

St. Mary's N.S. Ashbourne



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Code of Behaviour

This policy was formulated by St. Mary's National School to inform staff, pupils and parents of our Code of Behaviour. It is guided by the Education Act 1998, Education (Welfare) Act 2000, Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools by the National Education Welfare Board (NEWB, 2008), Behavioural, Emotional & Social Difficulties: A Continuum of Support by the National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS, 2009) and the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (Department of Education, 2013).

Mission Statement

St Mary's National School is a co-educational, Catholic primary school which strives to provide a well-ordered, caring, happy and secure atmosphere where the intellectual, spiritual, physical, moral and cultural needs of the pupils are identified and addressed.

The school acknowledges the uniqueness of each individual and his/her worth as a human being.

Through an integrated and challenging curriculum the school strives to foster in each pupil a positive self image and a confidence which allows each child to attain their maximum academic and social potential.

The school acknowledges the parents/guardians as the primary educators of their children and endeavours at all times to foster a partnership of mutual respect and cooperation.

Each member of the school community (students, teaching staff and other staff) has the right to enjoy school in a secure environment.

The school recognises its place in a changing society and endeavours to adapt appropriately as the need arises.

The school has a clear commitment to promote equality in all aspects of its functioning.

Aims of St. Mary's Code of Behaviour

St. Mary's Code of Behaviour aims to foster the conditions for learning and teaching in order that each child develops to his/her full potential academically, socially, physically and spiritually.

- a) St. Mary's School aims to create a climate that encourages all members of the school community to take ownership and responsibility for their own actions at all times.
- b) The school aims to provide a safe and healthy environment in which pupils and staff can grow in self-esteem.
- c) The school aims to ensure that each pupil in every class is educated without interruption or disturbance.
- d) The school aims to ensure that all staff members can carry out their work without interruption or disturbance.
- e) The school promotes qualities of social responsibility, tolerance and understanding.
- f) The school promotes positive habits of self-respect, self-discipline and responsibility among all its members.
- g) The school promotes habits of mutual respect, courtesy and an awareness of the interdependence of people in group and community.

Routines and General Information

1. Pupils and parents/guardians should be familiar with the contents of the St. Mary's N.S. Code of Behaviour Policy.
2. Gates open at 09:10 at which time supervision begins in school yards. Assembly is at 09:20. Therefore, children should **not** be in the yard prior to 09:10. No pupil should arrive later than 09:20. On wet mornings supervising teachers will admit children at 9.10 a.m. where children will be supervised going directly to their classrooms.
3. There are staggered break times. Junior Infants to 2nd class have their short break at 10:40 - 10:50 while 3rd to 6th class have their short break at 11.00 - 11:10.
Junior Infants to 2nd class have lunch from 12:20 to 12:50 while 3rd to 6th have their lunch break from 13:00 to 13:30. Weather permitting, children go to the yard or field. For safety reasons children are required to play carefully on the yard/field. When it is deemed appropriate, children will go to the field. On wet days children stay in their classrooms during breaks, where they are supervised by teachers on duty.
4. A note from parents or an Aladdin note must be provided when a child has been absent.
A note, verbal explanation or Aladdin note from parents must be presented when:
 - (a) a child has to go home early
 - (b) a child is late arriving
 - (c) homework has not been done
 - (d) a child is being collected by a different adult or there is any change in usual arrangements
5. While your child is in school he/she will be known by the names (first name and surname) that are on his/her Birth or Baptismal Certificate. Any derivation to this must be agreed by all parties involved; family, school etc.
6. A child who shows signs of illness should be kept at home. If a child shows signs of illness in school, the parent/guardian or nominated adult must collect the child from the school, if requested. In the event of an emergency the parent/guardian will be notified. If the parent/guardian cannot be contacted, medical attention will be sought for the child. In some urgent cases it may be necessary to seek medical attention before contacting parents/guardians, as noted on enrolment form.
If a child has a serious illness, or diagnosis by psychologist/OT or other relevant professional, of any kind it is most important for the parents/guardians to inform the school and to provide the school with a copy of all reports with relevant information. This information will be shared with the relevant staff, as the child progresses through the school.
7. Junior and Senior Infants go home at 14:00. Classes line up and are collected by parents, guardians or childminders when officially dismissed by their teacher. Infants are not allowed to go home on their own. All other pupils are dismissed at 15:00.
8. When it is necessary for a pupil to leave school early, the class teacher must be informed. When collecting a child, parents/guardians must call to the

Secretary's Office/Reception. The child/children will be called from the classroom/yard/field and will meet the parent/guardian at the office.

Parents/guardians are asked to inform the school in advance if they wish to nominate another person to collect their child. During school hours a child may never go home unless accompanied by an adult.

9. When bringing in items such as a forgotten sports bag, lunch etc to the school these should be left into the **Secretary's Office/Reception** where they can be collected by the child or class teacher.
10. Whilst most money is collected via Aladdin, if sending cash into the school, for any reason, parents are asked to please place it in an envelope with the child's name, class, date and the purpose for which it is being sent.
11. Invitations / Cards - are not to be distributed on school grounds
12. Cakes/Birthday Treats - in line with our Healthy Eating Policy and due to potential presence of food allergies/intolerances in classes, cakes/birthday treats are not to be sent into school.
13. No dogs, except service dogs, are allowed on the school grounds.

Any changes, or additions, to the above will be communicated to parents/guardians, as the need arises.

School Rules

The policy of our school is to foster appropriate positive attitudes and behaviour among our pupils.

1. Children are expected:
 - (a) to attend school regularly and punctually; (see point 2 below regarding Attendance).
 - (b) to be honest and truthful at all times;
 - (c) to have respect for teachers, ancillary staff, for each other, for themselves and for the school environment.
 - (d) to be clean, tidy and appropriately presented at all times in school.
For health and safety reasons, jewellery is not allowed, with the exception of a watch (see Acceptable Usage Policy) and a stud earring in the ear. Student hairstyles must be kept clean and neat. For hygiene reasons, long hair should be tied up. Hair colours must be within the natural range of hair colours. No distracting or outlandish hairstyles will be accepted under any circumstances. The Board of Management reserves the right to decide whether a particular hairstyle is acceptable or not.
For hygiene, health and safety reasons, nails are to be kept short, clean and natural. Make-up and false tan are not permitted.
2. Each child to whom the School Attendance Act applies, is obliged by law to attend school every day on which the school is in operation unless there is a reasonable explanation for not attending. Túsla are automatically notified once a child has missed twenty school days in any school year.
3. All pupils are expected to wear full school uniform as a mark of respect for their school as well as for the convenience of parents. School tracksuits, white polo shirt and non-marking footwear are essential for P.E. classes. Please label your child's clothing with their name.
4. In order to develop and maintain good behaviour throughout the school, children are expected to line up and move around the school in a quiet and orderly fashion.
5. At 3pm pupils are expected to leave the school grounds in an orderly fashion. They are expected to walk on the footpaths.
6. As part of our policy of promoting a healthy, balanced diet we do not allow any crisps, fizzy/energy drinks, chewing gum, glass bottles or hot drinks. A 'treat' is allowable on Fridays only and we ask you to limit this to only one small 'treat'. For health and safety reasons, we are a 'Nut Free' school.
7. Pupils are strictly forbidden to:
 - (a) Have any item that is a danger to the welfare and safety of pupils, teachers or the whole school community.
 - (b) Have any item that is likely to cause distraction or interruption in school. Any exception to this, will be made with permission of the class teacher/Principal only.
 - (c) Leave school grounds during school hours without permission.

8. Mobile phones/personal devices which are internet enabled must be stored in the children's bags and may only be switched on once the children have left the school grounds. If a child is found using a mobile phone/device, it will be confiscated until collected by the parent/guardian from the Principal by prior arrangement.
9. Boisterous behaviour, rough play and dangerous games are prohibited.
10. Cycling/scooting in school grounds is strictly forbidden at all times.
11. Only staff cars and authorised school bus may drive into school grounds/carpark during school hours. All other vehicles must park at a safe distance outside school gates.

Responsibilities

Board of Management's Responsibilities:

- To provide a comfortable and safe environment for all members of the school community.
- To support the principal and staff in implementing the code.
- To ratify the code within the context of the Mission Statement.
- The Board will actively support the promotion of positive relationships and behaviours that will reflect the school's ethos and responsibilities.
- To regularly review the Code of Behaviour.
- To promote the unique identity, ethos, values and culture of the school.
- To examine and deal with situations whereby suspension or expulsion may be warranted.

The Principal's Responsibilities:

- To promote a positive climate in the school.
- To ensure that the code is implemented in a fair and consistent manner for each person.
- To arrange the review of the code based on observation, recording and communication with staff and other members of the school community.
- To liaise with parents/guardians/teachers/SNAs.
- To liaise with the Board of Management in relation to behaviour.

Teachers' Responsibilities:

All teachers have an equal role to play in the overall implementation of the Code of Behaviour throughout the school.

- To present to all children the school rules in a manner appropriate to their understanding and learning.
- To formulate and display at the beginning of each academic year age appropriate rules for classroom behaviour.
- To create a safe learning environment for each pupil.
- To be courteous, consistent and fair.
- To provide an inclusive and engaging learning programme so that students are motivated to learn, thus encouraging positive behaviour.
- To recognise and affirm good behaviour, progress and effort.
- To teach and model the essential skills of listening, negotiating and managing differences.
- To deal appropriately with misbehaviour.
- To keep a record of instances of misbehaviour.
- To ensure there is an appropriate level of supervision of the class at all times.
- To provide support for colleagues.
- To liaise with parents/guardians/teachers/SNAs.

- To notify and discuss with parents/teachers changes in pupil's behaviour patterns.
- To notify principal of instances of misbehaviour where necessary, as per 'Level 2: Serious Breaches' / 'Level 3: Gross Misbehaviour' below.

It is accepted that while the responsibility for the implementation of the code rests with teachers of the children within their care, other staff members may inform this.

S.N.A.'s Responsibilities:

- To ensure that children in their care are in a safe and secure environment.
- To inform teachers of any concerns/report misbehaviour.
- To be courteous, consistent and fair.
- To recognise and affirm good behaviour, progress and effort.
- To provide support for colleagues.
- To maintain a close liaison with teachers.

Pupil's Responsibilities:

- To adhere to the Code of Behaviour:
 - During all curricular and school related activities in or outside of school
 - With all school personnel and visitors to the school.
- To be actively involved in formulation of classroom rules.
- To participate positively, ensuring a happy learning environment for all.
- To show respect for all members of the school community.
- To not engage in boisterous behaviour, rough play or dangerous games.
- To listen to their teachers, follow instruction and do as requested.
- To take responsibility for their own work and behaviour.
- To speak and act with courtesy and good manners at all times and to include other pupils in games and activities.
- To respect all school property, the property of other pupils and keep the school tidy and litter free.
- Not to leave the school or classroom during the day without permission.
- To move quietly around the school and avoid causing disturbance.
- Not to be in possession of items which have been deemed inappropriate and offensive to a safe, secure learning environment for all.
- To use the internet while at school in line with school Acceptable Usage Policy.

Parents'/Guardians' Responsibilities

- To be familiar with **all** school policies e.g. homework, healthy eating, code of behaviour and grievance procedure and to adhere to the same.
- To support the implementation of the Code of Behaviour and sign the acceptance of the same.
- To help their children with their homework and ensure it is completed
- To ensure that children attend school regularly and punctually and to be in the correct uniform.
- To ensure their children have the correct books and materials.
- To help their children to learn and practise good behaviour and to have a positive attitude towards themselves, other people and towards the school.
- To communicate with the school in relation to any problems which may affect the child's progress/behaviour or that may impact on school life. In order to avoid class disruption an appointment is necessary to speak at length to teacher (Note: refer to Parent Teacher Contact Procedures).
- To be courteous, consistent and fair.
- To notify the school of all absences, early collection or change of routine etc.
- To support our school community with the education and wellbeing of your child. If, at any time, there are issues regarding your child you should speak with the relevant teacher. If you have any concern about your child, please make an appointment with the class teacher by contacting the school secretary, letting the teacher know your area of concern. This is where issues can best be dealt with and discussing a concern with the class teacher usually leads to the concern being allayed.
- Should you wish to make a complaint then you are advised to follow the school's Parental Complaints Procedure.
- To refrain from discussing school business, children attending this school or members of staff in an inappropriate or offensive manner in any public forum including social media sites. As a school, we cannot condone the use of social media to criticise and make comments about the school, its pupils or any members of staff, or any member of the school community. Instances where defamatory comments are made which tarnish, or bring into disrepute this school or any member of the school community (whether named or implied) will be taken very seriously by the Board of Management.

Promoting Positive Behaviour

St. Mary's N.S. encourages children to achieve their personal best academically, intellectually and socially. All children deserve encouragement and support to achieve their full potential. Children will be encouraged, praised and listened to at all times by adults in the school. Praise and reward is earned by the maintenance of good standards as well as by particularly noteworthy personal achievements. Pupils will be praised for good behaviour and personal achievements as well as for good work.

By promoting positive behaviour, we will:

- Give recognition and attention to desirable, positive behaviours
- Reduce negative behaviours
- Increase time available to be spent on teaching and learning
- Improve social and emotional wellbeing
- Create relationships built on respect
- Create a learning environment where everyone knows the expectations

The following are some strategies used in our school to promote positive behaviour:

- Praise
- Weekly assembly (Roll of Honour, discussing positive behaviour)
- Positive note home
- Involving pupils in the preparation of classroom rules
- Helping pupils to recognise and affirm good behaviour
- Visit to Principal or other member of staff
- In-class reward system e.g. stamp sheets, golden time, merits
- Classroom based interventions such as Circle Time, Incredible Years Programme or class meetings

Children with Special Educational Needs

While all pupils in the school are subject to the school's Code of Behaviour, some pupils have special educational needs or other additional needs. Staff in St. Mary's NS have an appreciation and awareness of these complex and individual needs and will use their professional judgement in the application of the Code of Behaviour. The school will use appropriate interventions to support pupils who demonstrate behaviours of concern.

Inappropriate Behaviour

In order to establish a common understanding and a consistent response, the Code of Behaviour classifies misbehaviour into three levels based on the degree of the misconduct. The code also specifies the strategies and sanctions for dealing with the three levels of inappropriate behaviour.

Level 1: Minor Breaches

- Not listening in class and/or failure to follow instructions given by teacher and other adults working within the school
- Interruption of and disruption of work within the classroom
- Being discourteous to others
- Not completing homework without good reason
- Not wearing the correct school uniform
- Failing to walk and move in an orderly manner within the school and its grounds.
- Littering inside and outside on school grounds
- Rough play in the field or yard
- Other misbehaviours as may arise

Strategies for dealing with Minor Breaches:

1. Non-Verbal Cue
2. Positive-Action Reminder
3. Verbal reprimand including reasoning/advice on how to improve behaviour
4. Thinking Time: This may be a temporary separation from peers, friends or others (short period of time, 2 - 10 minutes, age dependent) in a suitable location (bench on yard, own place or suitable work station in class) to reflect on the misbehaviour and future positive behaviour.
5. Followed by use of Restorative Practice Questions
 - What Happened?
 - What were you thinking at the time?
 - What have you thought about since it happened?
 - Who has been affected, and in what way?
 - How could things have been done differently?
 - What rule did you break?
 - What do you think needs to happen next?
6. Encourage children to problem solve and/or discuss the incident or misbehaviour
7. Record repeated minor misbehaviours on ABC Record Sheet in Assessment Folder (see Appendix A)

Sanctions for dealing with Minor Breaches:

- Temporary loss of non-curricular privileges (e.g. Golden Time)
- Children may be prescribed additional work to be completed in their own time.
- Note for parents in journal or informal consultation with parents
- Record kept of repeated minor behaviour of concern

Level 2: Serious Breaches

- Repeated incidences of Level 1: Minor Breaches
- Leaving classroom, yard, field or school grounds without permission during school hours
- Use of mobile phone or internet enabled device on school grounds without permission
- Inappropriate use of I.C.T., as per AUP
- Isolated incidents of aggressive behaviour
- Constantly disruptive in class
- Bullying behaviour - **Note:** We have an Anti-Bullying Policy in place in the school. The Department of Education and Skills define bullying as *“unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time”*
- Purposeful misuse of school property
- Using unacceptable language

Strategies for dealing with Serious Breaches:

1. Where appropriate, senior pupils write an account of what has occurred, signed by parents
2. Child spoken to by Principal/DP
3. Parents are informed and may be asked to attend a meeting with teacher/Principal, if necessary
4. Incident recorded officially by Principal (office) and Class Teacher (ABC Record Sheet - Appendix A)

Sanctions for dealing with Serious Breaches:

- Temporary loss of non-curricular privileges
- Children may be prescribed additional work to be completed in their own time
- Confiscation of mobile phone or other offending articles
- Pupils who misbehave frequently and who have made insufficient effort to modify their behaviour will not be allowed to participate in school outings for their own safety and that of others.

Level 3: Gross Misbehaviour

- Repeated incidences of Level 2: Serious Breaches
- Use of threatening/offensive language or behaviour towards staff or others
- Any act of wilful violence towards pupils, staff or others
- Use of, or possession of, any inappropriate or potentially dangerous items by a pupil on school grounds
- Possession, supply or use of alcohol, cigarettes, vapes, illegal drugs and/or any other harmful substances
- Wilful or attempted wilful damage of school property or the property of staff or others
- Discriminatory or prejudicial activities or actions towards another person or group involving gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion and membership of the Traveller community.

Strategies for dealing with Gross Misbehaviour

1. Where appropriate, senior pupils write an account of what has occurred, signed by parents
2. Confiscation of dangerous/inappropriate/harmful item(s)
3. Child spoken to by Principal/DP
4. Parents are informed and will be asked to attend a meeting with teacher/Principal
5. Incident recorded officially by Principal (office) and Class Teacher (ABC Record Sheet - Appendix A)

Sanctions for dealing with Gross Misbehaviour

- As for Minor and Serious Breaches of the Code above, as appropriate
- Supervised separation from peers at break times
- Record of behaviour incident(s) is recorded by the relevant teacher/principal
- For gross misbehaviours, or repeated incidents of serious misbehaviour, suspension / expulsion will be seriously considered by the B.O.M. The Principal will follow due procedures as per the following:

Suspension

The Board of Management has the authority to suspend a pupil. The Board of Management delegates the authority to suspend for a maximum period of three days to the Principal. This delegation of authority is noted formally and in writing by the Board. The Principal is accountable to the Board of Management and will report all suspensions to the Board including the reasons for and the duration of the Suspension.

If a period of suspension longer than three days is being proposed by the Principal, the matter should be referred to the Board of Management for consideration. If it is not possible to convene a meeting of the Board in a timely fashion, the Board of Management authorises the Principal, in consultation with and approval of the Chairperson of the Board, to impose a suspension of up to five days. The Board of Management will normally place a ceiling of ten days on any one period of suspension. The Board will formally review any proposal to suspend a pupil, where the suspension would bring the total number of days for which the pupil 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.

Suspension should be a proportionate response to the behaviour of concern. The decision to suspend requires serious grounds such as that:

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

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

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

Procedures in respect of suspension

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

- The pupil and their parents will be informed about the incident, that it will be investigated and that it may result in suspension.
- The pupil and their parents will be given an opportunity to respond before sanctions are imposed.

If a pupil and their parents fail to attend a meeting, the Principal/Deputy Principal will inform them in writing advising them of the gravity of the matter, the importance of attending a rescheduled meeting and, failing that, the duty of the school authorities to make a decision to respond to the inappropriate behaviour.

Any decision to suspend will be given in writing to the parents by the Principal/Deputy Principal.

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 pupil
- The parent(s) and pupil(s) involved will be asked to reaffirm their commitment to the Code of Behaviour

- That the pupil will be given the opportunity to make a fresh start
- The provision for an appeal to the Board of Management
- The right to appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education (where the period of suspension will bring the total number of days suspended to twenty days or more in a school year)

A suspension may be removed if the Board of Management decides to remove the suspension for any reason.

Immediate Suspension

Where an immediate suspension is considered by the Principal to be warranted, 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.

In the case of an immediate suspension, parents will be notified, and arrangements will be made with them for the pupil to be collected. The school will have regard to its duty of care for the pupil. In no circumstances will a pupil be sent home from school without first notifying parents.

Appealing a Suspension

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

b) Appeal to Secretary General of Department of Education: Where the total number of days for which the pupil has been suspended in the current school year reaches twenty days or more, the parents may appeal the suspension under section 29 of the Education Act 1998. At the time when parents are being formally notified of such a suspension, they will be told about their right to appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education under section 29 of the Education Act 1998, and they will be given information about how to appeal.

When any consequence, including suspension is completed, pupils should be given an opportunity to make a fresh start. The suspension will be officially recorded and the Principal/Deputy Principal is required to report suspensions to TUSLA in accordance to the Education Welfare Act 2000.

Expulsion

A pupil 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. Expulsion of a pupil is a very serious step, and one that will only be taken by the Board of Management in extreme cases of unacceptable behaviour.

A proposal to expel a pupil requires serious grounds such as:

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

The grounds for expulsion may be similar to the grounds for suspension. In addition to factors such as the degree of seriousness and the persistence of the behaviour, a key difference is that, where expulsion is considered, the Board of Management will have tried a series of other interventions, and believe they have exhausted all possibilities for changing the pupil's behaviour. There may be exceptional circumstances where the Board of Management forms the opinion that a pupil should be expelled for a first offence.

Procedures for Expulsion

Where a preliminary assessment of the facts confirms serious inappropriate behaviour that could warrant expulsion, the procedural steps (as outlined in Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools) will include:

- A detailed investigation carried out under the direction of the Principal/Deputy Principal
- A recommendation to the Board of Management by the Principal/Deputy Principal.
- Consideration by the Board of Management of the Principal's/Deputy Principal's recommendation; and the holding of a hearing.
- Board of Management deliberations and actions following the hearing.
- Consultations arranged by the Educational Welfare Officer.
- Confirmation of the decision to expel.

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

Review and Ratification

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association. The updated policy will be communicated to parents via Aladdin. Hard copies of the policy will be available to parents from the office on request.

St. Mary's N.S. Code of Behaviour (ratified October 2023)

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on the 17th of October 2023 and will be reviewed in October 2024