

Code of Behaviour

RATHGORMACK N.S.

Aims

The aims of the Code of Behaviour of Rathgormack N.S. are:

- To provide guidance for pupils, teachers and parents on behavioural expectations.
- To provide for the effective and safe operation of the school.
- To develop pupils' self-esteem and to promote positive behaviour.
- To foster the development of a sense of responsibility and self-discipline in pupils based on respect, consideration and tolerance of others.
- To facilitate the education and development of every child.
- To foster caring attitudes to one another and to the environment.
- To enable teachers to teach without disruption.

Formulation of Policy

Every member of the school community *i.e.* pupils, parents, teachers, ancillary staff and BOM has had a role to play in the formulation of this Code of Behaviour. It has been drawn up under the NEWB Guidelines in line with Section 23 of the Education Welfare Act 2000.

The NEWB guidelines as referred to in the Code of Behaviour is accessible on http://www.newb.ie/codes_of_behaviour_guidelines/introduction.asp

Pupils and parents

- Participating in consultation (Discussion of behaviour, classroom rules, yard rules, homework policy, parents council, public drafts for parents view and provide feedback).
- Generating information
- Contributing to evaluation
- Giving ideas about improvements

Staff

- Planning (Cuiditheoir, in-service planning day).
- Ensuring involvement and participation (Each staff member reviewed existing code and worked on various areas of amendment).
- Gathering information
- Reviewing feedback (As a staff we shared and discussed our findings. By staff meeting in term 3 2010, feedback from all parties was collated and final draft prepared for ratification by the B.O.M.
- Policy reviewed May 2016.
- Proposing options for the future (Date for next review: 2019/2020).

Principal

- Leadership
- Direction
- Coordination (Assigning staff roles as outlined above).
- Communication (To whole school community).

Board of Management

- Vision (Reflected in school ethos and policies).
- Overseeing (Discussed during B.O.M. meetings).

- Participation (Provide feedback on draft document).
- Ratification

General Guidelines for Positive Behaviour

1. Pupils are expected to treat all adults and fellow pupils with respect and courtesy at all times. Behaviour that interferes with the rights of others to learn and to feel safe is unacceptable.
2. Pupils are expected to show respect for all school property and to keep the school environment clean and litter free.
3. Pupils are expected to take pride in their appearance, to have all books and required materials and to be in the right place at the right time.
4. Pupils are expected to obey a teacher's instructions, to work to the best of their ability and to present assignments neatly.
5. Pupils are expected to attend every day unless there is a genuine reason for absence, in which case the school must be informed in writing on return of the pupil, stating the reason for absence. To satisfy both parents and staff of the safe arrival of pupils to school, parents should also phone/text on the morning of the absence informing the school where the child is.
6. Should it be necessary for a child to arrive late, the child must report to the office to sign in. Should it be necessary for a child to leave early from school, the adult collecting the child must report to the office to sign out.

Setting standards of Behaviour

The standards expect all members of the school community, (as outlined on opening page) and in addition visitors to the school, to behave in ways that show respect for others.

Standards signalling positive values

- Respect for self and others.
- Kindness and willingness to help others.
- Courtesy and good manners.
- Fairness.
- Readiness to use respectful ways of resolving difficulties and conflicts.
- Forgiveness.

Standards signalling unacceptable behaviour

Standards are also a way of signalling to members of the school community the kinds of behaviours that are not acceptable in the school, for example:

- 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.
- Bullying

Bullying

Bullying is repeated verbal, psychological or physical aggression by an individual or group against others. The most common forms of bullying are aggressive physical contact, name-calling, intimidation, extortion, isolation and taunting. Bullying will not be tolerated and parents will be expected to co-operate with the school at all times in dealing with instances of bullying in accordance with the school's Anti-Bullying Policy.

Modelling the standards

The responsibility of adults

The adults in the school have a responsibility to model the school's standards of behaviour, in their dealings both with students and with each other, since their example is a powerful source of learning for students.

Parents are expected to model the standards that students are asked to respect. In order to do this, they need to be familiar with the standards and to understand the importance of expecting students to behave according to these standards.

The ways in which parents and teachers interact will provide students with a model of good working relationships.

Affirming Positive Behaviour

Positive reinforcement of good behaviour leads to better self-discipline and we place a greater emphasis on rewards and incentives than on sanctions.

Strategies/Incentives

- A quiet word or gesture to show approval.
- A comment on a child's exercise book.
- A visit to another class or Principal for commendation.
- Praise in front of class group.
- Individual class merit awards, points awards or award stamps.
- Delegating some special responsibility or privilege.
- Written or verbal communication with parent.

Linkage within curriculum

Each classroom teacher within the guidelines of the Revised Curriculum uses various sources to affirm positive behaviour.

- SPHE – Walk Tall, Stay Safe, Be Safe, Circle Time, Action for Life and Content Objectives.
- Alive 0
- Working in pairs and groups in all areas of the curriculum and school initiatives.

School Rules

School rules are kept to a minimum and are devised with regard for the health, safety and welfare of all members of the school community. If a school is to function efficiently, it is necessary that rules and regulations are clearly stated and enforced consistently and fairly.

Types of Misbehaviour

Minor

- Lack of courtesy and good manners towards others.
- Name Calling
- Punctuality issues.
- Minor behaviour that interferes with teaching and learning e.g. verbal interruptions, distracting others, lack of participation or concentration.
- Homework issues.

- Minor theft or damage to property/school environment e.g. taking another child's rubber, writing on table.
- Intentionally telling untruths.

Serious

- Behaviour that is harmful including bullying, harassment, discrimination and victimisation.
- Persistent Name Calling
- Intentionally telling untruths.
- Threats or physical hurt to another person.
- Continuous behaviour that interferes regularly with teaching and learning.
- Complete disobedience, disrespect and disregard towards others.
- Leaving school grounds without permission.

Gross

- Serious deliberate theft or damage to property/school environment e.g. theft of money or valuables, vandalism, breaking a window.
- Inappropriate behaviour: such as of a sexual nature, use of a mobile phone without permission from school, smoking, drug or substance abuse.

This is not an exhaustive list.

Discouraging Misbehaviour

The purpose of sanctions and other strategies is to promote positive and discourage misbehaviour. Sanctions will be applied according to the gravity of the misbehaviour, with due regard to age and emotional development. These may include:

Sanctions for Minor Misbehaviour of pupils

- Reasoning with pupil.
- Verbal reprimand including advice on how to improve.
- Prescribing extra work.
- Loss of privileges
- Temporary separation from peers within class and/or temporary removal to a supervised location.
- Communication with parents.

Sanctions for Serious Misbehaviour of pupils

- Loss of privileges.
- Temporary separation from peers within class and/or temporary removal to a supervised location.
- Communication with parents.
- Referral to Principal.
- Principal communicating with parents.
- Parents invited to school to discuss behaviour.
- The issue may need to be brought to the attention of the Board of Management
- Exclusion (Suspension or Expulsion) from school may be deemed necessary and the school will follow the guidelines as set out by the NEWB and section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

Sanctions for gross misbehaviour

- Suspension/ Expulsion
- Referral to Gardaí /Juvenile Liaison Officer / HSE where appropriate

Pupils will not be deprived of engagement in a Curricular Area, except on the grounds of health/safety.

Sanctions for Misbehaviour of adults

If any adult member of the school community is seen not to uphold the standards expected of them as outlined in the Code of Behaviour the following sanctions will apply.

- Disapproval expressed by principal
- Disapproval expressed by Board of Management
- If issue comes under Child Protection referral to HSE or Gardaí
- Under Section 24(3) of the Education Act(1998) procedures are laid down for the Suspension and Dismissal of teachers

Students with special educational needs

Students with special educational needs may require help to understand and observe the code. Students with learning difficulties may need to be taught how to relate cause and effects of behaviour in more tangible ways, for example through pictures, film or role-play etc., They may not be able to predict consequences as easily as their peers and so may be vulnerable.

Before/After School

Parents are reminded that the staff of the school does not accept responsibility for pupils before official opening time of 9.00 am or after the official closing time of 1.40 pm (infants) 2.40 pm (other classes) except where pupils are engaged in an extra-curricular activity organised by the school and approved by the Board of Management. Pupils involved in such activities are expected to behave in accordance with school behaviour policy during these times.

Suspensions and expulsions

A proposal to exclude a student through suspension/expulsion is warranted only by very serious misbehaviour or gross misbehaviour. Aggressive, threatening or violent misbehaviour towards a teacher or pupil will be regarded as very serious or gross misbehaviour.

Care will be taken to ensure that all matters to do with an investigation of alleged misbehaviour will be dealt with in confidence.

The principles of fair procedures will be applied to –

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

The principles of fair procedures are:

- (1) The right to be heard
- (2) The right to impartiality in the investigation and decision-making.

Refer to NEWB guidelines (see appendix 1)

Suspension

Suspension is defined as: requiring the pupil to absent him/herself from the school for a specified, limited period of school days.

During this period, the pupil retains their place in the school.

The board of management has the authority to suspend a pupil. Where this authority is delegated to the principal, the delegation will be done formally and in writing.

The decision to suspend a pupil must have serious grounds such as that:

- The pupils' behaviour has had a seriously detrimental effect on the education of other pupils.
- The pupils' continued presence in the school at this time constitutes a threat to safety.
- The student is responsible for serious damage to property.
- Aggressive, threatening or violent misbehaviour towards a teacher or pupil will be regarded as very serious or gross misbehaviour.
- The pupil has engaged in inappropriate behaviour such as of a sexual nature, smoking, drug or substance abuse of any kind.

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

Factors to consider before suspending a student- (see appendix 2 of NEWB Guidelines)

Suspension will be part of an agreed plan to address the pupils' behaviour. The suspension should:

- Enable the school to set behaviour goals with the pupil and their parents.
- Give school staff an opportunity to plan other interventions.
- Impress on a pupil and their parents the seriousness of the behaviour.

Forms of suspension

- **Immediate** suspension: In exceptional circumstances this may be considered necessary where the continued presence of the pupil in the school would represent a serious threat to the safety of pupils or staff, or any other person.
- **'Automatic'** suspension: Serious misconduct as deemed by Principal/Deputy Principal for particular named behaviours as outlined above.
- **Informal or unacknowledged** suspension: (Guidelines pg 74 -78 will be adhered to).

Procedures in respect of suspension

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

1. Inform the pupil and parents

The school will let the pupil and their parents know about the complaint, how it will be investigated, and that it could result in suspension.

Parents may be informed by phone and in writing, depending on the seriousness of the matter.

2. Give an opportunity to respond

A meeting with the pupil and their parents will provide an opportunity for them to give their side of the story and to ask questions. The school will record invitations to these meetings and the parents' response. If a student and their parents fail to attend a meeting, the Principal will write advising 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 negative behaviour.

Procedures in relation to immediate suspension

Where this is considered by the principal to be warranted for reasons of safety of pupil, other pupils, staff or others a preliminary investigation will be conducted to establish the case for the suspension.

In this case the parents will be notified and arrangements made with them for the pupil to be collected.

The period of suspension

A pupil will not be suspended for more than 3 days, except in exceptional circumstances where it is considered that a longer period is needed to achieve a particular objective.

B.O.M. should give guidance on kinds of circumstances where longer suspensions might be approved. The BOM must consider and approve a proposed suspension of longer than 3 days. However, where a meeting of the board cannot be convened in a timely fashion the board may authorise the principal to impose a suspension of up to 5 days. The board should normally place a ceiling of 10 days on any one period of suspension imposed by it.

The board will formally review any proposal to suspend a pupil, where the suspension would bring the number of days for which the pupil has been suspended in the current school year to 20 days or more. Any such suspension is subject to appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

Appeals

The B.O.M. will offer an opportunity to parents to appeal a principal's decision to suspend a pupil. If parents wish to appeal it should be done formally in writing to the B.O.M. The Board will discuss the issue and inform the parents of their decision within 21 days. If the appeal is upheld and the suspension has already taken place then record of the suspension will be permanently removed from the child's record.

In the case of a B.O.M decision to suspend, an appeals process may be provided by the Patron.

Section 29 appeal

Where the total number of days for which the pupil has been suspended in the current school year reaches 20 days, the parents may appeal the suspension under section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

When parents are being notified of such a suspension, they and the pupil will be told about their right to appeal to the Secretary General of the Dept of Education and Science under section 29 of the Education Act 1998, and will be given information about how to appeal.

Implementing the suspension

Written notification

The principal will notify the parents and the pupil in writing of the decision to suspend. The letter will confirm:

- The period of suspension and the dates on which it will begin and end
- The reasons for the suspension
- Any study programme to be followed
- Arrangements for returning to school, including any commitments to be entered into by the pupil and the parents (e.g. Reaffirming their commitment to the code of behaviour)
- Provision for an appeal to the B.O.M.
- The right to appeal to the Secretary General of the Dept of Education and Science (Education Act 1998 Section 29)

Re-integration of student

The school will help the student to take responsibility for catching up on work missed and reintegrate fully into school life.

Records and reports

Formal written records will be kept of:

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

The Principal should report all suspensions to the Board of Management, with the reasons for and the duration of each suspension.

Expulsion

A student is expelled from a school when a Board of Management makes a decision to permanently exclude him/her from the school having complied with the provisions of section 24 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.

The Board of Management of a recognised school has the authority to expel a student. As a matter of best practice, that authority should be reserved to the Board of Management and should not be delegated.

The grounds for expulsion

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.
- Seeking the assistance of support agencies.

A proposal to expel a student requires serious grounds such as that:

- The student's behaviour is a persistent cause of significant disruption to the learning of others or to the teaching process.
- The student's continued presence in the school constitutes a real and significant threat to safety.
- The student 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, school authorities have tried a series of other interventions, and believe they have exhausted all possibilities for changing the student's behaviour.

'Automatic' expulsion

A Board of Management may decide, as part of the school's policy on sanctions, and following the consultation process with the principal, parents, teachers and students that particular named behaviours or repeated incidents as listed above incur expulsion as a sanction.

Expulsion for a first offence

There may be exceptional circumstances where the Board of Management forms the opinion that a student should be expelled for a first 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:

- A serious threat of violence against another student or member of staff.
- Actual violence or physical assault.
- Supplying illegal drugs to other students in the school.
- Sexual assault.

Determining the appropriateness of expelling a student. (See appendix. 3).

Procedures in respect of expulsion

Schools are required by law to follow fair procedures as well as procedures prescribed under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, when proposing to expel a student (See appendix. 1). Where a preliminary assessment of the facts confirms serious misbehaviour that could warrant expulsion, the procedural steps will include:

1. A detailed investigation carried out under the direction of the Principal.
2. A recommendation to the Board of Management by the Principal.
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.
5. Consultations arranged by the Educational Welfare Officer.
6. Confirmation of the decision to expel.
7. School will strictly adhere to NEWB guidelines.

It is a matter for each Board of Management to decide which of the tasks involved in these procedural steps requires separate meetings and which tasks can be accomplished together in a single meeting, consistent with giving parents due notice of meetings and a fair and reasonable time to prepare for a Board hearing.

The Principal should give parents and the student every opportunity to respond to the complaint of serious misbehaviour before a decision is made and before a sanction is imposed.

Appeals

A parent may appeal a decision to expel to the secretary General of the Department of Education and Science (Education Act 1998 section 29). An appeal may also be brought by the National Educational Welfare Board on behalf of a student.

The appeals process

The appeals process under section 29 of the Education Act 1998 begins with the provision of mediation by a mediator nominated by the Appeals Committee (Department of Education and Science). For further details about the Appeals process, including requirements for documentation, and the steps in the process, refer to current DES guidance.

Review of use of expulsion

The Board of Management should 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.

Implementation of the Code of Behaviour

Every member of the school community has a role to play in the implementation of the Code of Behaviour. Rules will be kept to a minimum, emphasise positive behaviour and will be applied in a fair and consistent manner, with due regard to the age of the pupils and to individual difference. Good behaviour will be encouraged and rewarded. Where difficulties arise, parents will be contacted at an early stage.

Board of Management's Role

- Provide a comfortable, safe environment.
- Support the Principal and staff in implementing the code.
- Ratify the code.

Principal's Role

- Promote a positive climate in the school.
- Ensure that the Code of Behaviour is implemented in a fair and consistent manner.
- Consult with staff on a regular informal basis as to the working of the Code.
- Arrange for review of the Code, as required.
- Report absences over 20 days to NEWB as required.

Teachers' Role

Support and implement the school's code of behaviour.

- Create a safe working environment for each pupil.
- Recognise and affirm good work and behaviour according to each child's individual ability.
- Teaching the code and building students' competence.
- Prepare school work and correct work done by pupils.
- Recognise and provide for individual talents and differences among pupils.
- Be courteous, consistent and fair.
- Keep opportunities for disruptive behaviour to a minimum.
- Deal appropriately with misbehaviour.
- Keep a record of instances of serious misbehaviour or repeated instances of misbehaviour.
- Provide support for colleagues.
- Timely communication with parents when necessary and provide reports on matters of mutual concern.

Pupils' Role

- Attend school regularly and punctually.
- Listen to their teachers and act on instructions/advice.
- Show respect for all members of the school community.
- Respect all school property and the property of other pupils.
- Avoid behaving in any way which would endanger others.
- Avoid all nasty remarks, swearing and name-calling.
- Include other pupils in games and activities.
- Bring correct materials/books to school.
- Follow school and class rules.
- Adhere to all school policies.

Parents/Guardians' Role

Encourage children to have a sense of respect for themselves and for property.

- Ensure that children attend regularly and punctually.
- Be interested in, support and encourage their children's school work.
- Be familiar with the Code of Behaviour and support its implementation.
- Co-operate with teachers in instances where their child's behaviour is causing difficulties for others.
- Timely communication with the school in relation to any problems which may affect child's progress/behaviour.
- Ensure that children adhere to all school policies.

Review/Evaluation/Implementation

This code has been ratified by the B.O.M. and it will be constantly monitored and evaluated by all staff on an on-going basis e.g. as a standing item on Staff Meeting agenda.

This policy will be formally reviewed in 2019/2020.

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POLICY RATIFIED BY BOARD OF MANAGEMENT: 23/5/2016

POLICY REVIEWED BY BOARD OF MANAGEMENT: 25th June 2019

SIGNED:

Chairperson: Francis Quigley

Principal: Cathy Power