



St. Patrick's NS Strangsmills

Code of behaviour policy

Revised: 2023

www.strangsmillsns.ie
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Code of behaviour

Introductory Statement

St. Patrick's N.S. Strangsmills 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. While we are a Catholic school, with a Catholic ethos, we also have due recognition for all other religions.

We will, in our school, strive to promote, both individually and collectively, the professional and personal development of teachers through staff development programmes. We will encourage the involvement of parents through home/school contacts. We will endeavour to enhance the self-esteem of everyone in the school community, to imbue in the pupils respect for people and property and to encourage in them the idea of being responsible. We will promote gender equity amongst staff and pupils.

This policy was prepared in accordance with Guidelines issued by the National Educational Welfare Board in 2009. This policy was reviewed and updated in 2019, involving input from staff, parents and pupils.

Rationale

Under the Education Welfare Act, 2000, Section 23 (1) *schools are obliged to prepare a code of behaviour in respect of the students registered at the school. It details in Section 23(2), that the code of behaviour shall specify:*

- *The standards of behaviour that shall be observed by each student attending the school;*
- *The measures that shall be taken when a student fails or refuses to observe those standards;*
- *The procedures to be followed before a student may be suspended or expelled from the school concerned;*
- *The grounds for removing a suspension imposed in relation to a student; and*
- *The procedures to be followed in relation to a child's absence from school.*

Aims

- To allow the school to function in an orderly and harmonious environment.
- To promote positive behaviour and self-discipline recognising the differences between pupils and the need to accommodate these differences.
- To enhance the learning environment where pupils can make progress in all aspects of their development.
- To ensure the safety and well-being of all members of the school community by encouraging an atmosphere of respect, tolerance and consideration for others.
- To achieve a high standard of behaviour requires a strong sense of community within the school and a high level of co-operation among staff and between staff, parents/guardians and pupils.
- To ensure that the system of rules, rewards and sanctions are implemented in a fair and consistent manner throughout the school.

In compliance with Section 23 (4) of the Education Act, prior to registering a pupil, parents/guardians will be issued with a copy of the school's Code of Behaviour and on application, parents/guardians will be asked to confirm in writing that they accept the school's policy *'and that they shall make all reasonable efforts to ensure compliance with such code'*.

Whole school approach to promoting positive behaviour – roles and responsibilities

The purpose of the school rules are to ensure that all pupils and staff can work and learn in a safe environment where disruptions are kept to a minimum, everyone is encouraged to reach their potential and an atmosphere of teamwork and respect permeates all interactions.

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
- ✓ Be kind to staff and grateful for rewards
- ✓ Work to the best of their ability
- ✓ Be truthful and honest at all times
- ✓ Know and follow the rules
- ✓ Be mannerly, kind and caring – treat others as you would like to be treated
- ✓ Use appropriate language at all time
- ✓ Act responsibly and safely
- ✓ Wear full uniform and flat shoes, sports jerseys must not be worn
- ✓ Leave jewellery at home – watches and stud earring only allowed
- ✓ Nails to be kept short and false eyelashes and false nails should not be worn for health and safety reasons
- ✓ Respect property

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

Our playground motto is:

kind hands, kind feet, kinds words

- ✓ Treat each other with respect
- ✓ Walk directly 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 with all children in the school
- ✓ Be kind and caring
- ✓ Be respectful and fair
- ✓ Keep pupils safe
- ✓ Create a welcoming, happy and safe environment
- ✓ Devise classroom rules in collaboration with the pupils
- ✓ Regularly remind pupils about the code of behaviour and school rules
- ✓ 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

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, in line with the healthy eating policy
- ✓ 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
- ✓ Provide an adequate breakfast for children before school
- ✓ Ensure their child attends school
- ✓ Communicate to the school any problems or changes in personal circumstances or sleep issues 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, always contacting the class teacher as the first point of contact if an issue arises

Systems for acknowledging good behaviour and effort

In St. Patrick NS we promote an atmosphere of positive behaviour. Good and improved behaviour is acknowledged and rewarded using any one of the following:

- A quiet word or gesture of praise
- A word of praise in front of a group/class.
- Caught being good
- A comment in a pupil's copybook
- A visit to another member of Staff or to the Principal
- Delegating some special responsibility or privilege.
- A mention to parent/guardians, written or verbal
- Stamps of approval, stickers, treats etc.
- Individual, group and whole class reward system
- Subject and homework passes
- Golden time – extra PE, Art, library time or ICT
- Individual 'punch' cards/points
- Extra break time
- Class dojo
- Student of the week
- Visit to the 'sensory room' with a friend
- Secret walker

Consequences of unacceptable behaviour

The Education (Welfare) Act 2000, Section 23, states that a school must outline 'the measures that may be taken if a student fails to observe the standards of behaviour that the school has outlined'.

Teachers will use their professional judgement and their knowledge of the child and the particular circumstances of the behaviour or incident in responding to unacceptable behaviour and in selecting an appropriate sanction. The sanction will be proportionate to the behaviour or incident in question. It may include:

- Reasoning with pupils
- Reprimand (including advice on how to improve).
- Written reflection on behaviour – 'Think sheet' discussed with and signed by parents
- Communication with parents/guardians (note, phone call or meeting)
- Classwork to be completed at home

- Thinking time / time out: Temporary separation from peers during class time or during break time
- Withdrawal from class temporarily to another classroom
- Loss of privileges (games on yard, golden time, school match, outings or tours)
- Referral to Principal/Deputy-Principal
- Suspension / Expulsion

The nature and context of the unacceptable behaviour will determine the consequence used in response. Even minor breaches of the code of behaviour can be disruptive, particularly if they are persistent. The purpose of a sanction is to help children learn that their unacceptable behaviour may have a negative effect on themselves, on others and on their learning. Sanctions aim to help them make better choices in the future.

Anti bullying

St. Patrick's NS has a separate and comprehensive Anti-Bullying Policy developed in line with "Anti Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools " September 2013 Department of Education.

Bullying is defined as unwanted, negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) which is repeated over time.

Procedure for notifying the school about reasons for absence from school

In accordance with the Education Welfare Act 2000, if a child is absent from school, the school must be notified in writing of the reason for absence.

On returning to school following an absence, the child will receive an "Absence Report Form". Parents are required to sign this form and indicate the reason for absence. The school is obliged to report absences of more than 20 days to the Tusla.

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 to the teacher/phone the teacher
2. arrange an appointment to meet with the teacher to discuss the issue
3. arrange an appointment to meet with the principal (following step 2) if necessary.

Please refer to the Complaints Procedure on the school website.

If a teacher has a concern he/she should:

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

Policies and procedures for 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 St. Patrick's 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 schools pg.72 will be used when considering a suspension. See appendix 1 attached

Immediate suspension

In exceptional circumstances, the Principal may consider an immediate suspension 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.

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:

- *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.

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

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 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.

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 St. Patrick's 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. See appendix 2 attached

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.

Ratification and communication

This Code of Behaviour will be reviewed and updated regularly. This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on June 27th 2023. It will be reviewed again in 2026/2027.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Chairperson of BOM