.

### **The Responsibilities of Parents/Guardians are:**

- to show respect to others
- to be courteous and fair
- to ensure their children attend school regularly and punctually
- to encourage their children to do their best and to take responsibility for their work
- to help their children with homework and ensure that it is completed
- to ensure their children have the necessary books and materials for school
- to engage with the school in a common effort to support their child's learning and behaviour
- to attend meetings at the school if requested
- to support the Code of Behaviour
- to deal with their own child's bad behaviour
- to uphold the ethos of the school

### **The Responsibilities of School Staff are:**

- as highly skilled professionals, to work to the norms of best practice
- to show respect to everyone, including themselves
- to be courteous, consistent and fair
- to prepare their work and create engaging learning situations
- to be on time for work
- to recognise good work and behaviour
- to deal with bad behaviour
- to listen at appropriate times to students' explanations for their behaviour
- to implement the code of behaviour
- to be ready to listen to any child's concerns or anxieties about themselves or another child
- to be available at an appropriate time to any parent/guardian who wishes to discuss the welfare of their child
- to provide a clean, safe and well equipped school
- to uphold the ethos of the school

The school welcomes children with special needs. We expect that everybody in the school community will recognise their right to an appropriate education in an inclusive atmosphere. We expect that their dignity will be respected at all times., Sometimes children with special needs will need extra help and support to meet the behavioural standards that apply in the school and we will work with the child and his parents to ensure that he understands what is expected of him.

### **Recognition and Reward**

Good behaviour and genuine effort to work will be rewarded in many ways throughout the school day:

- approval by Teacher - "Good Boy", - "Well done"
- comment on work -

- praise to Parents:-verbally or in writing
- by gesture - thumbs up, handshake or other means such as stars, points etc
- approval from peers - a clap or similar
- praise from another teacher or Principal
- recognition from other classes - show your work/trophy/reward to the class next door
- privileges - homework vouchers, "messenger of the day"
- student of the week - formal recognition of good behaviour and effort - a badge is awarded weekly in each class from 3<sup>rd</sup> upwards and 'Students of the Week' are inscribed in a "Roll of Honour".
- St. Patrick's BNS, may use PBL, SALT or other systems to support it's Code of Behaviour and may use these or other system to communicate how sanctions are used to help students.

## **Sanctions**

The following means will be used to show disapproval of unacceptable behaviour:

- Reasoning with the student
- Reprimand ((including advice on how to improve)
- Temporary separation from peers
- Detention during breaks
- Prescribing additional work
- Referral to the Principal
- Communication with Parents:
  - a) note home from class teacher to be signed and returned/telephone call to parent
  - b) if not resolved, parents are asked to meet class teacher
  - c) if still not resolved, Principal to be involved
- Time out both formal and informal
  - Formal (as part of agreed behaviour management plan)
  - Informal (to allow a "cooling off" period for an over excited child)

"Time Out" may take place in another class.
- All incidents where a child is (a) separated from peers for longer than 10 mins (b) takes "time-out" in another classroom (c) referred to Principal, should be recorded in Incident Book.
- Separation from peers should occur in the context which gave rise to the incident i.e. within classroom for classroom incidents within playground for playground incidents.
- Detention after school until 3.15pm - written parental consent will be required
- Suspension
- Expulsion

## **Suspension and Expulsion**

(The following has been adapted from *Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for schools* published by NEWB, the National Educational Welfare Board)

### **Suspension**

For the purpose of this Code of Behaviour, suspension is defined as requiring the student to absent himself from the school for a specified, limited period of school days.

During the period of a suspension, the student retains his place in the school.

### **Authority to suspend**

The Board of Management of a recognised school has the authority to suspend a student. The B.O.M. has delegated the authority to suspend a pupil for a maximum of three days on any one occasion or five school days cumulatively in a school year to the school Principal.

The Principal will report each and every suspension to the B.O.M. outlining the circumstances that gave rise to the suspension and outlining how the pupil and his parents were given the right to respond to the complaint that gave rise to the suspension before the suspension was imposed.

In exceptional circumstances where a prolonged period of suspension is being considered, subject to a decision of the BOM, and a BOM cannot be convened more quickly, the Principal, in consultation with the Chairperson, may suspend a pupil for a period of five days.

Any decision of the Principal to suspend a pupil must provide the student and his parents with due process and an opportunity to reply.

### **The grounds for suspension:**

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

- the student's behaviour has had a seriously detrimental effect on the education of other students
- the student's continued presence in the school at this time constitutes a threat to safety
- the student is responsible for serious damage to property.

A single incident of serious misconduct may be grounds for suspension.

### **Determining the appropriateness of suspending a student**

Where the purpose of a proposed suspension is clearly identified, and that purpose cannot be achieved in any other way, suspension can have value.

Suspensions can provide a respite for staff and the student, give the student time to reflect on the link between their action and its consequences and give staff time to plan ways of helping the student to change unacceptable behaviour.

However, suspension can be counter-productive if used without a clear rationale or without measuring its impact and value. School management should consider the risk of any unwanted

outcomes from suspension, such as an increased sense of alienation from school that could lead to a cycle of behavioural and academic problems.

### **Factors to be considered before suspending a student**

The nature and seriousness of the behaviour:-

- What is the precise description of the behaviour?
- How persistent has the unacceptable behaviour been?
- Has the problem behaviour escalated, in spite of the interventions tried?

### **The Context of the Behaviour**

- What are the circumstances of the incidents of serious misbehaviour (e.g. in class, in a particular teacher's class, in the yard, in a group)?
- What factors may have triggered incidents of serious misbehaviour (e.g. bullying, cultural or family factors)?
- What is the age, stage of development and cognitive ability of the student?
- Are there any factors that may be associated with the behaviour (e.g. particular home circumstances, special educational needs)?

### **The Impact of the Behaviour**

- How are other students and staff affected by the student's behaviour?
- What is the impact of the behaviour on the teaching and learning of the class?
- Does the behaviour have a particular or greater impact on some students or teachers?
- Does the student understand the impact of their behaviour on others?

### **The Interventions tried to date**

- What interventions have been tried? Over what period?
- How have the interventions been recorded and monitored?
- What has been the result of those interventions?
- Have the parents been involved in finding a solution to the problem behaviour?
- Has the intervention of NEPS or other psychological assessment or counselling been sought, where appropriate?
- Are any other interventions such as peer mediation, restorative justice approaches or family conferencing available?
- Is the student or parent involved with any support service and has this agency or support service been asked for help in solving this problem?
- Has any other agency been asked for assistance (e.g. Child Guidance Clinic, Child and Adolescent services)?

### **Whether suspension is a proportionate response**

- Does the student's behaviour warrant suspension?

- Is the standard being applied to judging the behaviour the same as the standard applied to the behaviour of any other student?

### **The Possible impact of suspension**

- Will suspension allow additional or alternative interventions to be made?
- Will suspension help the student to change the inappropriate behaviour?
- How will suspension help teachers or other students affected by the behaviour?
- Will suspension exacerbate any educational vulnerability of the student?

### **Suspension as part of a behaviour management plan**

Suspension should be part of an agreed plan to address the student's behaviour. The suspension should:

- enable the school to set behavioural goals with the student and their parents
- give school staff an opportunity to plan other interventions
- impress on a student and their parents the seriousness of the behaviour.

### **Forms of suspension**

**Immediate suspension** In exceptional circumstances, the Principal may consider an immediate suspension to be necessary where the continued presence of the student in the school at the time would represent a serious threat to the safety of students or staff of the school, or any other person. Fair procedures must still be applied.

### **Inappropriate use of suspension**

Students should not usually be suspended for:

- poor academic performance
- poor attendance or lateness
- minor breaches of the code of behaviour.

However, any behaviour that is persistently disruptive to learning or potentially dangerous can be a serious matter. Behaviour must be examined in context to understand both the behaviour itself and the response or sanction that is most appropriate.

**Rolling suspension** A student will not be suspended again shortly after they return to school unless:

- they engage in serious misbehaviour that warrants suspension and
- fair procedures are observed in full and
- the standard applied to judging the behaviour is the same as the standard applied to the behaviour of any other student.

### **Informal or unacknowledged suspension**

Exclusion of a student for part of the school day, as a sanction, or asking parents to keep a child from school, as a sanction, is a suspension. Any exclusion imposed by the school is a suspension, and should follow these guidelines relating to suspension.

**Open-ended suspension** Students will not be suspended for an indefinite period.

## **Procedures in respect of suspension**

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

- inform the student and their parents about the complaint
- give parents and student an opportunity to respond.

### **Inform the student and parents**

Let the student and their parents know about the complaint, how it will be investigated, and that it could result in suspension.

Parents may be informed by phone or in writing, depending on the seriousness of the matter. Informing parents in writing has the benefit of ensuring that there is a formal and permanent record of having let parents know. It also ensures that parents are clear about what their son is alleged to have done. It serves the important function of underlining to parents the seriousness with which the school views the alleged misbehaviour.

### **Give an opportunity to respond**

Parents and student will be given an opportunity to respond before a decision is made and before any sanction is imposed. Parents and pupil will have the opportunity to discuss the matter privately before meeting with the school Principal or Board of Management, which ever applies.

A meeting with the student and their parents provides an opportunity for them to give their side of the story and to ask questions about the evidence of serious misbehaviour, especially where there is a dispute about the facts. It may also be an opportunity for parents to make their case for lessening the sanction, and for the school to explore with parents how best to address the student's behaviour. If a student and their parents fail to attend a meeting, the Principal should write advising of the gravity of the matter, the importance of attending a re-scheduled meeting and, failing that, the duty of the school authorities to make a decision to respond to the negative behaviour. The school should record the invitations made to parents and their response.

### **Procedures in relation to 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 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 must be notified, and arrangements made with them for the student to be collected. The school must have regard to its duty of care for the

student. In no circumstances will a student be sent home from school without first notifying parents.

## **The period of suspension**

A student will 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.

In the case of this school, the Board of Management considers that a prolonged period of suspension might be considered if and only if the behaviour in question is causing a significant threat to the safety of the pupil himself or of others, that every possible effort has been made to provide for the safe attendance of the pupil, that the behaviour is unlikely to alter without a change of circumstances. The duration of such a suspension will reflect the time necessary to arrange appropriate interventions.

If a suspension longer than three days is being proposed by the Principal, the matter should be referred to the Board of Management for consideration and approval, giving the circumstances and the expected outcomes.

However, the Board of Management authorises 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 in a timely fashion, subject to the guidance concerning such suspensions.

The Board of Management will normally place a ceiling of ten days on any one period of suspension imposed by it. Where a longer period is being considered, consideration will be given to allowing the pupil to attend school for a reduced school day pending appropriate intervention by external agencies NEPS, HSE ect...

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* (see 11.7 Appeals).

These provisions enable school authorities to give the student a reasonable time to reflect on their behaviour while avoiding undue loss of teaching time and loss of contact with the positive influences of school. They recognise the serious nature of the sanction of suspension and ensure that this seriousness is reflected in school procedures. The provisions mean that the Board of Management takes ultimate responsibility for sanctions of significant length, especially where such suspensions might reach twenty days in one school year and therefore might lead to an appeal.

## **Appeals**

The Board of Management will offer an opportunity to appeal the Principal's decision to suspend a student. In the case of decisions to suspend made by the Board of Management (see 11.6), an appeals process may be provided by the Patron.

### **Section 29 Appeal**

Where the total number of days for which the student has been suspended in the current school year reaches twenty days, the parents may appeal the suspension under section 29 of the *Education Act 1998*, as amended by the *Education (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2007*.

At the time when parents are being formally notified of such a suspension, they and the student should be told about their right to appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science under section 29 of the *Education Act 1998*, and should be given information about how to appeal.

## **Implementing the suspension**

### **Written notification**

The Principal will notify the parents and the student in writing of the decision to suspend. The letter should confirm:

- the period of the suspension and the dates on which the suspension will begin and end
- the reasons for the suspension
- any study programme to be followed
- the arrangements for returning to school, including any commitments to be entered into by the student and the parents (for example, parents might be asked to reaffirm their commitment to the code of behaviour)
- the provision for an appeal to the Board of Management
- the right to appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science (*Education Act 1998*, section 29).

The letter should be clear and easy to understand. Particular care should be taken in communicating with parents who may have reading difficulties, or whose first language is not the language of the school.

### **Engaging with student and parents**

Where a decision to suspend has been made, it can maximise the impact and value of suspension if the Principal or another staff member delegated by the Principal meets with the parents to emphasise their responsibility in helping the student to behave well when the student returns to school and to offer help and guidance in this.

Where parents do not agree to meet with the Principal, written notification will serve as notice to impose a suspension.

## **Grounds for removing a suspension**

A suspension may be removed if the Board of Management decides to remove the suspension for any reason or if the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science directs that it be removed following an appeal under section 29 of the *Education Act 1998*.

## **After the suspension ends**

A period of suspension will end on the date given in the letter of notification to the parents about the suspension.

## **Re-integrating the student**

The school will have a plan to help the student to take responsibility for catching up on work missed. This plan will help to avoid the possibility that suspension starts or amplifies a cycle of academic failure. Successful re-integration goes beyond academic work. A suspended student may feel angry or resentful about their suspension, and these feelings can trigger problems with reintegration which, in turn, may lead to further problem behaviour. Where possible, the school will arrange for a member of staff to provide support to the student during the re-integration process. Where required advice/support will be sought from National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS).

## **Clean slate**

When any sanction, including suspension, is completed, a student will 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.

## **Records and reports**

### **Records of investigation and decision-making**

Formal written records will be kept of:

- the investigation (including notes of all interviews held)
- the decision-making process
- the decision and the rationale for the decision
- the duration of the suspension and any conditions attached to the suspension.

### **Report to the Board of Management**

The Principal will report all suspensions to the Board of Management, with the reasons for and the duration of each suspension.

**Report to NEWB** The Principal is required to report suspensions in accordance with the NEWB reporting guidelines (*Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, section 21(4)(a)*).

## **Review of use of suspension**

The Board of Management will review the use of suspension 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 use of suspension is appropriate and effective.

Expulsion will only be invoked by a decision of the Board of Management. This authority will not be delegated. It will only be considered as a measure of extreme last resort. Procedures are as laid down by the National Educational Welfare Board in "Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools." This is available from the school, from the National Educational Welfare Board and on-line at [www.newb.ie](http://www.newb.ie) All decisions by the Board of Management on the suspension/exclusion of a student are subject to appeal as per Section 29 of the Education Welfare Act.

## **Conclusion**

This code of behaviour is written for the adults in the school community. It is the responsibility of both parents/guardians and teachers to ensure that all children understand what is expected of them and why. Teachers will involve the children in discussing what these standards and expectations mean in terms of school and classroom rules. This policy will be enforced within the school and when students are away from the school with a teacher and/or class for any reason. As children mature they will be expected to become more actively involved in drafting and agreeing class contracts and agreements about standards of behaviour in the class and around the school.

This policy will be updated and revised as necessary, at least every three years.