



## *Scoil Mhuire Gowran*

# Code of Behaviour

### **Introduction:**

This policy document was drawn up by the staff of Scoil Mhuire, in consultation with the Board of Management and parents/guardians in order to outline our practices and procedures in fostering a positive school culture where good behaviour is supported and promoted.

### **Rationale:**

- It is a requirement under the Education Welfare Act, 2000, Section 23 to prepare a code of Behaviour in respect of the students of the school. This policy ensures compliance with the legal requirements and good practice as set out in Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools, NEWB, 2008.
- The Code of Behaviour will help the school community to promote our school ethos and will outline procedures and practices that encourage good behaviour and help prevent unacceptable behaviour.
- The Code of Behaviour will enable the staff, pupils and parents to work together for a happy, effective and safe school.

### **Relationship to School Ethos:**

This policy complements the school ethos of nurturing potential in a caring environment where the welfare of children is paramount and where we promote the holistic development of the child including academic, physical, moral, emotional, spiritual, aesthetic, cultural, social & personal development.

### **Aims:**

- To enhance the learning environment where children can make progress in all aspects of their development
- To create an atmosphere of respect, tolerance and consideration for others
- To promote positive behaviour and self-discipline, recognising the differences between children and the need to accommodate these differences
- To ensure the safety and well being of all members of the school community
- To assist parents and pupils in understanding the systems and procedures that form part of the code of behaviour and to seek their co-operation in the application of these procedures

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- To ensure that the system of rules, rewards and sanctions are implemented in a fair and consistent manner throughout the school

### Whole school approach to promoting positive behaviour – roles and responsibilities

The importance of a whole school approach to the promotion of positive behaviour is paramount to the successful implementation of this policy. The key elements of this approach are:

- Teamwork – involving staff, pupils, parents and the Board of Management
- Ethos, policies and practices that are in harmony and support each other
- A whole school approach to curriculum and classroom management
- An inclusive and involved school community
- An on-going systematic process for planning and reviewing behaviour policy

#### ***Pupils can expect to:***

- ✓ Be treated fairly, equally and with respect
- ✓ Feel safe
- ✓ Learn in a safe environment
- ✓ Have positive behaviours affirmed
- ✓ Be listened to
- ✓ Have clear boundaries set for them and rules reinforced

#### ***Pupils are expected to: (school rules)***

- ✓ Be respectful towards other pupils, staff and visitors
- ✓ Walk quietly when entering and leaving the school
- ✓ Listen to all staff when they are spoken to
- ✓ Work to the best of their ability
- ✓ Be truthful and honest at all times
- ✓ Know and follow the school rules and procedures
- ✓ Be mannerly, kind and caring – treat others as you would like to be treated
- ✓ Act responsibly and safely
- ✓ Wear full uniform and flat shoes
- ✓ Leave jewellery at home – watches and stud earring only allowed
- ✓ Respect property

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### ***On the playground pupils are expected to: (playground rules)***

- ✓ Treat each other with respect
- ✓ Walk to and from the playground
- ✓ Line up in a quiet, straight line when the bell rings
- ✓ Play safely
- ✓ Stay in your own play area
- ✓ Children must ask permission to leave the yard
- ✓ Follow instructions of all staff

Classroom rules will be devised each September in the respective classes in collaboration with the pupils.

Staff members, supported by the Board of Management, adopt a positive approach to discipline within the school. Children are encouraged and praised for their efforts in maintaining discipline.

### ***Staff can expect:***

- ✓ To be treated with respect
- ✓ A safe work environment, that is positive and supportive
- ✓ Good standards of behaviour to facilitate good teaching and learning
- ✓ To be listened to
- ✓ Instructions / sanctions to be followed
- ✓ To have the support of colleagues, management and parents

### ***Staff are expected to:***

- ✓ Treat everyone fairly and listen to others
- ✓ Be familiar with and implement school rules and policies in a consistent manner
- ✓ Be kind and caring
- ✓ Be respectful and fair
- ✓ Keep pupils safe
- ✓ Create a welcoming, happy and safe environment
- ✓ Be clear with their own expectations
- ✓ Act professionally in dealings with all members of the school community
- ✓ Adhere to the codes of conduct for teachers

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Parental support is vital for the promotion of positive behaviour and the maintenance of high standards of behaviour. Parents are required as a condition of enrolment to confirm their acceptance of the code and to support its implementation.

### Parents can expect:

- ✓ A safe place for their children
- ✓ To be treated with respect
- ✓ To be listened to and kept informed
- ✓ To be treated equally, kindly and with respect
- ✓ To be made aware of issues and these to be treated with confidence
- ✓ To be notified of improved or deteriorated behaviour of their children
- ✓ To receive progress reports through parent teacher meetings and end of year reports

### Parents are expected to:

- ✓ Respect and support the school's code of behaviour and other policies
- ✓ Support teachers and staff and have a positive attitude towards the school and homework
- ✓ Have their child in full uniform, with all required materials and a healthy lunch
- ✓ Ensure their child completes their homework and sign the school journal
- ✓ Model a problem solving approach for their children and develop resilience in their children
- ✓ Have their children on time for school and collected on time
- ✓ Ensure their child attends school
- ✓ Communicate to the school any problems or changes in personal circumstances which may affect their child's behaviour
- ✓ Co-operate with teachers and the principal in instances where their child's behaviour is causing difficulty
- ✓ Arrange meetings by appointment

### General school strategies

#### Attendance

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Principal-Damien Aylward

Deputy Principal-Olivia O'Keefe

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- The school grounds will be open to receive pupils at 9.05am
- Junior and Senior Infants will be collected at 2pm unless they travel by bus.
- For the remaining classes, school closes at 3pm.
- Children are to be dropped off and collected punctually.
- A note/ phone call is required if a pupils has been, or will be absent, or if he/ she has to leave during school hours.
- Pupils leaving during the school day have to be signed out in the office.
- Pupil absences in excess of twenty days are reported, as is mandatory, to Tusla.

### **School Related Activities:**

The standards expected in the Code of Behaviour and school procedures apply in any situation where pupils are under the responsibility of the school. These include school tours, swimming, going to and from church, field trips, after school games and concerts etc

### **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 principal. The principal 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.

The children in the class or school may be taught strategies to assist a pupil with special needs adhere to the rules and thus provide peer support. This will be done in a supportive and safe way, acknowledging and respecting the difference in all individual

### **Rewards and sanctions**

#### **Rewards and acknowledgement of good behaviour**

Our aim is to help children achieve their personal best – academically, intellectually and socially. We place greater emphasis on rewards than on sanctions in the belief that this will, in the long run, give best results.

The following are some samples of how praise and affirmation is given:

- a quiet word or gesture of praise
- a comment in a pupil's exercise book.
- a visit to another member of staff or to the Principal for commendation.
- a word of praise in front of a group or class.
- a system of merit marks or stickers or dojo points.
- special class treats – e.g. golden time, homework pass, extra playtime.
- delegating some special responsibility or privilege.
- a mention to parent, written or verbal communication.

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### **Strategies for responding to inappropriate behaviour**

While we promote and reward positive behaviour, misdemeanours need to be recognised and dealt with and sanctions may be administered. Behaviour that interferes with the rights of others to learn and to feel safe is unacceptable.

#### **The purpose of a sanction is to bring about a change in behaviour by:**

- helping students to learn that their behaviour is unacceptable
- helping them to recognise the effect of their actions and behaviour on others
- helping students (in ways appropriate to their age and development) to understand that they have choices about their own behaviour and that all choices have consequences
- helping them to learn to take responsibility for their behaviour.

#### **A sanction may also:**

- reinforce the boundaries set out in the Code of Behaviour
- signal to other students and to staff that their wellbeing is being protected.

#### **In instances of more serious breaches of school standards, sanctions may be needed to:**

- prevent serious disruption of teaching and learning
- keep the student, or other students or adults, safe.

#### **The use of sanctions or consequences will be characterised by certain features:**

- It will be clear why the sanction is being applied
- The consequence will relate as closely as possible to the behaviour
- It will be made clear what changes in behaviour are required to avoid future sanctions
- There should be a clear distinction between minor and serious/gross offences
- It will be **the behaviour** rather than the person that is the focus
- The sanction will be age appropriate and proportionate to the offence

The following steps may be used **individually or collectively** to show consequences of unacceptable behaviour:

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 for a cooling off period.
4. Prescribing extra work
5. Loss of privileges- Golden Time or other discretionary curricular time relevant to each class
6. Teacher time during breaks.
7. Referral to principal.
8. Communication with parents by class teacher.

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9. Principal communicates with parents.
10. Suspension
11. Expulsion

**This list may not always be followed in the order outlined above. The sanction or sanctions used will always be considered in light of any specific misbehaviour.**

Teachers are encouraged to keep a written record of all instances of serious misbehaviour as well as a record of improvements in the behaviour of disruptive pupils. Before resorting to serious sanctions e.g. suspension, **the normal channels of communication between school and parents will be utilised.**

Any usage of the internet, digital media or mobile phone which intrudes on the privacy and dignity of the staff, students or their families is deemed a serious breach of the Code of Discipline. Any behaviour which endangers the health and safety of any member of the school community, including the inappropriate use of social media, is treated with the utmost seriousness by the Principal and Board of Management.

### **Policies and procedures for suspension or expulsion**

#### **Suspension**

Suspension is defined as requiring the student to absent himself/herself from the school for a specified, limited period of school days. The Board of Management of Gowran NS has delegated the authority to suspend a student, to the principal, for suspensions of up to three days.

Suspension will only be used where all other sanctions have failed, or in instances of very serious misbehaviour. The decision to suspend a student requires serious grounds such as that:

- the student’s behaviour has had a seriously detrimental effect on the education of other students
- the student’s continued presence in the school at this time constitutes a threat to safety
- the student is responsible for serious damage to property.

A single incident of serious misbehaviour may be grounds for suspension. Teachers shall keep a written record of all instances of serious misbehaviour. Before resorting to Suspension, the normal channels of communication between school and parents will be utilised. Parents will be involved at an early stage, rather than a last resort. The factors to be considered before suspending a student as per the **NEWB guidelines for developing a Code of Behaviour pg.72** will be used when considering a suspension. **See appendix 1 attached**

#### **Immediate suspension**

In the case of gross misbehaviour, where it is necessary to ensure that order and discipline are maintained and to secure the safety of the pupils, the principal may consider an immediate suspension for a period not exceeding three school days, pending a discussion of the matter with the parents to be necessary where the continued presence of the student in the school at the time would represent a serious threat to the safety of students or staff of the school, or any other person. Fair procedures must still be applied.

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Where an immediate suspension is considered by the principal to be warranted for reasons of the safety of the student, other students, staff or others, 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. Parents will be notified, and arrangements made with them for the student to be collected.

### Procedures in respect of suspension

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

**Note:** Aggressive, abusive, threatening or violent behaviour towards a teacher or pupils will always be regarded as serious misbehaviour and will be investigated as possible gross misbehaviour.

- **inform the student and their parents about the complaint**

The school will let the student 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 or in writing, depending on the seriousness of the matter.

- **give parents and student an opportunity to respond.**

Parents and student will be given an opportunity to respond before a decision is made and before any sanction is imposed. A meeting with the student and their parents provides an opportunity for them to give their side of the story and to ask questions about the evidence of serious misbehaviour, especially where there is a dispute about the facts. If a student and their parents fail to attend a meeting, the Principal will write advising of the gravity of the matter, the importance of attending a re-scheduled meeting and, failing that, the duty of the school authorities to make a decision to respond to the negative behaviour. The school will record the invitations made to parents and their response.

Before serious sanctions such as suspension or expulsion are used, **the normal channels of communication between school and parents/guardians will be utilised.**

Prior to any suspension, where possible, the principal may review the case in consultation with teachers and other members of the school community, with due regard to records of previous misbehaviour, their pattern and context, sanctions and other interventions used and their outcomes as well as any relevant medical information or special educational needs. Suspension will be in accordance with the Rules for National Schools and the Education Welfare Act 2000.

### The period of suspension

A student will not be suspended for more than three days, except in exceptional circumstances where the Principal considers that a period of suspension longer than three days is needed in order to achieve a particular objective. If a suspension longer than three days is being proposed by the Principal, the matter will be referred to the Board of Management for consideration and approval. The Board of Management will normally place a ceiling of ten days on any one period of suspension imposed by it.



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The Board will formally review any proposal to suspend a student, where the suspension would bring the number of 10 days for which the student 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.

### Appeals

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

### Section 29 Appeal

Where the total number of days for which the student has been suspended in the current school year reaches twenty days, the parents, may appeal the suspension under section 29 of the Education Act 1998, as amended by the Education (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2007.

### Implementing the suspension

**Written notification-** The Principal will notify the parents and the student in writing of the decision to suspend.

The letter will confirm:

- the period of the suspension and the dates on which the suspension will begin and end
- the reasons for the suspension
- any study programme to be followed
- the arrangements for returning to school, including any commitments to be entered into by the student and the parents (for example, parents might be asked to reaffirm their commitment to the code of behaviour and to commit to an individual behaviour plan)
- the provision for an appeal to the Board of Management
- the right to appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education (Education Act 1998, section 29).

### Grounds for removing a suspension

A suspension may be removed if the Board of Management decides to remove the suspension for any reason or if the Secretary General of the Department of Education directs that it be removed following an appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

### Re-integrating the student

The school will plan to help the student to take responsibility for catching up on work missed.

### Clean slate

When the suspension is completed, a student will be given the opportunity and support for a fresh start. Although a record is kept of the behaviour, and any sanction imposed, once the sanction has been completed the school should expect the same behaviour of this student as of all other students.

### Records and reports - Records of investigation and decision-making

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.

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### Report to the Board of Management

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

### Report to NEWB

The principal is required to report suspensions in accordance with the NEWB reporting guidelines (Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, section 21(4)(a)).

### Review of use of suspension

The Board of Management will review the use of suspension following the imposition of a suspension.

### Expulsion

A student is expelled from the school when the Board of Management makes a decision to permanently exclude him/her from the school. Expulsion may be considered in an extreme case, in accordance with Education Welfare Act. The Board of Management of Gowran NS has the authority to expel a student. The school will 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 (e.g. National Educational Psychological Service, Health Service Executive Community Services, the National Behavioural Support Service, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, National Council for Special Education, Special Education Support Service).

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 are 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.

### 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

**The factors to be considered before expelling a student as per the NEWB guidelines for schools pg.82 will be used when considering an expulsion.**

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### Procedures in respect of expulsion

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 BOM 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.

The school will refer to the guidelines pg.83-86 in the event of an expulsion. Where expulsion is being considered, the parents of the pupil involved will be given a copy of the procedures in relation to expulsion.

### Appeals

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

### Review of use of expulsion

The Board of Management will review the use of expulsion in the school following an expulsion.

### Record keeping –

Class, yard and school level Incidents of misbehaviour which are on-going in nature or serious will be recorded on the school database system ‘Aladdin’. The ‘behaviour log of actions’ notes the following information:

- Date and location
- Incident of misbehaviour
- Pupils involved
- Name of supervising teacher
- Actions taken

These records are kept on file indefinitely, as is recommended by management bodies.

### Bullying

#### **Definition of bullying: As outlined in school policy**

Bullying or any form of intimidation in school is forbidden and all allegations of bullying including bullying itself will be dealt with in line with the national procedures and school policy.

#### **Procedures for raising a concern or bringing a complaint about a behaviour matter**

If a parent has a concern he/she should:

1. write a note/email to the teacher or phone the teacher
2. arrange an appointment to meet with the teacher to discuss the issue

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3. arrange an appointment to meet with the principal (following step 2) if necessary.

If a teacher has a concern he/she can:

- inform the principal
- write a note to the parent outlining behaviour
- speak with the parent in a phone call or in a meeting

### **Success Criteria:**

- Observation of positive behaviour in classrooms, playground and school environment
- Practices and procedures listed in this policy being implemented by teachers
- Positive feedback from teachers, SNAs, parents and pupils

### **Ratification and communication**

This Code of Behaviour will be reviewed and updated regularly. This policy was ratified by the Board of Management.

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## **Appendix 1**

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Suspension

<b>Factors to consider before suspending a student</b>
<b>The nature and seriousness of the behaviour</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the precise description of the behaviour?</li> <li>• How persistent has the unacceptable behaviour been?</li> <li>• Has the problem behaviour escalated, in spite of the interventions tried?</li> </ul>
<b>The context of the behaviour</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the circumstances of the incidents of serious misbehaviour (e.g. in class, in a particular teacher's class, in the yard, in a group)?</li> <li>• What factors may have triggered incidents of serious misbehaviour (e.g. bullying, cultural or family factors)?</li> <li>• What is the age, stage of development and cognitive ability of the student?</li> <li>• Are there any factors that may be associated with the behaviour (e.g. particular home circumstances, special educational needs)?</li> </ul>
<b>The impact of the behaviour</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How are other students and staff affected by the student's behaviour?</li> <li>• What is the impact of the behaviour on the teaching and learning of the class?</li> <li>• Does the behaviour have a particular or greater impact on some students or teachers?</li> <li>• Does the student understand the impact of their behaviour on others?</li> </ul>
<b>The interventions tried to date</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What interventions have been tried? Over what period?</li> <li>• How have the interventions been recorded and monitored?</li> <li>• What has been the result of those interventions?</li> <li>• Have the parents been involved in finding a solution to the problem behaviour?</li> <li>• Has the intervention of NEPS or other psychological assessment or counselling been sought, where appropriate?</li> <li>• Are any other interventions such as peer mediation, restorative justice approaches or family conferencing available?</li> <li>• Is the student or parent involved with any support service and has this agency or support service been asked for help in solving this problem?</li> <li>• Has any other agency been asked for assistance (e.g. Child Guidance Clinic, Child and Adolescent services)?</li> </ul>
<b>Whether suspension is a proportionate response</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the student's behaviour warrant suspension?</li> <li>• Is the standard being applied to judging the behaviour the same as the standard applied to the behaviour of any other student?</li> </ul>
<b>The possible impact of suspension</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will suspension allow additional or alternative interventions to be made?</li> <li>• Will suspension help the student to change the inappropriate behaviour?</li> <li>• How will suspension help teachers or other students affected by the behaviour?</li> <li>• Will suspension exacerbate any educational vulnerability of the student?</li> </ul>

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