

Ardfinnan National School
Clonmel

Co. Tipperary



Code of Behaviour and
Discipline



Ardfinnan National School

CODE OF BEHAVIOUR AND DISCIPLINE

SOME PRINCIPLES

- Children of primary school age depend on the directions of their teacher to help them develop the control that is necessary for them if they are to master the art of working and playing in large groups.
- A major incentive to learning is a pupil-teacher relationship based on respect and co-operation rather than fear.
- The more positively children are motivated, the less need there will be for external discipline of any kind.
- The quality of teaching has a direct influence on pupil behaviour. Lively and stimulating methods, with work well matched to pupils' abilities are likely to receive a positive response from children. Positive expectations can make pupils more responsible in their work and conduct.
- Parents play a crucial role in shaping attitudes in their children which produce good behaviour in school. To maintain high standards of behaviour, the school must rely on the support and co-operation of the parents. The primary responsibility for the behaviour of pupils when they come to school lies with their parents.
- Parents can co-operate with the school by encouraging their children to abide by the school rules and by visiting the school when requested by the Principal or other members of the teaching staff. Please communicate regularly with the school about factors likely to affect the behaviour of your child at school.

This Code of Behaviour and Discipline has been drawn up by the Staff Members and the Principal, in accordance with Department of Education and National Educational Welfare Board guidelines. It has been agreed and ratified by the Board of Management.

The aim of this Code of Behaviour and Discipline is to help create a positive learning environment, relatively free from disruption in which every pupil is encouraged to become more self disciplined and can benefit from school.

We wish to:

- maintain a high level of co-operation among/between staff, pupils and parents creating a strong sense of community within the school leading to a high standard of behaviour.
- help organise a large group so that school can operate smoothly for the benefit of all.
- care in a practical way for pupils, staff, visitors, the school and its environment.
- offer a framework within which positive techniques of motivation and encouragement and praise of good behaviour are utilised by teachers.
- try and ensure that the curriculum matches the abilities aptitudes and interests of each pupil, thus reducing boredom, lack of interest or lack of progress.

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SCHOOL ETHOS

As a staff, we are committed to the creation of a warm and friendly atmosphere in the school where there is a sense of good order and an atmosphere conducive to learning.

The school promotes a Christian Ethos where respect, tolerance and fairness are promoted.

Our aim is to create a secure environment to ensure everyone's well being and safety and to maintain a happy, harmonious, working school so that our pupils may develop socially, personally, spiritually, emotionally, creatively and academically to their fullest potential.

In devising the code, consideration has to be given to the particular needs and circumstances of this school. Ardfinnan National School is a place for LEARNING – TEACHING – EDUCATION.

Aims:

- To allow the school to function in an orderly and harmonious way.
- To enhance the learning environment where children can make progress in all aspects of their development.
- To create an atmosphere of respect, tolerance and consideration for others.
- To promote positive behaviour and self-discipline recognising the differences between children and the need to accommodate these differences.
- To ensure the safety and well being of all members of the school community.
- To assist parents and pupils in understanding the systems and procedures that form part of the Code of Behaviour and to seek their co-operation in the application of these procedures.
- To ensure that the system of rules, rewards, and sanctions are implemented in a fair and consistent manner.

In support of these aims:

- Each pupil has the right to come to school, be at school, and return home from school without interference from any other.
- Each pupil is treated equally.
- Each pupil is expected to be well behaved and to show consideration for other children and adults.
- Each pupil is expected to show respect for the property of the school, other children's and his/her own belongings.
- Each pupil is expected to attend school on a regular basis and to be punctual.
- Each pupil is expected to do his/her best both in school and for homework.

School Rules

- Pupils must participate in all curriculum activities.
- Pupils must be on time for school (i.e. before 9.30a.m.), wearing correct uniform and have all required homework completed.
- Show respect to all school staff and to each other, bullying of any form will not be tolerated.
- Always follow directions from all school staff straight away.
- Always walk quietly in an orderly fashion, around the school building.
- Be where you are told within the school area.
- Keep our school clean and tidy and respect all school property.
- All absences by pupils must be explained to the class teacher by a parent/guardian in person or in writing.
- Pupils must abide by school code of behaviour.
- Pupils must abide by school healthy lunch policy.

Classroom Rules

- Do your work well and on time.
- Speak only with permission during lessons.
- Before leaving your place ALWAYS get permission (and only walk).
- Always have the proper school materials and use them only when needed.
- Allow others to do their work without interruption.
- Keep our classroom clean and tidy.
- Be truthful and honest at all times.

Yard Rules

- No fighting, kicking or any other form of rough play.
- Keep on tar macadam in your own specified play area only.
- Always follow directions from all staff on yard duty immediately.
- Leave the yard only with permission during break time. This includes entering the school after the 1.10p.m. bell.
- Lining up: at the bell, all play stops and children all walk to their own class line quietly.

Parents support discipline for learning

The overall responsibility for discipline within the school rests with the Principal and the Board of Management. Each teacher has responsibility for the maintenance of discipline within the classroom while sharing a common responsibility for good order within the school premises/grounds.

Strategies

(a) Praise may be given by means of any one of the following:

- A quiet word or gesture to show approval.
- A comment in a pupil's exercise book.
- A visit to another member of Staff or to the Principal for commendation.
- A word of praise in front of a group or class.
- A system of merit marks.
- Delegating some special responsibility or privilege.
- A mention to parent, written or verbal communication.

(b) Disapproval of unacceptable behaviour will be dealt with as follows:

(The nature of the behaviour will determine the strategy)

- Reasoning with pupils.
- Reprimand (including advice on how to improve).
- Prescribing extra work.
- Communication with Parents.
- Temporary separation from peers and/loss of privileges (duration depends on improvement in behaviour – this may include outings).
- A teacher has the right to refuse to allow a child on the school tour or other outing if the child has misbehaved.
- Referral to Principal/Deputy Principal.
- Note to parents.
- Take note of.
- Write out.
- **Suspension/expulsion (in accordance with Rule 130 of the Rules for National Schools as amended by circular 7/88).**

Procedures:

The degrees of misbehaviour will decide what type of punishment is warranted. The three degrees of misbehaviour referred to in this document, in order of increasing seriousness are minor, serious and gross. The following principles and examples will be taken into account by the teachers and/or the Principal in deciding into which category of misbehaviour a particular incident or sequence of incidents falls and what the appropriate punishment is:

Examples of minor misdemeanours:

- Interrupting class work
- Arriving late for school
- Running in school building
- Talking in class line
- Leaving seat without permission at lunch time

- Placing unfinished food or drink cartons in class bin
- Leaving litter around school
- Not wearing correct uniform
- Being discourteous or unmannerly
- Not completing homework without good reason
- Not having homework signed by a parent
- Endangering self or fellow pupils in the school yard at break time.

Examples of steps to be taken by teachers when dealing with minor misdemeanours:

- Verbal reprimand
- Reasoning with pupil
- Requiring pupil to apologise.
- Noting instance of yard misbehaviour in yard book.

Examples of steps to be taken when dealing with regular occurrences of minor Misdemeanours

Phase 1 (within the classroom):

- Write story of what happened **Or** one copy of school rules **Or** relevant rule to upper limit of 20 times – all to be signed by parent.
- Note in homework journal to be signed by parent
- Temporary separation from peers
- Sending to another teacher
- Denial of participation in some class activity.
- Warning to pupils whose name appears in yard book more than three times.
- Note to parents concerning further misbehaviour in yard.

(Misbehaviour in yard consists of any action that puts the safety of self/other pupil at risk).

Phase 2:

- Send to Principal.
- Class teacher meets one/both parents.
- Principal meets one/both parents concerning yard behaviour.

Examples of serious misdemeanours

- Constantly disruptive in class
- Telling lies
- Stealing
- Damaging other pupil's property
- Bullying
- Back answering a teacher
- Not working to full potential
- Using unacceptable language
- Bringing weapons to school

- Deliberately injuring a fellow pupil.

Examples of steps to be taken when dealing with serious misdemeanours:

- Send to Principal.
- Principal sends note in Journal to be signed by parent.
- Principal meets with one/both parents.
- Chairperson of Board of Management informed and parents requested to meet with Chairperson and Principal.

Examples of Gross Misdemeanours

- Setting fire to school property
- Deliberately leaving taps or fire hose turned on
- Aggressive, threatening or violent behaviour towards a teacher, other staff member, a pupil or visitor to the school
- Leaving school premises during school day without appropriate permission.
- Any abuse of drugs, alcohol or cigarettes whether occurring on or off school grounds.

It should be noted that these lists consist of examples only: It is not meant to be a totally comprehensive list of misdemeanours and procedural steps.

Examples of steps to be taken when dealing with gross misdemeanours/repeated instances of serious misdemeanours

(a) For gross misbehaviour or repeated instances of serious misbehaviours, suspension will be considered.

A proposal to exclude a student, through suspension or expulsion, is a serious step, warranted only by very serious misbehaviour. Schools are required, under section 23(2) of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, to include their procedures for suspension and expulsion in their code of behaviour in accordance with NEWB guidelines and Dept. of Education circulars.

Fair procedures have two essential parts:

- the right to be heard
- the right to impartiality.

In a school, fair procedures apply to:

- the investigation of alleged misbehaviour that may lead to suspension or expulsion and
- the process of decision-making as to (a) whether the student did engage in the misbehaviour and (b) what sanction to impose.

SUSPENSION

The Board of Management has the authority to suspend a student. The Board has delegated the authority to suspend, up to a maximum of 3 days, to the Principal who will give written notification to the Board of Management.

The grounds for suspension

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.

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..

'Automatic' suspension : The Principal may decide, as part of the school's policy on sanctions, and following the consultation process with the B.O.M., parents, teachers and students, that automatic suspension will be imposed on any pupil leaving the school premises without permission. However, a general decision to impose suspension for named behaviours does not remove the duty to follow due process and fair procedures.

Procedures in respect of suspension

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

Written notification

The Principal should 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).

Report to NEWB

The Principal is required to report to the NEWB suspensions of a certain length (i.e. 6 days or over) or suspensions which mean that the aggregate number of days of suspension in a school year is 20 or more.

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 the provisions of section 24 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.

Authority to expel

The Board of Management has the authority from both the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and from common law to expel a student. In addition to the procedures set out below, the Board of Management reserves the right to take action during any deliberative or decision making process to require that a student absent themselves from the school for a particular period whether on health and safety grounds or otherwise.

The grounds for expulsion

Expulsion should be a proportionate response to the student's behaviour. Expulsion of a student is a very serious step, and one that should only be taken by the Board of Management in extreme cases of unacceptable behaviour. The school should have taken significant steps to address the misbehaviour and to avoid expulsion of a student including, as appropriate:

- meeting with parents and the student to try to find ways of helping the student to change their behaviour
- making sure that the student understands the possible consequences of their behaviour, if it should persist
- ensuring that all other possible options have been tried including additional training for staff members, appropriate assistance from the various support agencies etc.
- seeking the assistance of support agencies (e.g. National Educational Psychological Service, Health Service Executive Community Services, the National Behavioural Support Service, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, National Council for Special Education).

This procedure may be used in an extreme case, in accordance with the principles set out below and with Section 24 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.

Grounds for expulsion:

- The pupil's behaviour is a consistent cause of significant disruption to the learning of others or to the teaching process.

- Continued presence of the pupil in the school constitutes a real and significant threat to the pupil's own safety and well-being.
- Continued presence of the pupil constitutes a real and significant threat to the safety and well-being of others.

Automatic expulsion:

The Board of Management may sanction automatic expulsion for certain prescribed misbehaviour:

- Sexual assault
- Possession of and/or supplying illegal drugs
- Actual violence or physical assault against another pupil or member of staff
- Attempted violence or physical assault against another pupil or member of staff
- Attempted self-harm resulting in the occurrence of potentially serious physical injury where the school judges that it can no longer meet the pupil's needs by adequately providing for the pupil's health, safety and well-being when at school.
- Actual self-harm resulting in the occurrence of serious physical injury where the school judges that it can no longer meet the pupil's needs by adequately providing for the pupil's health, safety and well-being when at school.
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Procedures in respect of expulsion:

1. Detailed investigation of incident(s) by school Principal including interviews with all relevant parties, witnesses and the alleged wrongdoer.
2. Provision of written report by Principal to Board of Management outlining the facts of the matter as ascertained by the Principal and the Principal's recommendations for the range of appropriate sanctions or recommendations for a particular sanction.
3. The Principal's report should be furnished to the parents of the pupil at least 5 working days before the hearing referred to below or any rate sufficient time must be allowed to them to review the report and be aware of what allegations are being investigated as part of this process. If statements have been taken as part of the investigation or evidence gathered, the parents are entitled to copies of such statements (unless the statement has been given in confidence and on the understanding that it will not be shared with the pupil and/or their parents) and details about the evidence which will be considered by the Board of Management.
4. The Board of Management considers the school Principal's report and recommendation and holds a hearing at which the child's parents/guardian can make submissions.
5. The Board of Management considers if the expulsion is appropriate in light of the following factors:

- 5.1 The nature, scale and persistence of the behaviour in question
 - 5.2 The effect of the behaviour on the school community (staff and pupils)
 - 5.3 The previous behaviour and conduct of the pupil
 - 5.4 Any contrition or attempts by the pupil to reform their behaviour
 - 5.5 Attempts (short of expulsion) made by the Principal and staff to divert, correct or check the behaviour and the effectiveness of those attempts
 - 5.6 The duty of the school to provide an education for its students and whether the continued enrolment or the student affects or limits the Board's ability to discharge this duty
 - 5.7 The duty of care owed by the school to its employees, pupils and to visitors to the school and whether the continued enrolment of the student affects or limits the Board's ability to meet this duty of care.
6. Based on the foregoing considerations, any submissions from the parents and the Principal's Report, the Board then makes a decision as to whether or not to exclude the pupil.
 7. If the Board of Management recommends expulsion, the Board of Management will propose a date on which the expulsion will become effective which will allow a 20-day period from the date on which the Education Welfare Officer is notified of the proposed expulsions.
 8. The Education Welfare Officer is informed of the proposal to expel the pupil and the effective date of that proposal.
 9. Parents of the pupil are informed of their rights to invoke a Section 29 appeal under the Education Act 1998.
 10. The Education Welfare Officer arranges consultations with the appropriate parties.
 11. Confirmation of the decision of the Board of Management (and if relevant, the effective date of the expulsion) is sent in writing by registered post or a recorded delivery method to the parents of the pupil.

Conclusion

The essence of our Code of Behaviour is valuing people and encouraging them to accept responsibility for their own behaviour and to develop self discipline. It is also designed to maximise the opportunities for appropriate education for all our students in both the special needs unit and the mainstream part of the school.

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management and will be reviewed and updated in line with Department of Education & Skills and NEWB guidelines.



Chairperson (Board of Management)

