

CODE OF BEHAVIOUR.

St. Mark's Junior National School has a central role in its children's social and moral development just as it does in their academic development. Children bring to school a wide variety of behaviours. As a school whose ethos establishes and supports a strong sense of community, in school we must work towards standards of behaviour based on the basic **principles of honesty, respect, consideration, responsibility and forgiveness.**

Thus, it follows that acceptable standards of behaviour are those that reflect these principles. Our **Code of Behaviour** reflects our commitment to providing positive support, including active teaching of relevant skills, for those children who are more vulnerable to behaviour problems. Therefore, any rules will be age appropriate and any breaches of the rules will have clear agreed consequences.

Rationale:

A **Code of Behaviour** is established to ensure that the individuality of each child is accommodated while at the same time acknowledging the right of each child to education in a relatively disruptive free environment.

We believe that a well established positive **Code of Behaviour** will give clear guidance in this area to children, staff and parents. It will also facilitate the smooth running of the school, thereby promoting the child's legal right to receive his / her education in accordance with the Primary School Curriculum.

Aims of the Code:

To create and maintain a safe, positive learning environment that encourages and reinforces good behaviour.

To foster a sense of personal responsibility in each child and to support good behaviour patterns based on consideration and respect for the rights of others.

To promote self esteem and positive relationships.

To facilitate the education, development and well being of every child.

To nurture caring attitudes to one another and to the environment.

To maintain a consistency of response to both positive and negative behaviours.

To ensure that the high expectations for and of every child, including the strategies to achieve them, are well known within the school community.

To encourage the involvement of both home and school in the implementation of this code; working as partners will result in the most positive outcomes for all.

To foster compassion and forgiveness.

Expectations:

- All members of the school community will behave in ways that show respect for others.
- All children will attend school regularly and punctually, will endeavour to do their best in class and will learn to take responsibility for their own work and behaviour.
- Full school uniform will be worn. For health and safety reasons, the only item of jewellery worn by children will be a wrist watch.
- In the playground children will keep the Golden rules and play with respect towards others.
- All forms of bullying or racial abuse will be unacceptable in the school.
- Discipline will be accepted with respect and a good grace.

Responsibility of Adults in the school:

The adults encountered by the children at school have an important responsibility to model high standards of behaviour, both in their dealings with the children and with each other, as their example has an important influence on the children.

Staff are therefore expected to:

- Create a positive climate with realistic expectations.
- Promote through example, respect, honesty and courtesy.
- Provide a caring and effective learning environment.
- Encourage relationships based on kindness, respect, forgiveness and understanding of the needs of others.
- Ensure fair treatment of all regardless of age, gender, race, ability and disability.
- Show appreciation of the efforts and contribution of all.

- Know, teach and model the 6 Golden Rules.

To ensure that The **Code of Behaviour** is being implemented the following **checks** are in place

- Monthly Behaviour check.
- Behaviour will be on the agenda of every Teacher Meeting.
- Code of Behaviour will be under annual review.

Role & Responsibility of Parents:

It is the role and responsibility of parents to work in partnership with the school in the interests of the children.

Parents can co-operate with the school, by encouraging their children to understand the need for school rules and for a code of behaviour.

We expect that parents will:

- Reinforce, at home, the messages about learning and behaviour that are conducive to a happy school.
- Instill a strong sense of pride in the school.
- Pay in full for books and appropriate educational materials; return rented and borrowed books in good condition and pay for replacements if they get lost or damaged.
- Equip their child with full uniform and ensure they wear it every day.
- Be courteous towards pupils and staff.
- Make an appointment to meet with a teacher / Principal through the school office.
- Respect school property and encourage their children to do the same.
- Label Pupils coats and other property.
- Supervise their young children on school premises when collecting other pupils or visiting the school.
- In the interests of safety dogs /pets are not allowed on school grounds(except Guide Dogs)

As the Board of Management are responsible for the Health & Safety of all staff and students **parents are requested not to approach or reprimand another child, not their own, on the school premises.**

Accept that all matters taking place outside of school grounds are outside the jurisdiction of Board of Management

It is School Policy to inform parents / guardians at an early stage, if problems occur and not simply at the point where possible suspensions are involved.

To maintain good standards of behaviour, the school must rely on the support and co-operation of the parents / guardians.

Parents are invited to keep in close contact with the school, with regard to all aspects of the child's progress.

Homework Policy:

- Homework will be assigned Monday - Thursday.
- All homework will be completed.
- Parents will commit to check all homework and 'sign and time' it each night to confirm that **ALL** homework has been completed.
- Parents will take an active interest in their child's homework, especially reading and learning. Parents will listen to their child's reading each night.
- If homework causes worry for the pupil, parents will contact the teacher.
- When homework has not been done, a **note of explanation** will be signed by a parent and will be sent in to the Class Teacher.

School Attendance:

All absences must be explained by a letter from the parent/ guardian. This letter must have an address, date, explanation of absence and signature of parent / guardian. These notes are collected by the Class Teacher and stored for future reference and for evidence if required for the Education Welfare Officer / Board.

When a parent fails to notify the school about a pupil's absence, this absence is recorded as "Unexplained absence". The Class Teacher will make a further request from the parent for a note of explanation. The Educational Welfare Officer is informed about any unexplained absences.

For significant absences due to illness a doctor's certificate is required by the school. Absences of 20 days or more, in a school year must be automatically reported to the Education Welfare Board.

Rules

The emphasis in St. Mark's is on the positive!

Our catch phrase is **'Catch them when they're good'**.

In order to feel secure and develop the skills for co-operation children need limits set for them. Therefore there must be rules

Rules are there in order to maintain a safe and happy environment for all.

It is the philosophy of the school therefore that Rules should be kept to a minimum, be clear, understood, known and accepted by all. Rules will be age appropriate and any breach of the rules will have clear, agreed and understood consequences

The Golden Rules

There are 6 Golden Rules and they underpin the moral values of the school. They are:

1. I will be gentle - I will not hurt anyone.
2. I will be kind - I will not hurt people's feelings.
3. I will be honest - I will not hide the truth.
4. I will listen - I will not interrupt.
5. I will respect property - I will not waste or damage things.
6. I will work hard - I will not waste time.

Core to all areas in the school will be that:

- The safety of each child is at the heart of all that we do.
- Staff will know, teach and model the **6 Golden Rules**.
- Pupils will sit in their seat when teacher is out of the room.
- Each teacher has the discretion to draft additional classroom rules.
- Children will be reminded of the rules and the rationale for them
- Good Behaviour will be acknowledged and rewarded

Classroom Rules:

At the beginning of each academic year, the Class Teacher will draft a list of Class Rules with the children.

This Contract will reflect and support the school's expectations, and will be presented in a way that is accessible to the children.

Class Rules will be kept to a minimum and will be devised with regard to the health, safety and welfare of all members of the school community.

They will emphasise positive behaviour (e.g. 'Walk' and 'Don't run').

Rules will be applied in a fair and consistent manner, with due regard to the age of the pupils and to individual difference. Where difficulties arise, parents will be contacted at an early stage.

Yard Rules:

The 6 Golden Rules for Yard.

I will walk in the yard

I will not run.

I will stay inside the yellow lines on the yard,

I will never leave without permission.

I will respect others when I play.

I will freeze when I hear the 1st whistle, and walk to my line on the 2nd.

(Each class group go to Running Yard a couple of times a week)

Behaviour

Levels of Misbehaviour:

There are three levels of misbehaviour: **Minor, Serious and Gross.**

Below are clarifications of what is meant by these terms.

Minor Misbehaviour:

All misbehaviour of a minor nature are dealt with by Class Teacher.

Some might include....

- Continuous talking.

- Fidgeting / Inattention
- Pushing in line.
- Kissing inappropriately
- Spitting.
- Telling tales.
- Smirking when reprimanded.
- Leaving seat in a teacher's absence.

Serious Misbehaviour:

In cases of serious repeated misbehaviour parents will be involved at an early stage and invited to meet Teacher and / or Principal to discuss the child's behaviour.

- All minor misbehaviours when on a continuous basis.
- Unprovoked acts of aggression.
- Rough play causing injury.
- Serious fighting -kicking / hitting
- Stealing from others / teachers.
- Ongoing lying and dishonesty.
- Disrespect.
- Bad / Inappropriate language directed at someone.
- Racist remarks / actions / attitudes.
- Biting.
- Spitting.
- Uncontrolled behaviours / tantrums.
- Refusal to work.
- Homework not done.
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Gross Misbehaviour:

In cases of any single instance of Gross Misbehaviour parents will be asked to meet the Teacher and / or Principal to discuss child's behaviour.

- Repeated serious misbehaviour.
- Serious theft.
- Serious damage to property.
- Assault on a pupil / teacher.
- Repeated serious misbehaviours.

Positive Incentives and Rewards:

Part of the Vision of St. Mark's Junior School is to help children achieve their personal best - academically, intellectually and socially.

We recognise there are many different forms of intelligence and that similarly, children use a variety of approaches to solve problems.

Reward systems which are based on academic merit or particular external goals tend to apply to only a limited number of children and undermine the individuality of the child.

Rewards will be given for effort not only for achievement.
All children will be encouraged to attain their own personal best.

Therefore rewards will be used consistently and by all the staff.
Children will be encouraged, praised and listened to by adults in the school.
Praise will be specific and will be earned by the maintenance of good standards as well as by particularly noteworthy personal achievements.

To encourage good behaviour in the school community Teachers and staff will promote models of good behaviour and model respectful relationships.

The following are some examples of positive incentives.

A quiet word or gesture to show approval.

A comment in a pupil's exercise book.

A visit to another member of Staff.

Praise Time with the Principal for commendation.

A word of praise in front of a group or class sticker on record sheet.

A monthly certificate of special effort.

Delegating some special responsibility or privilege.

A letter to parents acknowledging improvement.

Golden Time (Special 'treat' time on Friday afternoons).

Assemblies will be held to reiterate rules and good behaviour.

Special effort awards and Student of the Month will be integral to positive reinforcement.

Privileges will be given to children, who have difficulty behaving well, when they're good or when a real effort to behave well is noticed.

Smiley Face Reward System:

This system assumes that EVERY child is a good child trying to do their best.

So they are given a fresh start each week.

Each child starts each week with 10 smiley faces, the goal is to keep them all!

A permanent, laminated 'Smiley Face' poster will be on the back of every classroom door. Every Child's name will be on it and beside each name 10 velcro Smiley faces

In the event of losing a 'Smiley Face', for a misdemeanour, the child removes a Smiley from beside their name.

A Smiley cannot be restored until the following Monday when they are all reinstated.

Pupils Smiley Face Report Sheet.

At the beginning of the school year each child will receive a green record sheet which will chart their individual progress on a weekly basis.

Each Friday this will be updated and sent home for signing.

In this way Parents have a constant insight into their child's behaviour.

Teacher Record Sheet:

The teacher keeps a record of how each child is doing - this is a permanent record of each child's behaviour and is also a back up in the event of the loss of the pupil's Smiley Face record sheet.

Smiley Face Barometer/Zone

8 - 10 Smiley faces = Well done Zone

5 -7 Smiley Faces = Room for Improvement Zone

0 -4 Smiley Faces = Unsatisfactory Zone - need to talk to Parents

Rewards will be given to children who consistently stay in the Well Done Zone.

Sanctions:

The use of sanctions or consequences should 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.
- Group punishment will be avoided as it breeds resentment.
- There will be a clear distinction between minor and major offenses.
- It will be the behaviour rather than the person that is the focus.

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

Thinking time is an immediate response to a misdemeanour and is time given to a pupil to reflect on their misbehaviour and then apologise or make restitution.

Time out - chair in own class or to another teacher in same standard.

Magic Chair in Junior Infants.

Loss of Golden Time on a Friday (e.g. 5 mins, 10 mins. etc.)

Sanctions for all misbehaviours are based on a staged / ladder approach as follows:

Behaviour Modification Ladder:-

The Steps:

1. **Non verbal warning** from teacher.
2. **Verbal warning (i.e. chance)**
3. **Loss of Smiley Face/s** (See above).
4. **Parents informed** of behaviour.
5. **Possible involvement of other staff** - collective responsibility
6. **Loss of Privilege** which might include loss of Golden Time and / or shortening of yard time.
7. **Principal / Deputy Principal.**
When the situation continues to be unsatisfactory or when, in the opinion of a Teacher, a particular matter warrants it, a child will be referred to the Principal directly.
8. **Letter to Parents / Guardians** - The Principal may send a letter requesting the parents to make an appointment to meet with the Principal and Class Teacher in the office.

9. Principal sends for Parents / Guardians of child for consultation.

A behaviour plan is drawn up and agreed, this might include setting up home/school communication notebook and / or reward chart.

Relevant assessments may be discussed and if appropriate referral to Lucena Child & Family Guidance Centre will be sought.

In some cases it may be necessary to shorten the child's day.

At this stage the Principal would involve the Board Of Management and Educational Welfare Board

10. Letter of Final Warning. Where behaviour shows no improvement after the Parent / Teacher / Principal interview a final letter will be sent to the child's parents warning of suspension.

11a. Immediate Suspension. In exceptional circumstances, the Principal may consider an immediate suspension to be necessary where the continued presence of the pupil in the school at the time would represent a serious threat to the safety of pupils or staff of the school or any other person.

11b. Automatic Suspension: A pupil who is continuously disruptive or who commits a serious breach of discipline may be suspended by the Principal for an initial period of 3 school days.

If there is no improvement after suspension – **further periods of suspension** may be imposed.

12. Expulsion : Expulsion may be considered in an extreme case, in accordance with the rules for National Schools and the Education Welfare Act.

Sanctions for Minor Misbehaviours: Steps 1 / 4.

Sanctions for Serious Misbehaviours: Steps 1 / 8.

Sanctions for Gross Misbehaviours: Steps 1 / 12.

Depending on the severity of the misbehaviour the Teacher / Principal can intervene at any stage of the ladder.

For Serious or Gross Misbehaviours the Principal may send for the Parents / Guardians to remove the child from the situation for a cooling off period of time. This is not deemed to be suspension.

(See also Protocol for Managing Challenging Children Appendix 1).

Suspension & Expulsion - Clarifications:

The Board of Management confirms the authority of the Principal to suspend / expel a child. The Board of Management shall notify the Education Welfare Board in writing and in accordance with Section 24 of Education Welfare Act 2004.

Before serious sanctions such as **Detention, Suspension or Expulsion** are used, the normal channels of communications between school and parents will be utilized. Communication with parents may be verbal or by letter, depending on the circumstances.

Immediate Suspension:

- In exceptional circumstances, the Principal may consider an immediate suspension to be necessary where the continued presence of the pupil in the school at the time would represent a serious threat to the safety of pupils or staff of the school, or any other person.
- In the case of an immediate suspension, parents will be notified, and arrangements will be made with them for the pupil to be collected.
- Initial periods of suspension will be to a maximum of **three school days**.
- A Suspension of five days will be imposed on the recommendation of the Principal and on approval of the Chairperson of the Board of Management.
- If a suspension longer than five days and up to ten days is being proposed by the Principal, the matter will be referred to the Board of Management for consideration and approval, giving the circumstances and the expected outcomes.

Automatic Suspension:

Any behaviour that is persistently disruptive to learning or potentially dangerous is considered a serious matter.

Written Notification For Suspension:

(This covers both Immediate and Automatic Suspension).

The Principal will notify the parents in writing of the decision to suspend.

The letter will confirm:

- the period of the suspension.
- the dates on which the suspension will begin and end.
- the reasons for the suspension.
- any study programme to be followed by the child.
- the arrangements for returning to school, including any commitments to be entered into by the pupil and the parents (for example, parents might be asked to reaffirm their commitment to the Code of Behaviour).

Appeals:

Where the total number of days for which the student has been suspended in the current school year reaches twenty days, the parents have the **right to Appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science (Education Act 1998, Section 29)**.

Where there are repeated instances of serious misbehaviour, the Chairperson of the Board of Management will be informed and the parents will be requested in writing to attend at the school to meet the Chairperson and the Principal. If the parents do not give an undertaking that the pupil will behave in an acceptable manner in the future, the pupil may be suspended for a period.

Prior to suspension, where possible, the Principal may review the case; in consultation with teachers and other members of the school community involved. will take due regard to records of previous misbehaviours (their pattern and context). sanctions and other interventions used and their outcomes. Will take account of any relevant medical information, assessments or reports.

Suspension will be in accordance with the Rules for National Schools and the Education Welfare Act 2000.

Removal of Suspension (Reinstatement):

Following or during a period of suspension, the Parents / Guardians may apply to have the pupil reinstated to the school. The Parents / Guardians must give a satisfactory undertaking that a suspended pupil will behave in accordance with the school code and the Principal must be satisfied that the pupil's reinstatement will not constitute a risk to the pupil's own safety or to that of the other pupils or staff. The Principal will facilitate the preparation of a behaviour plan for the pupil if required and readmit the pupil formally to the class.

Expulsion:

Expulsion may be considered in an extreme case, in accordance with the Rules for National Schools and the Education Welfare Act 2000.

Before suspending or expelling a pupil, the Board will notify the Local Welfare Education Officer in writing in accordance with Section 24 of the Education Welfare Act.

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 expectations.
- 🎧 Class teachers, Resource teachers and SNAs will check that standards and rules are communicated in a way that children with special educational needs can understand.
- 🎧 Their understanding of the school's expectations will be checked from time to time, especially where a student with special needs is acting in a way that would usually be seen as being in breach of the school's Expectations.
- 🎧 Some children may need opportunities to practice observing the rules, with feedback on their progress.
- 🎧 As appropriate Specialised Behaviour Plans will be put in place in consultation with parents, the Class Teacher, Learning Support / Resource Teacher and or Principal. This will form part of the child's individual programme.
- 🎧 The school 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 other children in the school or class may be taught strategies to assist a pupil with special needs, to adhere to the Expectations, thus providing peer support.
- 🎧 This will be done in a supportive and safe way, acknowledging and respecting the difference in all individuals.

Further Supports:

SPHE is the subject areas which most contributes to the social, personal and health education of the child and as such St. Mark's JNS gives this subject prominence on the curriculum.

Circle Time & Restorative Practices

St. Mark's JNS uses Restorative practice as a means of conflict resolution.

We try to do an **Empathy Circle** every morning with every class so as to start the day well with the best possibility for positive behavioural outcomes.

Circle time is also used and is seen as key to introducing a range of skills - interpersonal, interpersonal and organisational.

Children and teacher sit in a circle and discuss issues, challenges and solutions.

It gives each child the opportunity to discuss and share their feeling in a trusting environment. It helps children formulate what they want to say, and it lets them experience other people's problems or feelings, by developing their talking and listening skills.

A range of strategies and games are employed and focus on:

- Co-operation.
- Problem solving.
- Celebration
- Discussion.
- Role play.
- Sharing of feelings.
- Compassion - development of empathy
- Forgiveness.
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Teachers can decide to choose an area for discussion, for example topics such as: Sadness, Happiness, Fear, Grief, Confusion, Anger, Bullying, Showing care for others, Abuse, Secrets, Parental break ups, Friendships, Respect etc.

This will help the Teacher find out each child's understanding or experience of an issue, and will also help the Teacher to educate the children in a range of ways to cope with these problems in the future.

Pastoral Care Team

This staff team impacts positively on student behaviour and is used to help any member of staff who is anxious or worried about a child in their care.

Vulnerable Children Register

Children for whom there are concerns are placed on our **Vulnerable Children**

Register to ensure that they are kept under regular review and to help ensure that their emotional and care needs are being met.

Bereavement:

Loss can have a profound effect on a child and on the child's behaviour.

Rainbows operates within the school as a low level therapeutic group intervention and children will be referred to this as appropriate and only with signed parental permission.

Three members of staff are trained as Rainbows facilitators.

Methods of Communicating with Parents:

Communicating with Parents / Guardians is central to maintaining a positive approach to dealing with children.

Parents / Guardians and Teachers when necessary work in a specific and targeted way to develop a joint strategy in addressing specific difficulties. In this way the shared strategy can be implemented at home and in school.

A high level of co-operation, partnership and open communication is seen as an important factor encouraging positive behaviour in school. Structures and channels designed to maintain a high level of communication among and between staff, pupils and Parents /Guardians have been established and are reviewed regularly.

Parents / Guardians are encouraged to talk in confidence to teachers about any significant development in a child's life, in the past or present, which may affect the child's behaviour.

Structures for positive home / school communication used at all levels within the school include:

- General information meetings with Parents / Guardians prior to starting school.
- Termly Newsletters to Parents
- Updated events on website
- Individual meetings with all Parents / Guardians before the child starts school.
- Annual Open night
- Informal Parent / Teacher meetings.
- Formal Parent / Teacher meetings.
- Class Teacher meeting at the beginning of each year.
- Children's homework copy.
- Letters / notes from school to home and home to school.
- Home - School communication notebook.
- School notice board.
- Text a Parent.

Acceptance of Code:

Before registering a child as a student in St. Mark's Junior School, the Principal will provide the parents with a copy of the school's Code of Behaviour.

The Principal, as a condition of registering the child, will require his / her parents to confirm in writing:

- (a) the Code of Behaviour is acceptable to them; and
- (b) they shall make all reasonable efforts to ensure that their child complies with the Code.

Review of Code:

A copy of this Code is available to all parents. All parents are obliged to read, sign and return the form, appended to the Code, thus indicating their agreement with its terms.

It is a condition of attendance at this school that pupils abide by the rules and regulations in this Code of Behaviour.

All members of the teaching staff have been involved in the drafting of this Code.

The Code will be reviewed at regular intervals.

Reviewed January 2012

Reviewed January 2014

Reviewed January 2016

Signed: _____
Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: January 2016

Signed: _____
Principal

Date: January 2016