



St. Mary's Road
Buncrana,
Co. Donegal

St. Mura's National School

Tel. No. 074 9362309
Roll No.16854V
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Code of Behaviour

The school has a central role in the children's social and moral development just as it does in their academic development.

The children bring to school a wide variety of behaviour. As a community environment, in school we must work towards standards of behaviour based on the basic principles of honesty, respect, consideration and responsibility. It follows that acceptable standards of behaviour are those that reflect these principles.

Children need limits set for them in order to feel secure and develop the skills for co-operation. Therefore any rules will be age appropriate, with clear agreed consequences.

Parents can co-operate with the school by encouraging their children to understand the need for school rules, by visiting the school and by talking to the members of staff.

A code of behaviour is established to ensure that the individuality of each child is accommodated while at the same time acknowledging the right of each child to education in a relatively disruption free environment.

Aims of the Code

- To create a positive learning environment that encourages and reinforces good behaviour
- To promote self-esteem and positive relationships
- To encourage consistency of response to both positive and negative behaviour
- To foster a sense of responsibility and self-discipline in pupils and to support good behaviour patterns based on consideration and respect for the rights of others
- To facilitate the education and development of every child
- To foster caring attitudes to one another and to the environment
- To enable the teacher to teach without disruption

Responsibility of Adults

The adults encountered by the children at school have an important responsibility to model high standards of behaviour, both in their dealings with the children and with each other, as their example has an important influence on the children.

As adults we should aim to:

- Create a positive climate with realistic expectations



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- Promote, through example, honesty and courtesy
- Provide a caring and effective learning environment
- Encourage relationships based on kindness, respect and understanding of the needs of others
- Ensure fair treatment for all regardless of age, gender, race, ability and disability
- Show appreciation of the efforts and contribution of all
- To discourage physical aggression and encourage 'Kind Hands, Kind Words, Kind Feet'. A Code of Conduct for staff and volunteers ensures that the rights of the children are upheld

School Rules

- Respect for self and others
- Respect for others' property
- Respect other students and their learning
- Kindness and willingness to help others
- Follow instructions from staff immediately
- Walk quietly in the school building
- Courtesy and good manners
- Readiness to use respectful ways of resolving difficulties and conflict
- Ask permission to leave the classroom
- Do your best in class
- Take responsibility for your own work.

This can be summed up as 6 main rules:

- Respect/Be nice
- Do your best
- Be tidy
- Be safe
- Walk
- Listen

Class Rules

At the beginning of each academic year, the class teacher will draft a list of class rules with the children. These reflect and support the school rules, but are presented in a way that is accessible to the children. Class rules should be kept to a minimum and are devised with regard for the health, safety and welfare of all members of the school community. They should where possible emphasise positive behaviour (e.g. 'Walk' and not 'Don't run'). Rules will be applied in a fair and consistent manner, with due regard to the age of the pupils and to individual difference. Where difficulties arise, parents will be contacted at an early stage.



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Incentives

Part of the vision of St. Mura's N.S. is to help children achieve their personal best – academically, intellectually and socially. We recognise that there are many different forms of intelligence and that similarly children use a variety of approaches to solve problems. Reward systems which are based on academic merit or particular extrinsic goals continuously apply to only a limited number of children and undermine the individuality of children. All children deserve encouragement to attain their own best. Children will be encouraged, praised and listened to at all times by adults in the school. Praise is earned by the maintenance of good standards as well as by particularly noteworthy personal achievements. Rates of praise for behaviour should be as high as for work.

The following are some samples of how praise might be given:

- A quiet word or gesture to show approval
- A comment in a pupil's exercise book
- A word of praise in front of a group or class
- The use of 'Discipline for Learning' stamps and booklets
- Delegating some special responsibility or privilege
- A mention to parent, written or verbal communication.

Unacceptable Behaviour

Three levels of misbehaviour are recognised: Minor, Serious and Gross. All everyday instances of a minor nature are dealt with by the class teacher. In cases of repeated serious misbehaviour or singles instances of gross misbehaviour, parents will be involved at an early stage and invited to meet the teacher and/or the Principal to discuss their child's behaviour.

Examples of serious misbehaviour:

- Behaviour that is hurtful (including bullying, harassment, discrimination and victimisation)
- Behaviour that interferes with teaching and learning
- Threats or physical hurt to another person
- Damage to property
- Theft

Examples of gross misbehaviour:

- Assault on a teacher or pupil
- Serious theft
- Serious damage to property



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Sanctions

The use of sanctions or consequences should be characterised by certain features:

- It must be clear why the sanction is being applied
- The consequence must relate as closely as possible to the behaviour
- It must be made clear what changes in behaviour are required to avoid future sanctions
- Group punishment should be avoided as it breeds resentment
- There should be a clear distinction between minor and major offences
- It should be the behaviour rather than the person that is the focus

The following steps will be taken when the children behave inappropriately. They are listed in order of severity with one being for a minor misbehaviour and ten being for serious or gross misbehaviour. The list is by no means exhaustive. Teachers may put in place alternative measures bearing in mind the features by which sanctions should be characterised. The aim of any sanction is to prevent the behaviour occurring again and if necessary to help the pupils devise strategies for this:

1. Reasoning with pupil
2. Verbal reprimand including advice on how to improve
3. Temporary separation from peers within class and/or temporary removal to another class
4. Prescribing extra work/writing out the story of what happened
5. Loss of privileges
6. Detention during break
7. Communication with parents
8. Referral to Principal
9. Principal communicating with parents
10. Exclusion (Suspension or Expulsion) from school (in accordance with Rule 130 of the Rules for National Schools as amended by circular and Education Welfare Act 2000)

However sanctions should relate as closely as possible to the behaviour. Therefore a child, who does not do his work in class or has not completed his homework, may be detained at break time to finish the work.

Pupils will not be deprived of engagement in a curricular area, except on the grounds of health & safety.



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Suspension

The Board of Management of St. Mura's N.S. has the authority to suspend a pupil. A student should not be suspended for more than three days except in exceptional circumstances. The Board of Management normally place a ceiling of ten days on any one period of suspension imposed by it. Any suspension for which the pupil has been suspended in a school year for 20 days or more is subject to appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998. A single incident of misconduct may be grounds for suspension.

Suspension is defined as *"Requiring the student to absent himself/herself from the school for a specified, limited period of school days"*

Suspension should be a proportionate response to the behaviour that is causing concern. Normally other interventions will have been tried before suspension. The decision to suspend a pupil requires serious grounds such as:

- The student's behaviour has 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

Procedures for Suspension

Schools are required by law to follow **fair procedures** when proposing to suspend a student. This school will observe the following:

- Inform the pupil and their parents about the complaint
- Give parents and pupil an opportunity to respond
- Initial suspension will be generally no longer than 3 days. (except in exceptional circumstances)
- BOM will formally review any proposal to suspend a student for 20 or more days in a school year (in total). Any such suspension is subject to appeal under Section 29 of the Education Act (1998).

Implementing the Suspension

The Principal will notify the parents in writing of the decision to suspend their child and the letter will confirm:



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

A suspension may be removed or altered either immediately or retrospectively if the Board of Management decides, or, if the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science directs it to be removed following an appeal under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998 as amended by the Education (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2007.

Removal of Suspension (Reinstatement)

Following or during a period of suspension, the parent/s may apply to have the pupil reinstated to the school. The parent/s must give a satisfactory undertaking that a suspended pupil will behave in accordance with the school code and the Principal must be satisfied that the pupils reinstatement will not constitute a risk to the pupil's own safety or that of the other pupils or staff. The Principal will facilitate the preparation of a behaviour plan for the pupil if required and will re-admit the pupil formally to the class.

Integrating the Pupil and Starting With a Clean Slate

The Principal will arrange for a member of staff to provide support for the pupil during the reintegration process. The pupil will be given the opportunity and support for a fresh start.

The school will then expect the same behaviour of this pupil as of all other pupils.

Recording and Reporting

A record of the behaviour and sanction imposed will be kept which will include:

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

The Principal, if acting on the written delegated authority to suspend, will report all suspensions to the Board of Management with the reasons for and the duration of each suspension.



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The Principal will report all suspensions to the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) in accordance with NEWB reporting guidelines (*Education (Welfare) Act 2000, section 21(4)(a)*).

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

The Board of Management has the authority to expel a pupil. This authority is a reserved function of the Board of Management and is not delegated to the Principal.

Before expelling a pupil, the school will have taken significant steps to address the misbehaviour and to avoid expulsion of a pupil including, as appropriate:

1. Meeting with parents and the pupil to try to find ways of helping the pupil to change their behaviour
2. Making sure that the pupil understands the possible consequences of their behaviour, if it should persist
3. Ensuring that all other possible options have been tried
4. Seeking the assistance of support agencies, if appropriate

A proposal by the Board of Management to expel a student requires serious grounds, such that:

1. The student's behaviour is a persistent cause of significant disruption to the learning of others or to the teaching process.
2. The student's continued presence in the school constitutes a real and significant threat to safety
3. The student is responsible for serious damage to property.

Expulsion should be a proportionate response to student's behaviour and should only be taken in extreme cases of unacceptable behaviour.

Expulsion for a First Time 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:



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- A serious threat of violence against another student or a 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 following procedural steps will include:

1. A detailed investigation carried out under the direction of the Principal. (Includes contacting the parents re. behaviour as with suspension)
2. A recommendation to the Board of Management by the Principal. (Parents informed of the same)
3. Consideration by the Board of Management of the Principal's recommendation; and the holding of a hearing.
4. Board of Management deliberations and actions following the hearing (including informing the Educational Welfare Officer. The pupil cannot be expelled before the passage of 20 school days from the date the EWO received the written notification)
5. Consultations arranged by an Education Welfare Officer. (BOM may consider suspending the pupil during this period if the continued presence of the pupil will seriously disrupt the learning of other, or represent a threat to the safety of other pupils or staff)
6. Confirmation of the decision to expel. (notifying parents, including information on right to appeal)

Appeal

Circular 22/02 Appeals procedure under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998

Under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998, parents (or pupils who have reached the age of 18) are entitled to appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science against some decisions of the Board of Management, including (1) permanent exclusion from a school and (2) suspension for a period which would bring the cumulative period of suspension to 20 school days or longer in any one school year. Accordingly, schools should advise parents of this right of appeal and associated timeframe if it has been decided to suspend or permanently exclude a pupil. Appeals must generally be made within 42 calendar days from the date the decision of the school was notified to the parent or student. (See Circular 22/02)



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Children with Special Needs

All children are required to comply with the code of behaviour. However, the school recognises that children with special needs may require assistance in understanding certain rules. Specialised behaviour plans will be put in place in consultation with parents and the class teacher, learning support/resource teacher, and or Principal who will work closely with home to ensure that optimal support is given. Cognitive development will be taken into account at all times. Professional advice from psychological assessments will be invaluable.

Methods of Communicating with Parents

Communicating with parents is central to maintaining a positive approach to dealing with children. Parents and teachers should develop a joint strategy to address specific difficulties, in addition to sharing a broader philosophy which can be implemented at home and in school.

A high level of co-operation and open communication is seen as an important factor encouraging positive behaviour in the school. Structures and channels designed to maintain a high level of communication among staff and between staff, pupils and parents have been established and are being reviewed regularly.

Parents should be encouraged to talk in confidence to teachers about any significant developments in a child's life, in the past or present, which may affect the child's behaviour.

The following methods are to be used at all levels within the school:

- Informal parent/teacher meetings and formal parent/teacher meetings
- Through children's homework journal (infants do not have a homework journal – parents are asked to check bags)
- Letters/notes from school to home and from home to school
- School newsletter

Procedures for notification of pupil absences from school

The Education Welfare Act, 2000, Section 23 (2)(e) states that the code of behaviour must specify, "*the procedures to be followed in relation to a child's absence from school*". In relation to explanation of pupil absence, parents/guardians send in a note informing teachers in writing of their child's absence from school and the reason for this absence. These notes are kept on file. Under the Education Welfare Act 2000 the school informs the National Education Welfare Board in writing of any child who is absent for twenty days or more.



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This Policy was devised by the teaching staff of St. Mura's National School and ratified by the Board of Management on _____

Signature: _____ (School Manager)

and by the Patron of the school on _____

Signature : _____ (Patron of School)

It will be reviewed on an annual basis.