

St Joseph's Girls Primary School.

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ST. JOSEPH'S G.N.S.

DISCIPLINE POLICY/ CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

(In accordance with the Education Welfare Act and Tusla)

The school Policy on Discipline is the core framework on which all activities within the school community are organised. It is a Whole School Policy, which is underpinned by the collective responsibility of staff, parents and pupils. The policy presented is as a result of a review of the existing Discipline Policy, approved in November 2010. The Board of Management takes responsibility for this review and all future reviews of the Discipline Policy. The review was initiated by staff members, parents and pupils who, following a review of existing discipline policy, drew up a draft document for consideration by the parent body, student body and the staff.

Rationale and School Ethos

The fundamental aim of this policy is to promote a positive school ethos whereby the uniqueness of each individual is valued, everyone is treated with respect and tolerance and pupils can participate in active learning. Relationships, based on mutual respect, will have direct bearing on the holistic development of each individual pupil. We recognise that certain pupils may require additional help to behave in an acceptable and respectful way, and we are committed to trying to provide that help. All subject areas of the curriculum, and in particular, SPHE, can provide opportunities to enhance the orderly environment through which pupils can feel secure and make progress. A number of separate but interconnected areas are outlined as part of the Discipline Policy. These are:

- The Code of Behaviour;
- Anti-bullying Policy;
- Homework Policy;

- Policy on Healthy Eating;
- Safety Statement;
- Admissions Policy.

CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

Aims

The aim is to create an ordered environment where staff pupils and parents have shared and clear aims. A happy, calm environment is the best way for pupils to maximise their learning. Important objectives are:

- To ensure that individuals take responsibility for their own behaviour;
- To develop positive behaviour patterns;
- To assist in creating an atmosphere of respect and tolerance for others;
- To ensure that the system of rules, rewards and sanctions are implemented in a fair and consistent manner.

The code of behaviour covers a number of areas. These include

- Behaviour in School (in-class, on yard and while attending school trips or events);
- Whole School Approach;
- Rewards and Sanctions;
- Roles and Responsibilities.

Behaviour in School

Pupils are expected:

- To be polite in their speech and behaviour at all times
- To be kind and considerate to others
- To walk quietly when moving around the school
- To treat the school environment and all school property with care
- To be attentive and co-operative in the classroom
- To allow other pupils complete work assignments without interruption
- To line up and move quietly in and around the school
- To get permission to leave or re-enter the classroom or school building
- Accept the direction, guidance and correction of all members of staff

- Not to eat prohibited sweets or junk foods especially chewing gum

Staff in the school are expected to model these standards of behaviour in their dealings with students and with each other.

These expected behaviours are summarised in a child-friendly manner in the form of 'Our School Rules' and 'Our Yard Rules'. These rules are short, concise and worded positively. They are displayed in all classrooms and around the school. The yard rules are displayed on the school yard. This ensures consistency and fairness as the same behaviour is expected from all children throughout the school.

Punctuality and attendance

All pupils are expected to be on time for school every morning. Parents or guardians must inform the school if the child is absent. Children should remain in school until finishing time and removal from class before that time should only be done in exceptional circumstances. Once pupils enter onto the school grounds they must not leave the school premises under any circumstances.

If a pupil must leave during the day, the school must be contacted by the Parent /Guardian. The pupil must be signed out by either a parent or guardian. Parents are reminded that pupils cannot be signed out in the last 10 minutes before the end of classes. Pupils are never permitted to leave without such permission and to do so is considered to be a serious breach of the Code of Behaviour.

A record of early leavers and late arrivals is kept and monitored on an on-going basis.

Dress Code

All pupils are expected to have a full school uniform which currently consists of a white shirt/ polo shirt, a wine jumper or cardigan and grey trousers / skirt. A school tracksuit is also available and this may be worn also. However, for important school occasions, pupils are expected to wear their uniform. Appropriate footwear should be worn for P.E. Excessive jewellery is not permitted for Health and Safety Reasons. Makeup is not permitted at any time. Long false nails/gel nails are not permitted for safety reasons. If a child attends school without wearing the appropriate uniform, she may be given a school uniform to wear for the day. For safety reasons if a child arrives at school with long false/gel nails she may not be able to participate in activities such as P.E, yard time etc. Children will be asked to remove or cut their nails at home.

Phones (See separate Mobile Phone and Electronic Device Policy)

Pupils are not permitted to have mobile phones or other electronic devices in school. However, in certain circumstances, with a written request from parent / guardian, a pupil may be permitted to bring such a device with them. The device/ phone must be handed into the office on arrival. It must also be switched off at all times on school grounds, and labelled with the pupil's name. Failure to do so will result in confiscation.

Racism & Racist Incidents:

St. Joseph's GNS has zero tolerance for racism and racist incidents.

In our school we define a racist incident as being discriminated against, or being targeted, on the basis of colour, race, ethnicity, nationality, culture, religion/belief or language. Our school promotes respect for every individual and we work hard at providing a nurturing and welcoming environment for all members of our school community. Where a racist incident occurs it will be dealt with in line with our Code of Behaviour and our Anti-Bullying Policy.

Communication

Parents/ Guardians will be informed by letter or phone if punctuality, absenteeism, homework or behaviour are a cause for concern. Parents should phone, write or call to the school to communicate anything in relation to their child.

WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH

The Board of Management will have overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy and Code of Behaviour. In practice, this will be carried out by the principal and staff of the school. Staff should consider themselves responsible at all times for both their own class and all the other pupils of the school. A team work approach to behaviour monitoring, will facilitate fair and consistent implementation and will be the cornerstone of an effective Discipline Policy. Through the formal and informal review process, other school policies and systems which impact on behaviour will also be reviewed so that classroom management, a differentiated curriculum and motivation all support positive behaviour patterns

In situations where there is unacceptable behaviour staff should respond in a firm way in accordance with the guidelines and framework of the Code of Discipline. A feature of the Whole School Approach will be the development of a common framework for recording the nature, intensity and persistence of particular behaviours. It is especially important that there is a shared understanding of behaviour and behaviour expectations between parents and staff.

The Discipline Policy will be reviewed on a regular basis at staff meetings, Board of Management meetings with the parent body and with the students. In consultation with staff, parents, and pupils adjustments and amendments will be made. Parents will be encouraged to be involved in helping their children maintain a positive attitude to Discipline.

SPHE will have a central role as a curricular area in the development of positive strategies and providing the interface for the Whole School Approach. SPHE will assist in developing the necessary skills for positive behaviour. These include:

- Good communication
- Conflict resolution skills
- Critical thinking
- Self-esteem
- Responsible citizenship
- Accommodating citizenship

Understanding that all behaviour has consequences and encouraging pupils to accept responsibility for their own behaviour will be the guiding principle for and SPHE activities and lessons.

REWARDS AND SANCTIONS

This Code of Discipline is founded on a positive approach to good behaviour. Consequently the majority of effort and emphasis will be on developing and implementing positive strategies for managing good behaviour. From time to time however, some pupils will present with particular problems or have circumstances which hinder good behaviour. In those cases there will be a clearly defined set of procedures to deal with such incidents.

Positive strategies

A wide variety of strategies will be employed to develop and maintain a positive approach to Discipline. These will vary according to the age of the pupils, the time of the year and the type of classroom activity.

- **Assembly:** The weekly Assembly will be used to promote positive behaviour and there will be a class based “Pupil of the Month” each month.
- **Stickers, Stars and Certificates:** Staff may regularly reward incidents of good behaviour and class-work with stickers and certificates. Other rewards will be used at the discretion of individual teachers and SNAs
- **Public praise** both within the classroom and throughout the school
- **Achievement Board-** Photos of pupils displayed with awards, certificates, good work etc.
- **Newsletters-** Regular newsletters will feature items on pupils sporting artistic and other achievements.
- Parents will be informed on a regular basis of good behaviour, especially efforts at improving behaviour
- Individual & Group reward systems will take place across individual classrooms also.

Sponsor Programme

From time to time, some pupils will present with particular behaviour problems. These may be of a low level but persistent in nature or may be extremely disruptive and unable to respond to the normal sanctions outlined in the Code of Behaviour. A “Sponsorship” programme will be put in place to assist those pupils.

In the first term of each year, teachers will be asked to identify pupils in their class who would be suitable for the Sponsorship Programme. Staff members will then volunteer to act as a “Sponsor” for these pupils. When disruptive behaviour occurs and the pupil does not respond to sanctions then that pupil will go to their Sponsor’s class for a time and continue their work there.

Parents of those pupils who are in the Sponsor Programme will be informed and their assistance in changing the negative behaviour patterns of the pupils will be sought.

The Sponsor will act as a significant adult in the life of this pupil and will take a special interest in their progress as well as encouraging positive behaviour patterns. Communication between the sponsor and child should be regular and the child’s positive achievements should also be shared with the sponsor. The sponsor will liaise with parents or guardians as well as the class teacher.

SANCTIONS

The sanctions outlined below will be applied using a fair and consistent approach. At all times, sanctions will be underpinned by the principle of changing unacceptable behaviour. Pupils will be encouraged to take responsibility for their actions and understand that all behaviour has consequences. Parents and school will work together at all times to assist in changing unacceptable

behaviour. The Home / School / Community Liaison teacher will have a central role in supporting this process. Sanctions for breaches of discipline cover all activities during the school day including breaks and playtimes and all other aspects of school life including school trips and sporting occasions. The Sponsorship Programme for the selected pupils will run parallel to these procedures. They may be brought into operation at any of the levels or may be set up for new pupils at any stage.

Procedures for Sanctions

The following list will normally represent a sequence for the issuing of sanctions.

- Verbal Warning
- Sanction as outlined below

However, in the case of a severe breach of discipline the initial steps may be passed over and a child may be sent directly to the principal, parents may be contacted or, in the case of a serious breach of discipline such as assault, suspension may occur.

Examples of behaviour that warrant immediate sanctions such as detention or in-school suspension include physically fighting (pushing, hitting, biting, pulling hair), deliberate damage to school property, stealing etc.

Sanctions in Junior Classes:

It is envisioned that in the junior classes sanctions will be avoided where possible. Teachers instead will try to ignore undesired behaviour and praise the behaviour they like to see. However when sanctions are deemed necessary in the junior classes they may include:

- Loss of a privilege e.g. sitting out for 5/10 minutes of an activity
- A visit from the principal
- Talking to the parent/guardian

Sanctions in Senior Classes:

Conduct cards will be the main method of recording behaviour for senior classes. Such a system will provide a clear record of behaviour patterns.

Guidelines for Conduct Cards:

Any staff member can record in the Conduct Card of any pupil. If necessary, copies of the card will be sent home at some stage each term. Copies may also be sent home more often if necessary along with a letter from the school principal.

The following are examples of bad behaviour which can be entered on the Conduct Card:

- Bullying of any kind including physical assault
- Rudeness, cheek, insulting /disrespectful behaviour, name calling
- Foul language
- Homework (persistent failure to complete same)
- Disruptive classroom or yard behaviour (often persistent and of a low level)
- Dangerous or boisterous behaviour when moving around the school, on yard, or on school trips

The following are the sequence of actions taken when conduct card is used:

- ❖ When **three** incidents of bad behavior are recorded the child will be sent to the principal to have a conduct card signed. The child receives extra homework. The principal sends home a letter to inform parents/guardians and it must be signed and sent back to the school. A copy of the conduct card is also sent home.
- ❖ When **six** incidents of bad behavior are recorded, the child will be sent to the principal to have a conduct card signed. The child is given detention. The principal sends home a letter to inform parents/guardians and it must be signed and sent back to the school. A copy of the conduct card is also sent home. Parents/Guardians are given the date of detention in advance and they must inform the school whether their daughter will be collected after detention or if she may walk home
- ❖ When **nine** incidents of bad behaviour are recorded, the child will receive a yard detention and extra homework. A letter will be sent home to inform parents/guardians and it must be signed and sent back to the school. A copy of the conduct card is also sent home. Children given a yard detention will be allowed a short time at the end of the yard to get some fresh air once the other children have left the yard.
- ❖ When **twelve** incidents of bad behaviour are recorded, the child will receive an in-school suspension. The child will be sent to another teacher with classwork to complete and will not be allowed to participate in class events. An in-school suspension may run for a total of 5 days, depending on the severity of the offence. The principal sends home a letter to inform parents/guardians and it must be signed and sent back to the school. A copy of the conduct card is also sent home.

When 6 or more incidents of poor behaviour are recorded on the conduct card, particularly over a short space of time, parents/guardians may be asked to come to the school to meet with the principal and class teacher.

Behaviour Chart/Contract:

If a child's behaviour has become regularly disruptive she will be put on a 'behaviour chart' or a 'behaviour contract' and must check in with the school principal regularly during the school day. Parents are informed and the behaviour chart will be sent home daily for parents to sign. See the *NCSE Behaviour Resource Pack* for suggested templates and suggestions regarding use:

<https://www.sess.ie/resources/behaviour-management>

A 'behaviour plan' may also be put in place and more serious sanctions may apply. The school will follow the NCSE Guidelines on behaviour support when devising a behaviour plan.

Detention

- Depending on the nature or the persistence of an offence, individual teachers, in consultation with the principal, will ask a pupil to do detention.
- Detention will be held as the need occurs. Sessions will either be during lunchtime or after school for a maximum of 30 minutes after school.
- Parents will be informed beforehand.
- Detention will be a sanction from the Conduct Card after six incidents.

In School Suspension

- In school detention is where a child is removed from her own classroom and goes to another class to complete work.
- This may continue for a maximum of 5 consecutive days.
- Detention will be a sanction from the Conduct Card after twelve incidents.

PROCEDURE FOR SUSPENSION / EXPULSION

When persistent misbehaviour occurs and that behaviour may warrant suspension or even expulsion, the parents / guardians will be contacted. They will be invited to come to the school to discuss the breach of Discipline. They will be made aware of the possibility of suspension or expulsion and given an opportunity to respond. In the case of a case of gross misbehaviour, the Board of Management will authorize the Principal to sanction an immediate suspension not in excess of three consecutive days.

Examples of gross misbehaviour will include the following:

- Possession of a knife or other weapon
- Behaviour that represents a serious threat to safety of staff or other pupils
- Behaviour that represents a threat to the pupil herself
- Physical or verbal assault on staff or on other pupils
- Threatening another pupil/staff member
- Leaving the school premises without permission
- Deliberate defiance of teachers
- Foul or inappropriate language
- Possession of alcohol or tobacco
- Using an electronic device to record pupils/teachers or anyone in the school

Expulsion may be considered in an extreme case, in accordance with the Rule for National Schools and the Education Welfare Act 2000. Before suspending or expelling a pupil, the Board shall notify the Education Welfare Officer in writing in accordance with Section 24 of the Education Welfare Act.

Managing difficult / extremely Challenging Behaviour

Where aggressive or violent behaviour of a particular pupil cannot be managed successfully by the strategies and procedures laid out in this Discipline Policy, the following additional procedures may be taken:

- Detailed discussions with parents / guardians with a view to getting external assistance
- Referral to an appropriate agency for referral e.g. Tusla, HSE Child and Family Clinic Barnardos Springboard
- Contact with the NCSE for behavioral support or advice
- Contact with the school NEPS psychologist
- Use of restricted school day

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Board of Management

The Board of Management will support the Discipline Policy by taking responsibility for regular reviews. It will discuss, on an annual basis, the operation of the policy and participate in efforts to improve its effectiveness and development. It will support the principal and staff in their implementation of the policy and, if necessary, offer support to parents who may have difficulty in maintaining acceptable standards of behaviour.

Staff

All Staff members have a major responsibility to implement the Discipline Policy in a fair and consistent manner. Developing a common understanding of behaviour will take time but every effort will be made through staff meetings, planning days and informal discussion to achieve that. Staff also have a responsibility to ensure that pupils fully understand what is expected from them in terms of behaviour and how they can improve their behaviour. New members of staff, student teachers and temporary and substitute teachers will be informed of the Code of Behaviour and copies of the policy will be available in every classroom and on Google Drive.

Strategies and activities to promote positive behaviour patterns among all the students will be reviewed, amended and updated on a regular basis.

Parents

Parents are expected to cooperate fully with the school in the implementation of the code of behaviour. The Home School Community Liaison Coordinator will work with parents / guardians on a regular basis to ensure that they are in a position to support the code of behaviour and to assist them with any difficulties that might arise from specific incidents. A one page synopsis of this policy for parents and pupils is given out in Sept of each school year.

Pupils

Taking responsibility for one's own actions is a fundamental principle of this code of behaviour. Through SPHE, good example and direct teaching, pupils will understand that all behaviour has consequences. As children get older they will be expected to take on increased amounts of responsibility in this regard. Pupils will also learn that after a breach of the code and the completion of

the relevant sanction, they will always begin again with a “clean sheet”. However, entries in the conduct card will remain. This is to encourage those who have difficulty in maintaining good standards of behaviour. Those who make particular efforts with changing behaviour will be acknowledged, and where appropriate, rewarded.

Review and Ratification

This policy was reviewed and revised in June 2021 by the staff and parents of St. Joseph’s G.N.S.

Signed: *Lucian Phelan* (Chairperson of the Board of Management)

Date: 14/6/21

Signed: *A. Fitzgerald* (Principal)

Date: 14/6/21

To be reviewed in May 2023 or earlier if deemed necessary