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Code of Behaviour

Introduction

St. Joseph's National School has drawn up a code of behaviour as required under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.

Aims and expectations

It is a primary aim of our school that every member of the school community feels valued and respected, and that each person is treated fairly and well. We are a caring community, whose values are built on mutual trust and respect for all. We aim to create an atmosphere of respect, tolerance and consideration for others. The school behaviour policy is therefore designed to support the way in which all members of the school can live and work together in a supportive way. It aims to promote an environment where everyone feels happy, safe and secure and the school can function in an orderly and harmonious way

The primary aim of the behaviour policy is not a system to enforce rules. It is a means of promoting good relationships, so that people can work together with the common purpose of helping everyone to learn. This policy supports the school community in aiming to allow everyone to work together in an effective and considerate way.

The school expects every member of the school community to behave in a considerate way towards others. We aim to ensure the safety and well-being of all members of the school community.

Our aim is to promote positive behaviour and self-discipline, recognising the differences between children and the need to accommodate these differences. We treat all children fairly and apply this behaviour policy in a consistent way.

This policy aims to enhance the learning environment where children can make progress in all aspects of their development, and become positive, responsible and increasingly independent members of the school community.

The school rewards good behaviour and we believe that this will develop an ethos of kindness and co-operation. This policy is designed to promote good behaviour, rather than merely deter anti-social behaviour.

Rights and Responsibilities

Pupils' Rights

Our school's code of behaviour is based on values and overall aims such as respect, fairness, inclusion and the promotion of self-discipline and the importance of listening to all members of the school community.

All our pupils have the right to expect to be treated fairly, consistently and with respect. They should be able to learn and be educated in a relatively disruption free environment, safe from bullying and abuse.

Pupils should have the expectation that their individual differences will be recognised and that provision be made for them.

Pupils have the right to be listened to, and to question, at appropriate times. As learners they are allowed to make mistakes and to learn from them. They should have confidence that their positive behaviour will be affirmed and that misbehaviour will be dealt with appropriately.

Pupils' Responsibilities

We require pupils to attend school regularly and punctually, to work quietly and safely, when requested and to the best of their ability at all times.

They have the responsibility to listen to their teachers and act on instructions/advice. In addition, they are required to listen to other pupils and to await their turn to speak.

Pupils are required to show respect for all members of the school community and to respect the rights of other pupils to learn. They have the responsibility to care for their own property, and to respect all school property and the property of other pupils.

In the interests of health and safety, they have a duty to avoid behaving in any way, which would endanger themselves or others. Therefore, they are required to remain seated at all times should their teacher not be in the room, they are required to stay on the school premises during school hours (unless permission has been sought by parent/guardian) and they are required to stay within the designated areas during break times.

We require our pupils to treat others with dignity and respect. Therefore, we expect them to avoid nasty remarks, swearing or name-calling and be inclusive of other pupils in games and activities.

We expect our pupils to contribute to good order around the school. We require them to move quietly around the school and to keep the school clean and tidy.

Our pupils have a responsibility to bring the correct materials and books to school and follow school rules and class rules.

Staff Rights

Staff, like all workers, have the right to expect to be treated with respect and dignity. They should be able to work in a safe well- maintained environment, relatively free from disruption. They have the right to the support and co-operation of all staff colleagues and parents, in order to achieve the schools aims and objectives.

Staff members have a right to be listened to and participate in decision-making which affects their own work and that of the school in general.

Teachers also have the right to work in an atmosphere that encourages professional development, and to support and professional advice from boards of management, Dept. of Ed. and Science, NEWB, National Council for Special education and NEPs.

Staff responsibilities

Members of staff will support and implement the school's code of behaviour. They need to be cognisant of their duty of care and create a safe welcoming environment for each pupil. Each staff member has the responsibility to develop and nurture a sense of self -esteem in each pupil and in this regard the praising of desirable behaviour is essential.

Teachers will facilitate pupils to reach their full academic potential. This entails recognising and providing for individual talents and differences among our pupils.

Members of staff are expected to be courteous, consistent and fair, to keep opportunities for disruptive behaviour to a minimum and to deal appropriately with misbehaviour. This means that they will listen, at appropriate times, to pupils' explanations for behaviour. They will keep a record of instances of serious misbehaviour, or repeated instances of misbehaviour; they will communicate with parents when necessary and provide reports on matters of mutual concern. Staff members also provide support for colleagues.

Parents' and Guardians' Rights

Parents and Guardians have a right to be treated with respect and to have a safe and welcoming environment provided for their child. They are entitled to expect there will be a recognition of individual differences among pupils and that there will be fairness and consistency in the manner in which the pupils are treated.

They have the right to communicate with teachers (by appointment) on matters of mutual interest or concern and to expect contact at an early stage to discuss difficulties/ problems.

Progress reports, in accordance with agreed school policy, information on school policies and procedures are legitimate expectations of parents.

They have a right to be consulted in relation to the school's code of behaviour and to appeal decisions in accordance with agreed procedures.

Responsibilities of Parents and Guardians

Parents are expected to encourage children to have a sense of respect for themselves, for others, for their own property and that of others.

They are asked to ensure that their children attend school regularly and punctually and we require them to show interest in their children's school work by ensuring their child has the correct materials.

They are required to be familiar with the school's code of behaviour and other school policies, (such as healthy eating policy) and they should support their implementation.

They are expected to co-operate with teachers in instances where their child's behaviour is causing difficulties for others and to communicate with the school in relation to any problems which may affect their children's progress/behaviour.

Strategies to affirm desirable behaviour

Our school policy is designed to promote good behaviour, rather than merely deter bad behaviour.

In promoting positive behaviour we aim to establish a climate where praise and encouragement far out- weigh the frequency of criticism and sanctions.

Each teacher has the responsibility to develop and nurture a sense of self-esteem in each pupil, and in this regard, praising of desirable behaviour is essential. We praise and reward children for good behaviour in a variety of ways:

- teachers congratulate children - either publicly or privately, being sensitive to the age and personality of the student
- merit awards- citizen of the week, worker of the week, gaeilgeoir na seachtaine during seachtain na gaeilge etc.
- distribution of team points to children either for consistent good work or behaviour or to acknowledge outstanding effort or acts of kindness in school ● comments and smiley faces on pupils' work badges or stamps in books ● work displays ● homework passes
- Achievement Assemblies where commendations are given for good attendance, good behaviour,

- good work commendation letters to parents

These rewards are aimed at individual students but we also try to reward classes to foster a co-operative behaviour. Such rewards include:

- Extra free time PE/games, treats, homework off on agreed nights.

The reward schemes are constantly monitored to evaluate their effectiveness in promoting positive behaviour and in reducing misbehaviour.

Unacceptable Behaviour:

Behaviour such as substance misuse, violence, bullying, vandalism or rudeness to adults is not acceptable in St. Joseph's N.S. All occurrences of this type of behaviour will be noted, including the name of the victim. The Restorative Justice approach will be used and only if a pupil refuses to engage with this process or the approach is deemed to be ineffective will the Sanction strategy set out in this document be followed.

At St. Joseph's National School we will help to develop emotional literacy and understanding focusing on

- Responsibility for the impact of our behaviour on others
- Accountability
- Thoughtfulness and Reflection
- Kindness and Compassion

- Honesty and Trustworthiness Reliability
- Integrity
- Respectful and caring behaviour

In the event of wrongdoing we will:

1. First seek to understand — see the world from different perspectives
2. Focus on the harm done — not the rule broken
3. Include those harmed in fair problem solving
4. Work on making things right rather than punishment

To this end we will engage in the process of Restorative Practice which emphasises restoring relationships rather than punishing wrongdoers.

What is Restorative Practice?

Restorative Practice (RP) is based on the philosophy and principles of Restorative Justice (RJ).

- Viewing wrongdoing through a "rational" lens — understanding that harm has been done to people and relationships
- Understanding that when such harm is done, it creates obligations and liabilities C]
- Focusing on repairing the harm and making things right

How does it work?

This means that when things go wrong you:

- Involve those responsible for and those affected by the behaviour in solving the problem
- Provide high levels of support for all parties, perpetrators or those affected
- Address the needs of all those involved in the harmful incident
- Provide strong messages and reminders about what behaviours are acceptable and unacceptable

The Restorative Continuum

The Restorative Chat

In the event of a minor issue there are 6 Stages. The teacher or adult will invite both parties to a Restorative Chat where they will:

1. Engage— inviting the pupils directly involved into the dialogue
2. Reflect — Encouraging thoughtfulness and empathy

3. Understand — how people have been affected, the harm done
4. Acknowledge the harm done and possible apology
5. Agree — make a plan to fix things
6. Arrange for follow up — making sure the plan is working

The Small Group Conference

In the event of more serious incidents a small group conference may be required to which all pupils affected by the incident are invited.

The Seating plan is circular and the Conference is conducted by a facilitator — an adult familiar with the RP process but one who was not involved in the incident. There are 5 Stages involved

- 1 . Introduction — The facilitator invites all involved into a room and to take a seat before explaining the rules of engagement
2. Reflection - Encouraging thoughtfulness and empathy
3. Understanding — how people have been affected, the harm done
4. Acknowledgement of the harm done and possible apology
5. Agreement — make a plan to fix things and arranging a follow up
6. Wrapping up the conference ends when everyone has been invited to contribute and is clear about what they have been asked to do

The Big Discipline Issues

The 'No Blame Classroom Conference' and the formal 'Community Conference' are natural extensions of the Small Group Conference.

No Blame Classroom Conference

The 'No Blame Classroom Conference' is usually facilitated by someone in the school with appropriate training and may be the first experience of RP for many pupils. It engages the whole class in a problem solving process that encourages reflection, mutual understanding and shared ownership of the problems that people are experiencing. The class, together with their teacher/teachers, plan a way forward aiming for a more positive learning environment. All parties, including the teachers, must be willing to examine their behaviour.

The Community Conference

As the behaviour becomes more serious, resulting in greater harm, the parents of those involved need to be brought in to provide support and assist the 'community' in deciding what consequences will provide the best learning experience and repair the harm. This very formal response is called the Community Conference. A Community Conference is a face to face meeting of the community of people affected by an incident which causes serious harm within the school community. The conference provides a forum in which the wrongdoers, victims and their respective supporters seek ways to identify, repair and prevent future harm in the wake of serious incident.

Wrongdoers are given an opportunity to explain themselves and to understand the impact of their behaviour on other people, themselves and the school community. They are also invited to make things right by acknowledging the harm they have caused by way of apology or material reparation.

Victims have the opportunity to explain how they have been affected and to become involved in negotiating how to repair the harm.

A community Conference will only go ahead if the wrongdoer/victims consent to their involvement and everyone feels safe to participate in the process. Some reluctance is normal but refusal is rare.

Who attends the Conference?

- An experienced and trained conference facilitator
- The wrongdoer/s directly responsible for the incident
- The victim/s directly affected by the incident
- The bystanders/supporters/witnesses who were there when it happened and were affected or perhaps escalated the issue
- Other parties affected by the incident who, owing to their role or position have to manage the fallout.

Supporters for the victims and wrongdoers — people who can provide a sense of safety for the victim and also assist in the exploration of the harm caused. They can also be a resource for reaching agreement and deciding on what needs to be done to repair the harm.

If the best process to try to resolve these issues is a conference, then it is crucial that the facilitator interviews all people involved before deciding the final participant list, to gain a clear understanding of who was involved and to inform each participant of the conference process. The facilitator will also prepare and send letters informing the families of dates and times and other conference information; prepare the conference documents; arrange a suitable room; liaise with the school administration; discuss transportation and childcare needs; organise refreshments.

There are two separate time elements; preparation and facilitation. Preparation time will depend on the circumstances and complexity of the issue but will normally be held within 1-5 days of the incident occurring. Facilitating the conference will take on average 1 h to 2 hours. As in the Small Group Conference the Seating plan is circular and the Conference is conducted by a facilitator — an adult familiar with the RP process but one who was not involved in the incident.

Community Conference Agenda

1. Introduction
2. Telling the Story
3. Exploring the Harm
4. Acknowledgement and Apology
5. Agreement

6. Closing the Conference

At the outset each is asked to tell their story in the order:

1. Wrongdoer/s
2. Victims
3. Victim's Supporters
4. Wrongdoer's Supporters

At the Midpoint of the conference the facilitator asks people for their ideas on how to right the wrongs. The facilitator checks with the group to gauge whether ideas and suggestions are fair and realistic. The conference agreement is then made. Closing the conference the facilitator will read the agreement reached for a final time and then invite people to make any final comments.

The 3 Golden Rs to guide our Restorative practice are REFLECT, REPAIR & RECONNECT
In the end, it's the relationship which matters.

For pupils who do not engage with the Restorative Practice Approach we will revert to the sanctions which are outlined below.

Video conferencing

The video conference room is a classroom and the same school behaviour and codes of conduct apply to this environment.

Strategies to show Disapproval of Unacceptable behaviour:

A sanction should be seen to match the misdemeanour. The most powerful sanction is the disapproval of those whose views the pupil respects so it is very important that we create a climate of opinion in which the sanction has the greatest possible effect.

For the vast majority of pupils a simple admonition is the most effective sanction, but reprimands are used fairly.

Other strategies include reasoning with the pupil, the implementation of a warning system or temporary separation from peers. In this case the pupil may be required to work at a separate desk for a specified period of time. Pupils will be reminded that they have chosen to misbehave and may be asked to finish uncompleted work, complete a behaviour related work

sheet, or write a 'sorry' note outside of class time. At other times it might be appropriate to assign extra work to pupils to complete either in school or for homework.

Detention at breaks (morning or/and lunch), during which the pupil is supervised, is a strategy which may be used. This sanction, while maintaining the duty of care, gives the pupil the opportunity to reflect on his/her behaviour, provides an opportunity for negotiation, and allows teaching and learning to continue without interference.

'Time out' in another class may be necessary if the work of the class is being disrupted severely or if there is a risk of injury to another pupil. This strategy is part of a planned intervention which includes the steps to be taken prior to exiting the class to which the child is going, how she/he will be supervised, the work to be completed in the other room and when the child will be allowed back in to his/her own class.

This strategy is arranged on a whole class basis with teachers agreeing on reciprocal arrangements.

Communication with the child's parents/guardian takes place at the earliest possible opportunity.

A pupil may be referred to the school Principal/Deputy Principal but this is only done as part of an agreed set of procedures or for a serious incident.

Strategies and Sanctions for dealing with misbehaviour

The purpose of sanctions and other strategies is to promote positive behaviour. It is important that teachers make it clear that it is the behaviour, which is being criticised, and not the person. At all times sanctions will be logical, leave the child's dignity intact and be proportionate to the misdemeanour committed. Teachers will avoid any early escalation to severe sanctions, reserving them for the most serious or persistent misbehaviour and all teachers will remember that individual children are responsible for their own behaviour, making a choice whether to behave or misbehave.

Through SPHE, Religious Education and the use of Circle Time, teachers encourage children to discuss, reflect and contribute to the solving of behaviour problems.

While consistency is an essential requirement, we realise it is also important to take account of individual circumstances.

Teachers keep a record of continuous inappropriate behaviour in class/school, and instances of serious unacceptable behaviour.

For some pupils it may be necessary to design a behaviour management plan in which specific, short-term behavioural targets are set, as a result of discussion with the child, parent(s)/guardian and teacher.

Parents are informed as soon as it is perceived that difficulties are developing with regard to their child's behaviour.

Role of the Board of Management

The B.O.M has the responsibility of setting down these general guidelines on standards of behaviour and discipline and of reviewing their effectiveness. They support the principal and staff in carrying out these guidelines.

The Principal has the day to day authority to implement the school behaviour and discipline policy, but the management Board may give advice to him/her about particular disciplinary issues. He/she will take this into account when making decisions about matters of behaviour.

Fixed-term and permanent exclusions

Only the Principal (or acting Principal) has the power to exclude a pupil from school. He/she may exclude a pupil for one or more fixed periods of 1-3 days, up to 20 days in any one school year. He/she may also exclude a pupil permanently. It is also possible for the principal to convert a fixed-term exclusion into a permanent exclusion, if the circumstances warrant this.

If the principal excludes a pupil he /she informs the parents immediately, (usually by telephone first, then in writing,) giving reasons for the exclusion. At the same time, she/he makes it clear to the parents that they can, if they wish, appeal against the decision to the Board of Management. If necessary, they may then appeal to the secretary General of the Dept. of Education and Science. Appeals must generally be made within 42 days from the date the decision of the school was notified to the parent. The school informs the parents about how to make any such appeal. The Principal informs the Board of Management about any permanent exclusion. The Board of Management itself cannot either exclude a pupil or extend the exclusion period made by the principal.

When an appeals panel meet to consider exclusion, they consider the circumstances in which the pupil was excluded, consider any representation by parents and consider whether the pupil should be reinstated.

If the Board of Management appeals panel decides that a pupil must be reinstated, the Principal must comply with this ruling.

Review and Ratification

This policy was updated and ratified in 2020

This policy will be reviewed at the end of the 2023 school year or before that date should the need arise.

Signed: _____
Edward Forde (Chairperson Board of Management)