

CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

incorporating

School Behaviour Charter



school policy

revised 2010

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1. Introduction

1.1 Introductory statement

The school's Code of Behaviour and related policies are based on the *Discipline for Learning* system devised by Adrian Smith. It emphasises prevention of poor behaviour with the establishment of good behaviour management skills, rather than responding to negative behaviour.

1.2 Rationale

The specific objectives in the development of this policy are to attain

- clearly defined responsibilities for all partners in the school – Board of Management, staff, parents and children;
- a clear presentation of expectations for standards of behaviour within each classroom, and throughout the school and wider community;
- consistency in approach to discipline throughout the school, from class to class and teacher to teacher;
- procedures for positive recognition of good effort/behaviour;
- ways of recording of pupil/class behaviour/effort;
- a means of review of pupil progress over term/year(s).

The policy takes account of requirements under the *Education Welfare Act, 2000, Section 23 (1)* which refers to 'the obligation on schools to prepare a code of behaviour in respect of the students registered at the school', and of *Section 23(2)*, which required the code of behaviour to address matters relating to suspension and expulsion.

1.3 Relationship to the school's characteristic spirit / ethos

St Patrick's National School aims

- to provide a safe, caring, happy and disciplined environment where children's self-esteem, self-confidence, initiative and innovation can be nurtured within an atmosphere of mutual respect and appreciation, at all times valuing and celebrating the uniqueness of all individuals;
- to actively encourage children to care for themselves, their families and friends and their environment;

- to provide an environment where the children feel secure, knowing that if they have concerns, they will be listened to with understanding and respect, and their concerns will be addressed;
- to foster an understanding and cultural appreciation of the moral, spiritual, religious, social and cultural values which shape our society; and
- to nurture respect for such values.

2. Aims

This *Code of Behaviour* aims

- to ensure an educational environment that is guided by our school's ethos and characteristic spirit;
- to allow the school to function in an orderly way where children can make progress in all aspects of their development ;
- to create and develop 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 the Code of Behaviour, through the Behaviour Charter, and to ensure a spirit of co-operation in the application of these procedures;
- to ensure that the system of rules, rewards, and sanctions are implemented in a fair and consistent manner throughout the school;
- to present clearly defined responsibilities for all partners in the school – Board of Management, staff, parents and children.

3. Content of policy

3.1 Roles, responsibilities and guidelines

High standards of behaviour have an important effect on all aspects of school life. They allow children to learn in a calm and tolerant environment, while offering opportunities for development of self-confidence and awareness of the feelings and need of others through interaction with staff and peers. The *School Behaviour Charter* operated at St

Patrick's NS is based on the principles of consideration and respect for self, each other, the school and its environment – working toward the open, friendly atmosphere which we encourage throughout the school.

The school endeavours to treat all pupils in a consistent manner, while always taking special circumstances into consideration. From their arrival at school, pupils are guided as to how they are expected to behave and they are made aware of the rewards (or sanctions) that they should expect as a result of their behaviour. Most activity in this regard is through praise and encouragement, both of which are given on an on-going basis.

The charter supports the theory that children make a choice with regard to their behaviour (apart from obvious exceptional situations). Pupils learn that good behaviour brings desirable consequences. The school's rules, rewards and sanctions are revised and explained to pupils during the first weeks of each new school year, and each class develops its own set of classroom rules – with appropriate tailoring for the Junior and Senior Infant classes.

As with all school policies, the Board of Management relies on parents' support for the successful implementation of the charter. The *School Behaviour Charter* is given to all staff, and to families on joining the school. Parents are asked to discuss the general expectations with their children, as they consider appropriate to each child's age. On enrolment, a form agreeing to support the policy must be completed, signed by parents and returned to the school where it is placed in the child's file. Pupils in senior classes (Fourth to Sixth Classes) are encouraged to sign the form on their own behalf. The policy, including the *School Behaviour Charter*, is available on the school's web site and through the school office.

3.2 Whole-school approach

(ref 4. Curriculum)

'A positive school ethos is based on the quality of relationships between teachers and the ways in which pupils and teachers treat each other. This positive ethos permeates all the activities of the school, and helps in forming a strong sense of social cohesion within the school' (ref *Circular 20/90*).

Our children's chances of success and happiness in life, here and hereafter, depend considerably upon their ability to make responsible choices. To assist in fostering maturity in our pupils, a whole-school approach to discipline has been developed by the partners in our school community - the Board of Management, teachers and parents, as well as the pupils themselves.

This policy is based on the principles of consideration and respect for self, each other, the school and its environment. A central concept is the basic fact that no child has to misbehave. When anyone does misbehave, then he or she is making a positive choice to do so. Children can always choose to 'behave'. Pupils have to know that good behaviour brings desirable consequences.

The plan has three chief elements:

Rules

Pupils are presented with

- a set of classroom rules
- a set of guidelines for behaviour outside the classroom.

Rewards

In order to encourage pupils to choose to follow these rules and guidelines, a system of rewards is in place.

Behaviour checks

Pupils who choose to break a rule will have automatically chosen one of a list of consequences/sanctions.

All partners in the school community including Board of Management, teachers, parents and pupils make a commitment to the school charter.

3.2.1 The Board of Management

The Board of Management has primary responsibility for the care and welfare of the pupils. All members of staff have a general duty of care to ensure that arrangements are in place to encourage the highest standards of behaviour, while the Principal has

particular responsibility for ensuring the effective implementation of the *school's Code of Behaviour* (ref school's *Child Protection Policy*).

The school's behaviour charter specifies the commitments of the Board of Management as being:

- to protect and promote the ethos of the school;
- to ensure effective educational management and provision in the school;
- to provide a management and support structure which will facilitate the principal and staff in the fulfilment of the school's aims and objectives;
- to ensure that
 - the needs of pupils are identified and responded to;
 - school plans are developed, implemented and regularly evaluated;
 - the curriculum, assessment and general education provisions within the school are of a high quality and meet the requirements prescribed by the Department of Education and Skills (DES);
 - management and staff development needs are identified and provided for, within available resources;
 - procedures are in place through which parents can receive full information on all aspects of their children's educational progress;
 - the school complies with all the rules and regulations prescribed by the DES;
- to be responsible for all staff at the school;
- to implement the school's *Code of Behaviour*.

3.2.2 Staff

In our school, all children are treated with respect and dignity. There is a strong sense of community and cooperation among staff, pupils, parents and management, and all are agreed that their focus is primarily on the promotion and recognition of positive behaviour. It is noted that... 'It is important that the policy is accepted by all staff.' (Circular 20/90).

Staff members were involved in the initial drawing up of the *Code of Behaviour*, with its emphasis placed on preventing poor behaviour and the establishment of good behaviour management skills. An agreed sliding scale of behaviour checks is discussed at the first

staff meeting of each academic year. These behaviour checks are then discussed with the children and they are displayed in each classroom. Newly appointed teachers (permanent, temporary and substitute) are given a copy of the *Code of Behaviour*, for their reference, and are made aware of the behaviour posters in their classroom.

It may arise from time to time that a child presents with behavioural difficulties arising from their special education needs. In this situation an IEP with behavioural targets and specific strategies is drawn up in consultation with the relevant parties, as appropriate (ie Principal, class teacher, SEN teacher, SNA, parents, and external professional support). Other staff members are briefed on the behaviour management strategies on a need-to-know basis.

The *Code of Behaviour* commitments for staff are

- to ensure pupils' safety and well-being;
- to create a positive environment conducive to teaching and learning ;
- to be fair, courteous and approachable;
- to maintain positive home/school links;
- to be punctual, well-prepared and organised;
- to implement the school's *Code of Behaviour*.

3.2.3 Parents

'Evidence seems to indicate that schools which succeed in achieving and maintaining high standards of behaviour and discipline tend to be those with the best relationships with parents.'... 'Schools need the support of parents in order to meet legitimate expectations with regard to good behaviour and discipline.' (DES, *Circular 20/90*).

Co-operation between staff and parents is encouraged at all times, with numerous opportunities for communication throughout the year, both in a structured format and more informally (ref *Home-school communication policy*).

Parents were involved in the formulation and implementation of this policy, through a representative committee that included members of the Board of Management, parents and teaching staff who reviewed the existing policy and developed a draft that was then presented to the Board of Management.

The *Code of Behaviour* is communicated to parents on the enrolment of their child, and parents are required to make a commitment to support the policy and to support the school in the promotion of positive behaviour and the maintenance of high standards of behaviour. They are aware of, and cooperate with, the school's system of rewards and sanctions and attend meetings at the school if requested.

In supporting the school's *Code of Behaviour*, parents make commitments

- to ensure that their children come to school on time, refreshed, appropriately dressed, equipped/prepared for the day and ready to start work;
- to inform the school in writing of absences, illnesses, etc;
- to supervise homework and sign homework notebooks nightly;
- to implement and support all school policies, eg uniform, healthy lunch, etc;
- to support the school authorities and staff as they work in the best interests of the children in their care;
- to actively support the implementation of the school's *Code of Behaviour*.

3.2.4 Pupils

The pupils' charter applies in classrooms, the playground and other common areas, as well as in the wider community. It states

- be respectful of yourself, your school and others
- keep your school tidy
- be kind
- be safe
- be on time
- be organised
- be positive
- follow instructions from all staff.

These commitments are complemented by class-based rules that are proposed and agreed by pupils of each class (First – Sixth) at the beginning of every academic year, under the guidance of the class teacher, and are specific to that class. There should be a maximum of six positively worded rules that have regard to the needs of the class, the teacher, and the wider school community. Short, clear charters are prepared for the

Infant classes by their teachers, to be used for reference and to familiarise the children with the concept of class-based rules and responsibilities.

Each charter should be

- classroom specific;
- worked out in consultation with the pupils;
- include no more than 6 rules;
- contain positive language;
- clear and positive in recognising good behaviour;
- fair, reasonable and consistent;
- supported by the school community;
- culture/gender free.

The format of the charter includes:

- rules
- rewards
- sanctions.

Recognised rewards for good behaviour and sanctions ('checks') for poor ('unwise') behaviour should be agreed and consistent.

Infant classes age-appropriate modifications

The general school rules will be introduced in Junior Infants. In Senior Infants these will be discussed again, and at this stage the children should be able to formulate their own class rules, with a suggested maximum of four rules. It is important that parents of Senior Infants pupils are reminded of the responsibilities to which they signed up when they first registered their children in the school (ref *Enrolment policy*).

In the Infant classes there should be a lot more emphasis on the promotion of positive behaviour than on the sanctioning of negative behaviour. Emphasis should be placed on a class spirit/climate of good behaviour in which each individual is valued for the contribution he/she makes to the happiness and well-being of the whole group.

3.3 Positive strategies for managing behaviour

'The most effective methodology that teachers develop in attempting to manage challenging behaviour is to prevent it occurring in the first place'. (*Managing Challenging Behaviour, Guidelines for teachers INTO 2004: 5*).

A range of positive strategies are used throughout the school to promote good behaviour and to prevent misbehaviour. These apply in the classroom setting, the playground and the general school environment.

3.3.1 Classroom

The positive strategies used by the staff to effectively manage behaviour in the classroom include

- behavioural expectations in each class that are consistent with the ethos as expressed in the code of behaviour and which set a positive atmosphere for learning;
- pupil input in devising the class rules;
- teachers ensuring that pupils understand, and are frequently reminded of, how they are expected to behave;
- a clear system of acknowledging and rewarding good behaviour and sanctions for misbehaviour;
- classroom management techniques that ensure a variety of activities and methodologies to sustain pupil interest and motivation.

3.3.2 Playground

The fundamental principle of the school's *Code of Behaviour* - respect for others, oneself and property - applies in the playground at all times.

Positive strategies are implemented by staff to promote good behaviour, to prevent behavioural difficulties, and to deal with incidences of unacceptable behaviour (ref *Supervision policy*).

Activities

Activities that are permitted in the playground vary depending on the time of year. The pros and cons of allowing specific activities are discussed and agreed at staff meetings, and the children are made aware of the decisions by their class teachers. The

children's suggestions regarding activities in the playground are welcome and may be placed on the staff meeting agenda, if appropriate.

Zones

The children of the junior section of the school (Junior Infants to Second Class) play

- at the back of the school (weather and ground conditions permitting), or
- in the courtyard area, First and Second Classes at the end nearest to their classrooms and the Infant classes at the end adjacent to their classrooms.

Pupils of the Senior classes (Third Class to Sixth Class) use the playground towards the front of the school with Third and Fourth Classes nearest the GP hall, Fifth and Sixth Class at the other end near the main school entrance. When the weather is fine (usually September/October and May/June), the senior pupils may use the grassy area as well as the hard area, and may take turns to use a specific part of the this area for playing football.

Playground supervisors (teachers)

During each break, there are two teachers on duty - one in each zone. Teachers who have opted to work as playground supervisors do a minimum of 37 hours supervisory duty each school year. A rota is drawn up by the Deputy Principal and distributed to each teacher involved. It is also displayed in the staff room. In the course of one rota a teacher will supervise in the playground on two days (both breaks), and in the Quiet Room on one day. The BOM has made the decision that the Principal should not be part of the rota, but should be available at all times and take charge in case of emergencies.

The teacher supervisors shall wear a high-visibility jacket, and ensure that the children in their care are visible to them at all times. The children should be encouraged to play sensibly and fairly. However, should an incident of misbehaviour occur the teacher must intervene and decide on an appropriate course of action. Arguments can sometimes be sorted out amicably, but serious incidents of aggression require sanctions. Children may be asked to stand to one side of the play area for a specified number of minutes or, if the teacher deems it necessary, a child may be sent indoors for the remainder of the break time. In such a case, the class teacher (and possibly the Principal) would be informed and an incident report written up and placed on record.

The supervising teacher should also attend to children who have accidents in the playground and judge whether or not the injured child needs to be sent indoors to the teacher on duty in the Quiet Room.

Children who need to use the toilet during break times must get the permission of the supervising teacher to leave the playground and go to the toilets that are closest to their play area.

On the days when a teacher is doing playground supervision, he/she may leave their class in the care of the teacher in the adjacent classroom for 5 - 10 minutes in order to have a short break/respice prior to going on duty. The door between the classrooms must be kept open, and the supporting teacher must move freely between the classrooms, overseeing all activities.

Playground supervisors (SNAs)

SNAs are required to assist with playground supervision during all break times - both in the Junior playground and in the Senior playground. The SNA's role as a playground supervisor is very similar to that of the teacher supervisor, but does not carry the same weight of responsibility. They shall wear a high-visibility jacket, and ensure that the children in their care are visible to them at all times.

SNAs may sometimes be asked to observe the behaviour of individual children in the playground should such observations be deemed helpful to the support of those individuals.

Going to and returning from the playground

Children go to and return from the playground in their class groupings. A bell rings to signify the start of break time. At first break, the children may go straight out when the bell rings. At the second break, they spend the first 10 minutes indoors eating lunch under the supervision of their class teacher. The bell rings again when break is finished, and all children are expected to stop what they are doing and remain silent. The supervisor then blows a whistle which is the signal for the children to line up in their designated area. The supervisor remains in the playground until all classes have been collected by their teachers.

3.3.3 Indoor supervision

Indoor supervision (dry weather)

(ref school policies *Administration of first-aid and medication, Supervision*)

Children who need to stay indoors during break times (because of illness/injury or as part of a sanction). Children who are unwell may only remain indoors if they have an explanatory note from a parent, or on the recommendation of a teacher.

They are supervised in the Quiet Room by a teacher supervisor. This teacher also takes care of the needs of children who are injured in the playground. He/she may administer first aid for minor cuts, bruises etc, with more serious injuries referred to a designated First-aid Officer. More serious injuries are referred to parents or directly to a doctor. The teacher should make a note of all injuries dealt with in the specially designated book or, in the case of serious injuries, assist with the completion of the *Accident report form* if she has been involved in any way with the treatment of the injury.

Where there are any concerns beyond minor injury, parents should be contacted and informed of the injury/accident/illness and asked to come to the school. If parents cannot be contacted, a First-aid Officer will seek medical assistance, through the family doctor, the designated school medical practice (Greystones Medical Centre, Church Road) or by calling an ambulance.

In the case of a more serious injury, where it is judged that immediate medical assistance is necessary, or where the parents/guardians cannot be contacted, the Principal, with another member of staff, will bring the injured child to a doctor, and will stay until treatment has been concluded or a parent has arrived. Where possible, the child is brought to the designated doctor as specified by the parents or guardians on the child's *admission form* or *personal emergency information form*. If the nominated doctor is unavailable, or if the distance to the nominated doctor's surgery is judged to be excessive, the child will be brought to the designated school doctor or nearest hospital. Parents will be made aware of the circumstances of the injury at the earliest opportunity.

In the case of a very serious injury, the emergency services will be called immediately, urgent first-aid to preserve life or prevent further serious injury shall be administered until a nurse, doctor or other trained person can take over management of the situation.

Efforts to contact parents will continue until they have been informed of the incident. If the child is to be sent home and the parents are unavailable, every effort will be made to contact those nominated by the parents as substitute caretakers on emergency contact documentation.

A child may also be required to remain indoors as a sanction, school or classroom to 'work for 10 minutes of break time, doing 'homework' or 'housework'".

The Senior Infant classroom is the designated back-up room for indoor supervision, if the Quiet Room is needed for a child who is particularly unwell and waiting to be collected.

Indoor supervision (wet weather)

Teachers work as a team in order to ensure adequate supervision of pupils at all times. Such teams operate between classes located side by side, ie First and Second, Third and Fourth, Fifth and Sixth. The doors between the classrooms remain open and the teacher in attendance moves between the two rooms, to ensure that both classrooms are supervised. If the Junior or Senior Infant Class teacher must leave the classroom, arrangements are made with an LS/RT to supervise the class. On wet days, this arrangement allows for each teacher to take a personal break/respice in turn, while their colleague supervises the two classrooms.

3.3.4 Other areas in the school

All staff work to create and develop an atmosphere of respect, tolerance and consideration for others. To allow the school to function in an orderly way and to ensure the safety and well being of all members of the school community, rules are drawn up by individual class teachers with their pupils concerning the manner in which

- groups move around the school. ie lining up in an orderly way before going to the playground / when break time ends / when walking to the Church etc
- children access the bathrooms / cloakrooms ie number of children at time etc
- children using the GP hall, library / ICT room etc.

Emphasis is placed on good mannerly behaviour and awareness of others. Children are reminded of these rules on an on-going basis, as needed.

3.4 Rewards and sanctions

As noted previously, the school's *Behaviour Charter* is based on the principles of consideration and respect for self, each other, the school and its environment.

A range of positive behaviour management strategies are employed throughout the school, based on age-appropriateness, class dynamics, SEN considerations, etc. There is a general sense of expectation of a high standard of behaviour, eg good manners and courtesy are expected and reciprocated by staff at all times, whether in the classroom, playground or elsewhere in the school.

Acknowledgements of, and rewards for, good behaviour and a positive attitude to all aspects of school life are standard procedure throughout the school. These include individual and class-based merits/rewards.

The issue of choice is fundamental to the *Discipline for Learning* philosophy, believing that in most cases children can always choose to 'behave' and that no child has to misbehave. Pupils have to know that good behaviour brings desirable consequences. When someone does misbehave, then he or she is making a positive choice to do so, and is aware that there will be consequences, and know, within a range, what those consequences will be.

3.4.1 Acknowledgement of, and rewards for, good behaviour

Infant classes - teaching positive behaviour

Opportunities to discuss "What should you do?" in certain situations occur frequently throughout the day in the Infants classes, particularly during RE, story time, and SPHE lessons. Particular behaviours, such as saying "Please", "Thank you" and "Excuse me, please"; turn-taking; listening to others; waiting one's own turn to speak; asking for adult intervention in conflict situations etc could be the focus of Circle Time and/or of a Drama class.

Incentives to behave positively include

- praising good behaviour
- 'adjacent praise'

- stickers
- certificates eg 'star of the day'
- Golden time

Teachers may construct their own incentives to suit the needs of particular individuals or groups of children.

Other classes

Whilst the class teacher generally gives merit points in the classroom, other adults in charge (SEN teachers, SNAs, or teachers on playground duty, etc) may request a merit be awarded. Class teachers may also employ a group award scheme in their classrooms. Parents are aware of the merit system in use in their child's class, as this is explained at the Class-based meetings at start of each school year.

Rewards in the classroom may include:

- praise
- sticker / badge / ink stamp
- merit point
- certificate
- homework pass
- privilege for child / group / class (eg special book loan / extra computer access time / favourite lesson / story time / DVD / tour / end-of-term treat).

3.4.2 Strategies for dealing with 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'.

The degree of misdemeanours whether minor, serious or very serious, will be judged by the teachers and/or Principal based on a common sense approach with regard to the gravity/frequency of such misdemeanours.

A sliding scale of behaviour checks is discussed at the first staff meeting of the school year. Newly-appointed teachers are given a copy of the *Code of behaviour* for reference. Behaviour checks are discussed with the children at the start of the school

year and are also displayed in the classroom. Substitute/temporary teachers are made aware of the classroom's behaviour posters.

School / classroom behaviour checks are stages as follows:

1. warning/reprimand - name recorded and undo damage
2. stand up / move place for max. 10 minutes
3. work for 10 minutes of break ('homework' / 'housework')
4. (a) move to another classroom for 10 minutes / until assignment is completed to teacher's satisfaction
(b) lose a privilege
5. (a) extra homework / redo work (to be signed by parent)
(b) letter of apology (signed by parent)
6. referral to principal / deputy principal
7. communication with parents
8. referral to Board of Management
9. suspension (ref Section 3.5.1 on Suspension)
10. expulsion (ref Section 3.5.2 on Expulsion).

An individual child's behaviour may be monitored from time to time by use of a weekly or daily report system that may also include reporting or meeting with a parent.

The class teacher would usually follow stages 1 – 5, but in the case of a more serious misbehaviour he/she may move directly to stage 6.

Infant classes - dealing with challenging behaviour

However hard one tries, situations will arise in which the behaviour of a child, or a group of children, is not acceptable and is causing disruption to the learning process within the class, or perhaps to the smooth running of playtime in the yard, or indeed causing damage to school property.

Should the child ignore reminders about class rules and about what constitutes correct behaviour, the following sanctions will apply:

1. loss of a privilege eg Golden time
2. consultation with parent/s
3. follow-up meeting with parent/s

4. regular meetings with parents in cases of persistent unacceptable behaviour (weekly report)
5. suggest to parents that an incentive scheme (eg star chart) might be used to encourage positive behaviour
6. consultation with parents and principal (in cases of seriously disruptive inappropriate behaviour).

Criteria for very serious misbehaviour:

- deliberate continued defiance
- bullying, to include verbal or physical abuse
- deliberate damage to property
- continued fighting when asked to stop
- use of any prohibited substances.

If an incident occurs that is considered of a sexualised nature, the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) will be informed, record it, and respond to it appropriately (ref school's *Child Protection Policy*).

Action to be taken following very serious misbehaviour

1. referral to the principal or deputy principal who will consult with parents/guardians repair or undo damage caused - 15 minutes detention each day for 1 week
2. referral to the principal and the chairperson of the Board of Management who will both meet with parents/guardians
3. referral to the Board of Management with view to possible suspension, and or expulsion.

3.4.3 Parents involvement in the management of challenging behaviour

Parents should be kept fully informed from the outset of instances of serious misbehaviour on the part of their children (DES, *Circular 20/90*). Class teachers contact the parents in cases of minor behaviour issues at stage 5 (ref school / classroom behaviour checks). This is done through the homework diary or by telephone. In the case of more serious misdemeanours, the principal contacts the parents directly.

Parents are invited to meet with school personnel in the spirit of co-operation, with the best interests of the child in mind. Meetings may involve a number of parties ie principal, class teacher, Special Education Needs (SEN) teacher, SNA, and member of the Board of Management. Meetings may be convened in the child's classroom, the Quiet Room, or the Principal's office. The child may participate for part or all of the meeting, if appropriate.

Parents are made aware of the *Code of behaviour* as part of the enrolment process. Agreement to support the policy is a condition for enrolment. The policy can be accessed through the school's web site, and a copy is available through the school office. Parents of pupils attending the school are encouraged to contact the class teacher if they have concerns regarding behaviour. They should arrange a mutually agreeable time to meet with the class teacher or principal, as appropriate. These procedures are outlined at the annual class-based home/school meetings held at the beginning of the school year.

3.4.4 Managing aggressive or violent behaviour

A number of strategies are used for dealing with serious emotional and behavioural problems.

If children present as being emotionally disturbed, their parents are encouraged to seek a psychological assessment, and every support is offered to the family throughout the process. Through the Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO), appropriate support is sought from services available, eg Health Service Executive (HSE), National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), etc.

In this situation an Individual Education Plan (IEP) with behavioural targets and specific strategies may be drawn up in consultation with the relevant parties, ie principal, class teacher, SEN teacher, professional support professional from an external agency (as above), SNA, and parents. SEN personnel may facilitate teachers in supporting the management of challenging behaviour. As appropriate, other staff members are briefed on the behaviour management strategies to employ when they are required to engage with the pupil, eg while on playground supervision.

For many organisational and curricular activities in school, classes are grouped together: Junior & Senior Infants, First and Second Class, Third and Fourth Class, Fifth and Sixth Class. Class teachers work closely with their 'partner teacher'. Newly qualified teachers may go to their 'partner teacher' for advice / support in managing challenging behaviour. The principal and SEN teachers may also assist teachers in creating individual behaviour plans for specific children.

Professional development is available to staff through the range of courses provided by Colleges of Education, Institute of Child Education and Psychology (ICEP) courses, Education Centres etc. In addition, SEN teachers and others attend conferences on relevant issues as they become available, within the constraints of resources. Teachers are encouraged to feedback to other teachers as appropriate, individually or through the forum of a staff meeting.

In the event of it becoming necessary to include physical restraint as a strategy for dealing with violent or threatening behaviour, this will form part of the IEP drawn up in consultation with the relevant parties, with reference to *Managing Challenging Behaviour - Guidelines for Teachers, INTO 2004: 11*, The Board of Management should also consult competent legal advice.

In the event of seriously violent or threatening behaviour causing a risk to the safety of the pupil himself/herself or the safety of other pupils or staff, the Board of Management will seek temporary exclusion/separation from the endangered pupil(s)/staff while a workable solution is put in place. This may involve redeploying staff, consulting with SENO and/or Education Welfare Officer (EWO) about putting appropriate support and resources in place, or arrange an alternative placement.

3.5 Suspension and expulsion procedures

The *Education Welfare Act, 2000*, stipulates that a code of behaviour shall specify... 'the procedures to be followed before a student may be suspended or expelled from the school concerned' and 'the grounds for removing a suspension imposed in relation to a student.' (*Sections 23(2), c and d*)

3.5.1 Suspension

Suspension is extremely rare at St Patrick's National School where pupils are generally well behaved and steps undertaken by staff, with the support of parents, result in positive outcomes. However, suspension will be considered in cases where a child's behaviour poses a threat to the safety and/or education of others. This sanction demonstrates the seriousness of the misbehaviour to the pupil and his/her parents, while working towards agreeing steps to modify the behaviour(s) concerned.

A student will not be suspended for more than three days except in exceptional circumstances where the Principal considers that this is necessary in order to achieve a particular objective following discussion with, and agreement by, the Board of Management.

During the period of suspension, the school will afford an opportunity to the parents and child to meet with the Principal, relevant school staff and a representative from the BOM with a view to agreeing procedures/strategies to be implemented on the child's return to school. This should be formalised in writing.

The principal shall inform the Education Welfare Officer (EWO), by notice in writing, when a student is suspended from a recognised school for a period of not less than 6 days. (ref *Sections 21 (4) a*)

3.5.2 Expulsion (permanent exclusion)

Under the *Education Welfare Act, 2000*, 'A student shall not be expelled from a school before the passing of twenty school days following the receipt of a notification under this section by an educational welfare officer'. (*Section 24(4)*) It is the right of a Board of Management to take '...such other reasonable measures as it considers appropriate to ensure that good order and discipline are maintained in the school concerned and that the safety of students is secured.' (*Section 24(5)*)

3.5.3 Procedures

Circular 20/90, which states that 'Parents should be informed of their right to come to the school and be invited to do so in order to discuss the misbehaviour with the Principal Teacher and/or the class teacher'.

1. The child is informed about the complaint made against him/her and is afforded an opportunity to respond.
2. The manner of investigation is explained and a possible outcome, ie suspension, conveyed.
3. The matter is investigated by the relevant school staff and detailed records are kept of this.
4. Parents of the child(ren) concerned are requested to attend a meeting with relevant school staff where they are provided with details of the complaint/s.
5. Following the investigation and discussion with parents, the Principal then addresses the issue at a Board of Management meeting.
6. Parents of the child(ren) are requested to attend a meeting with representatives of the Board of Management where they are afforded an opportunity to respond. In cases where parents/guardians do not agree to attend such a meeting, a formal letter will be issued by the Principal advising parents of the gravity of the matter and the importance of attending a rescheduled meeting. Failing that, it is the duty of the Board of Management to arrive at a decision in response to the pupil's negative behaviour.
7. The parents are informed by letter of the decision reached and, where possible, by phone.

To ensure openness and accountability records must be kept of serious and gross misbehaviour outlining

- a description of the behaviour,
- where and when it occurred,
- the attempted interventions by school staff,
- meetings held with parents/guardians and outside agencies (where appropriate).

In the case of gross misbehaviour, the Board may authorise the Chairperson or Principal (or in his/her absence, the Deputy Principal) to sanction an immediate suspension of a pupil for up to three school days following a preliminary investigation by the Principal/Deputy Principal to establish the case for suspension. A formal investigation will follow the imposition of the suspension.

3.6 Appeals process

Under *Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998*, parents are entitled to appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills against some decisions of the Board of Management, including (i) permanent exclusion from a school and (ii) suspension for a period which would bring the cumulative period of suspension to 20 school days or longer in any one school year.

Accordingly, schools should advise parents of this right of appeal and associated timeframe if it has been decided to suspend or permanently exclude a pupil. Appeals must generally be made within 42 calendar days from the date the decision of the school was notified to the parent or student. (ref Circular 22/02)

The Principal and designated Board member will prepare a response if and when an appeal is being investigated by the Dept of Education and Skills (ref Circular 22/02, Section 12 – processing of an appeal).

3.7 Record keeping

(ref school's *Record-keeping and data protection policy*)

In line with the school's practice on record keeping and data protection legislation, notes from parent-teacher consultations of a sensitive nature are stored in confidential file in Principal's office with restricted access, and normally retained in archive until the pupil has reached age of 21. Highly sensitive confidential files should be kept in perpetuity.

3.7.1 School records

(ref *Record keeping and data protection policy*)

All accidents and incidents are recorded using standard *Incident Report* forms and *Accident report* forms. They are filed in the Principal's office, with limited access to staff and Board of Management, through the Principal.

Records of parent:teacher consultations, home:school communications, and correspondence with outside agencies, Board of Management, etc are kept in individual confidential pupil files and securely stored in the Principal's office.

3.7.2 Class-based records

In line with the school's practice on record keeping, and data protection legislation, factual records in relation to pupils' behaviour (*Incident report* forms) and meetings with parents (*Parent:teacher consultation* forms) are initially made by the class teacher, and transferred to the Principal for secure storage within the school. Teaching staff will have access on a need-to-know basis only.

3.7.3 Playground records

Records in relation to pupils' behaviour are kept by use of *Incident report* forms. They are given to the Principal for secure storage within the school. Teaching staff will have access on a need-to-know basis only.

4. Curriculum

The school's SPHE curriculum is used to support the *Code of Behaviour*. It aims to help our pupils develop communication skills, appropriate ways of interacting and behaving, and conflict resolution skills. It also aims to foster self-esteem and to help children accommodate differences and develop citizenship.

Throughout the school, we aim to create a positive school climate which is open, inclusive, respectful, fair, democratic and tolerant and which seeks to support and encourage the holistic development of all children and all adults working with our children. The strategies we will use to create this environment are detailed in our SPHE plan and will involve:

- creating a health-promoting physical environment
- enhancing self-esteem
- fostering respect for diversity
- building effective communication within the school
- developing appropriate home-school communication
- catering for individual needs
- developing democratic process
- fostering inclusive and respectful language.

We strive to ensure that our school will be physically and emotionally safe and we will deliver the curricular content of our SPHE programme with a view to giving the children the protective skills of self-esteem and assertiveness. The *circle time* and *bubble time* methodologies are used on a whole school basis. Co-operative interpersonal skills will be developed through working in pairs and working in groups, while older children will be encouraged to work positively with conflict, as negotiation and consensus building skills are developed.

5. Procedure for notification of a pupil's absence from school

The *Education Welfare Act, 2000, Section 23 (2) (e)* states that the *Code of behaviour* must specify, 'the procedures to be followed in relation to a child's absence from school.' *Section 18* stipulates that parents must notify the school of a student's absence and the reason for this absence.

High standards of school attendance are encouraged by

- creating a stimulating and attractive school environment;
- acknowledgement of good or improved attendance;
- adapting curriculum content and methodologies to maximise relevance to pupils;
- adapting the school timetables to make it as attractive as possible for families to attend and to be on time.

Parents are made aware of the terms of the *Education Welfare Act* and its implications through in-school correspondence, at class meetings, and in one:one consultations, as relevant.

A standardised form (*Absence from school* form) is used to record pupil absences. It includes all information that is required for completion of National Education Welfare Board (NEWB) records. Such forms should be returned to the class teacher on the first day following an absence, and should be accompanied by a medical certificate, if applicable. All such records are kept on file in the Principal's office.

The school uses the standard procedures to report pupil absences to the NEWB (*ref www.newb.ie*)

6. Reference

6.1 Reference to other school policies

The following school policies cross-reference with the Code of Behaviour:

- SPHE plan
- Anti-bullying
- Child protection
- Enrolment
- Equality
- Health, safety and nutrition
- Home / school communication
- Record keeping
- Safety Policy
- Special Educational Needs.

7. Roles and responsibilities

The Board of Management is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the school's Code of Behaviour is implemented. The Principal and the Deputy Principal are responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the policy and for informing staff, parents and pupils of the policy and their respective roles in its implementation.

8. Success criteria

Practical indicators of the success of the policy include

- observation of positive behaviour in class rooms, playground and school environment;
- practices and procedures listed in this policy being consistently implemented by teachers;
- positive feedback from teachers, parents and pupils.

9. Ratification and communication

This policy was reviewed in 2010, and ratified by the Board of Management in September 2010. It became official policy from that date. It is available to all the school's education partners on the school's web site and through the school office.

10. Implementation

This policy is officially implemented throughout the school, from the date of its ratification by the Board of Management.

11. Policy review

This policy will be reviewed in 2014, unless required sooner. Co-ordination of the review is the responsibility of the SDP co-ordinator, in consultation with the principal. Those involved in review will include BOM, Principal, SDP co-ordinator, staff/ISM team, parent representatives, and may include pupil input.

Appendix 1

Other reference

Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 Section 23(1 -5), 24 (1-5)

Education Act, 1998 Section 15 (2(d))

Circular 20/90 on Discipline (DES web site: www.education.ie). Also in CPSMA Handbook

Circular 22/02 Appeals Procedures under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998. (DES web site: www.education.ie). Deals with appeals under the following headings:

- permanent exclusion from a school
- suspension
- refusal to enrol

Guidelines for Developing School Codes of Behaviour (National Education Welfare Board) *Draft edition published for consultation in 2007*

Department of Education and Science Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post Primary Schools (1993) available on DES website

Discipline for Learning, Adrian Smyth

Report to the Minister of Education, Niamh Breathnach, TD on Discipline in Schools.

Maeve Martin, 1997. Ch 4, pp56-61, Recommendations for Schools

Stay Safe programme

Walk Tall programme

Management Board Members' Handbook. revised 2007.

CPSMA: A suggested Code of Behaviour & Discipline for National Schools

INTO (2004) Managing Challenging Behaviour: Guidelines for Teachers

INTO (2006) Towards Positive Behaviour in Primary Schools

INTO (1995) Enhancing Self Esteem

The Education Act 1998 and The Education Welfare Act 2000 - Questions and Answers, INTO

The Principal's Legal Handbook Oliver Mahon B.L. IVEA 2002 Ch. 2 School Discipline Responding to Bullying. First Steps for Teachers. The Cool School Programme. NE Health Board

Investigating and Resolving Bullying in Schools. The Cool School Programme. NE Health Board

Stop it! Steps to Address Bullying. Wexford Education Network. Wexford Area Partnership. Phone: 053 23994

Working towards a Whole School Policy on Self-Esteem and Positive Behaviour. Jenny Mosley. Positive Press 2001

Working Together – to promote positive behaviour in classrooms, CEDR, Mary Immaculate College of Education

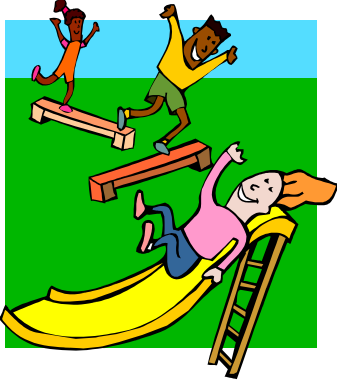
Achieving Positive Behaviour. A Practical Guide. Patricia Dwyer. Marino

Appendix 2

This poem reflects the principles behind the school behaviour charter.

Children learn what they live

If a child lives with criticism
he learns to condemn.



If a child lives with hostility
he learns to fight.

If a child lives with ridicule
he learns to be shy.

If a child lives with shame
he learns to feel guilty.

If a child lives with tolerance
he learns to be patient.

If a child lives with encouragement
he learns with confidence.



If a child lives with praise
he learns to appreciate.

If a child lives with fairness
he learns justice.

If a child lives with security
he learns to have faith.

If a child lives with approval
he learns to like himself.

If a child lives with acceptance and friendship
he learns to find love in the world.