

BEHAVIOUR

Policy

The Board of Management (BOM) believes that in order to create and maintain a happy, safe and effective learning environment for all, there must be high standards of student behaviour. These must be mutually agreed, widely promoted and actively supported by teachers, other school staff and parents/guardians. We strive to create a climate that encourages and reinforces good behaviour, and in which relationships of respect, trust and support grow, both amongst the children and between the children and the adults who care for them. Children are expected and helped to take personal responsibility for their own behaviour, so that they may gain maximum benefits from their time at school and mature into caring, responsible citizens. The school respects and celebrates the individuality of each child. However, the educational needs of a child whose behaviour is unacceptable will be balanced within the context of meeting the educational needs of all children in the school. This policy has been drawn up to comply with all relevant legislation and to incorporate good practice. It applies to all children equally and must be read in conjunction with all other school policies.

Procedures

1 Responsibilities

1.1 BOM

It is the responsibility of the BOM to ensure that this document is drawn up with the appropriate involvement of all stakeholders, that it is kept up-to-date and that the policy is upheld. The BOM seeks to ensure staff members are able to avail of high quality training and development opportunities for dealing effectively with behavioural issues that they might come across during the course of their work. The BOM may be involved in instances where behaviour is particularly problematic.

1.2 Principal

The Principal is responsible for ensuring that these procedures are implemented, including communicating them on an ongoing basis to all members of the school community. These duties will be assumed by the Deputy Principal in her absence. The Principal plays a particular role in terms

of the induction of new staff (so that they are clear about the school's approach to behaviour from the start) and ensuring mentoring is in place for new staff.

1.3 Teaching staff

For most children, their teachers are significant figures in their life, providing them with adult support and care during the school day. Class teachers (and their substitutes, in cases of absence) are at the frontline, providing help to individual students at the same time as ensuring effective management of the whole classroom. In so doing, they must balance warmth and empathy with objectivity and professional detachment. Teachers are expected to model positive behaviour and to deepen their understanding on an ongoing basis of the factors that affect children's behaviour and that help them to engage in positive behaviour. Furthermore, they are expected to work as a team and support each other in terms of managing difficult behaviour. Special Educational Needs (SEN) teachers have a particular role in working with children with SEN whose behaviour poses a challenge.

1.4 Special Needs Assistants and classroom assistants

Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) and classroom assistants have a role in helping the children in their care manage their behaviour, under the day-to-day guidance of class teachers and SEN teacher(s).

1.5 Others

Student teachers are expected to manage the behaviour of their pupils in accordance with this policy, under the day-to-day guidance of the class teacher. Visiting teachers, coaches, supervisors of the Half One and Half Two Clubs, and extra-curricular staff are also expected to manage children's behaviour in the spirit of this policy.

1.6 Parents and guardians

If parents and guardians set a good example, teach their children that different settings have different rules, and promote a positive attitude towards school, it is highly likely that in-school behaviour will be good.

It is essential that we foster good links between home and school. We recognise that we have a responsibility to explain to parents and guardians the reasons for acceptable school behaviour and to urge them to reinforce messages about such behaviour to their children. We know that parents and guardians can offer valuable experience of, and insight into, their children's behaviour and urge them to share relevant information with the school on a continual basis. We also request that they cooperate fully with the school in instances where their child(ren) may be displaying inappropriate behaviour.

To this end, we will seek to involve parents and guardians sooner rather than later if there are concerns about their child(ren)'s behaviour.

If parents/guardians have concerns about the behaviour of another child, they are reminded that any behaviour issue that is school-related is a school issue; they are therefore advised to raise their concerns with the school rather than attempting to resolve this themselves. This includes behaviour that occurs outside of school, but that has a negative impact within school.

Furthermore, we believe that the Parents' Association is well placed to organise general talks on managing children's behaviour and will aim to support them in doing this if they so choose.

1.7 Pupils

Pupils are expected to take personal responsibility for their own behaviour and appreciate how that influences the wellbeing of those around them. Older children have a particular role in modelling positive behaviour for younger children. The Student Council, Green Schools Committee, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Committee, and Anti-Bullying Ambassadors also play an active role in promoting positive behaviour. Where necessary, and in line with the school's SEN policy, children with SEN will be helped to understand fully what is expected of them in terms of behaviour and will be supported towards achieving this behaviour.

2 A positive school climate

2.1 A whole school approach

We endeavour, in an ongoing and consistent manner, to foster a positive school climate, which benefits the entire school community. Good day-to-day management and teaching will support most students to behave well and will create a relaxed school atmosphere. This includes having in place wellconsidered policies and procedures, creating understandable routines, setting clear boundaries, being fair, trusting children to take responsibility, 'catching' children behaving well, and giving positive feedback when they do so.

2.2 Specific initiatives

Positive behaviour messages are echoed continuously. At the beginning of each school year, Positive Behaviour Week is celebrated. Children and their teachers draw up classroom rules for positive behaviour, which are put on display as a reminder for all throughout the school year. First to sixth class pupils and their parents/guardians also read and sign a behavioural code (the 'happy school rules'), which is written in their homework journals. Positive

behaviour themes are discussed throughout the year, especially through assemblies, circle time, Learn Together (the Ethical Education Programme), and the Social, Personal and Health Education programme. Furthermore, new parents' meetings, class meetings, progress meetings and other meetings provide regular opportunities to discuss positive behaviour with parents and guardians.

2.3 The use of rewards

We recognise that judicious use of rewards may play a beneficial role in supporting and reinforcing positive behaviour. Rewards need to be meaningful, inclusive, appropriate to a child's personal needs, and closely linked in time to the behaviour that is being rewarded. In order to prevent demotivation, rewards should not: seem unattainable; become the goal of learning; result in unhelpful competition; nor be given repeatedly to the same children to the exclusion of others. Crucially, rewards in the school are given for effort, not just for achievement. Rewards may be given to individual children, small groups, classes, or indeed to all children in the school. As children get older, there is less focus on extrinsic motivation (rewards) with greater emphasis being placed on intrinsic motivation.

The following reward systems are in use (this list is not exhaustive):

- verbal praise
- written messages/stamps
- positive notes sent home to parents/guardians
- reward charts
- token gifts/prizes (not sweets)
- certificates/trophies
- Golden Time (half hour on Fridays undertaking activity of class' choice)
- undertaking other fun class activities
- being given responsibility to undertake certain tasks
- homework passes (full or partial)
- Achievements Book (public praising at assemblies of individuals' social, personal or academic achievements)
- Sixth Class Graduation (celebrating the achievements of children leaving the school and acknowledging their contribution to school life).

3 Our school rules

This section outlines the standards of behaviour that are expected under a range of headings, in order that there is clarity about these amongst everyone. Due regard will be given to age and range of abilities when implementing these rules.

3.1 Attendance

If enrolled in the school, children are legally required to attend. School attendance is vitally important and any avoidable term-time absence is strongly discouraged. If a child is absent, parents/guardians must notify the school either in advance, or otherwise on the day of return, by writing a note to the class teacher explaining the reason for absence. Teachers maintain these notes until the end of the school year. The Principal is legally required to notify any absences of 20 days and over in any school year to Tusla: the Child and Family Agency.

3.2 Punctuality

School commences at 8.50 every day. The start of the school day is as vital and integral to the educational experience as any other part of the day and it is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure their children are present at this time. Lateness is very disruptive. In cases of persistent lateness, parents/guardians will be asked to meet with the Principal to discuss the reasons and to seek joint solutions to the problem.

3.3 Being safe

All school policies are important, but the health and safety policy is of particular significance. Children must ensure they behave in a manner that is safe and secure for themselves and those around them, both during school hours and immediately before and after the school day. This includes, but is not limited to: dismounting from bicycles, scooters, skateboards and the like before entering the school grounds; not bringing animals into the school grounds; staying away from out-of-bounds areas (such as railings, flowerbeds, coned areas and the staff car park); not running in the school buildings; not throwing objects; never leaving school or a school activity without permission; and not re-entering the school building at the end of the school day. Children must comply immediately with all adult requests to ensure health and safety.

3.4 Respecting property

Children must respect their own belongings, the possessions of other people and all school property. Additionally, they are expected to respect the environment in general. This includes being tidy, not littering, not spitting, not wilfully damaging property and never stealing.

3.5 Relationships with others

Any interpersonal relationships must be appropriate to the primary school environment. We place great emphasis on the need for respect, honesty, responsibility, kindness and forgiveness. We focus on equality, collaboration, teamwork, and the building of a strong and positive school identity. Children

are expected to be courteous and listen to their teachers and to other members of staff and respond to their requests. Staff will work hard to ensure unhealthy cliques do not develop. Children must not isolate others, nor engage in name calling, nor spread rumours. Bad language, verbal and physical aggression are not tolerated. Bullying is taken extremely seriously and procedures for dealing with this are outlined in our anti-bullying policy.

3.6 Break times

Children eat their lunches in their seats and may not normally bring food outside of the classroom.

Outdoor breaks are an important part of the day, but do require specific rules. Children are expected to follow orders for safe and orderly movement between classrooms and the yard, and within the yard itself. Children must stay within their designated zones and not enter the planted areas/wildlife garden (unless permission has been granted). Use of the 'friendship wall' is encouraged. Children may only engage in the activities that have been sanctioned for their age group and may only use the toys and games from their own class boxes. Rough play ('trains', 'bulldogs', pushing people off mounds, etc) and argumentative behaviour are not allowed. A yard book is used for communicating behaviour issues amongst staff members.

If inclement weather does not permit outdoor breaks, children must stay seated and engage in quiet activities such as reading, drawing, colouring or puzzles. The use of computers and scissors is not allowed during indoor breaks.

3.7 School work

All children are expected to participate in all school activities and do their best during each task. It is important that they have the right books and equipment in order to do their school work and that they strive to maintain a neat working space. They should listen to instructions, and not distract others or disrupt the class.

3.8 Homework

Small, regular amounts of 'do-able' homework are an essential component of children's educational development. It reinforces that which is taught in school, enables children to extend their knowledge, encourages selfdiscipline, and strengthens links between home and school. Homework must be done to the best of the child's ability whenever it is set. Children must ensure that they have the right books and equipment in order to do their homework. Children are expected to do their work themselves, but they are encouraged to discuss their tasks with their parents/guardians, who, in turn, are asked to provide the appropriate support.

Homework is only given Mondays to Thursdays. Children in all classes do reading homework. Parents and guardians must sign the reading slip (infants) or homework journal (first to sixth class) on a nightly basis to confirm it has been completed. The following approximate homework time guidelines are provided:

Infant classes	10 minutes reading time
First class	20 minutes
Second class	30 minutes
Third class	45 minutes
Fourth class	60 minutes
Fifth class	75 minutes
Sixth class	90 minutes.

If a genuine problem has been experienced in completing the homework, parents/guardians are requested to write a note to the teacher on the reading slip or in the journal, to explain the nature of the problem. If homework is not done, children may be asked to do it at home the following evening or in class over the following days. Repeated incompleteness of homework will not be tolerated.

3.9 School outings

Children are reminded that they are representing the school when they are on outings. Their behaviour should bring credit to the school and should not bring the school into disrepute. Children may not bring money with them when they go on school outings.

3.10 Birthdays

Birthdays are an important part of a child's life. All children from junior infants to second class benefit from special assemblies at which their birthdays are noted. Furthermore, teachers may choose to acknowledge children's birthdays in a pleasant and suitable manner (for example, a happy birthday song or a homework pass). If they do so, it is important that no pupils are left out (for example, if their birthdays fall on non-school days). No birthday party invitations, cards or presents may be distributed by children, their parents/guardians or minders within the school grounds at any time. Neither may treats (such as sweets or DVDs) be brought in with children to mark their birthdays.

3.11 Dress code

Children are expected to be suitably dressed every day they attend school (or school events). The primary school setting is one where many children across a wide age range engage in many different activities. The following

must not be worn: make-up; dangling and other unsafe jewellery; overly elaborate and/or unsafe hairstyles; revealing and/or potentially offensive clothes. Children are requested to wear comfortable clothes with flat, wellfitting shoes. These must be clean, in a good state of repair and labelled with the child's name. If teachers request that children wear specific clothing for activities such as sports or arts and crafts, every effort should be made to do this. Failure to do so may result in the child not being allowed to participate in the activity. Occasionally, children will be allowed and encouraged to wear fancy dress (for example, at Hallowe'en).

3.12 Personal electronic devices

We recognise that there are many advantages to new and emerging technologies and we accept that many children now have access to devices such as mobile phones, tablets, music players, cameras, etc. At the same time, we are aware that there are many potential downsides to such technologies. As such, there are strict rules about the use of personal electronic devices. If a child needs to have a device in school – for example, to meet a SEN or to ensure they are contactable by their parents on the way home from school – prior written permission must be sought from the Principal. If at all possible, children should avoid bringing devices into school, as there is a risk of damage and/or theft and the school cannot be held responsible for this under any circumstances. Furthermore, children may not have any devices switched on, nor on display, during any part of the school day. This ban is in place both within school grounds (at any time) and outside of school grounds (during school outings).

3.13 Online activity

Children may not post online any inappropriate comments, photos or videos about any member of the school community, neither inside nor outside of school, nor bring the school into disrepute in any other way through their online behaviour.

3.14 Dangerous substances

Cigarettes, alcohol, drugs and weapons are illegal for school age children. They may never be brought onto the premises and neither is it acceptable to imitate their form or use.

4 Responding to inappropriate behaviour

4.1 A whole school approach

Despite best efforts to counter it, we acknowledge that inappropriate behaviour happens from time to time, whether intentionally or unintentionally. We know that even minor breaches of agreed rules can be disruptive, particularly if they are persistent. Serious misbehaviour can have damaging and possibly long-lasting effects that include the disruption of the student's own learning and the learning of others. It can cause anxiety and distress and potentially pose a threat to safety and security.

It is important therefore, to adopt a systematic and consistent approach to dealing with any behavioural issues that may arise. This includes: not ignoring the inappropriate behaviour; intervening early; keeping the response as local as possible; adopting a problem-solving approach; and involving both the child, and if necessary her/his parents/guardians, in seeking solutions.

The vast majority of incidences of misbehaviour will be occasional and minor and will therefore be quickly and effectively dealt with by the class teacher. For example, teachers may use card systems (yellow card/red card or a traffic light approach) as part of their class behaviour management strategies.

Some children may need additional help to manage their behaviour, such as working with another teacher or drawing up a behaviour contract.

A very small minority of children may show very challenging behaviour that does not respond to such low-level interventions. They will need a sustained response involving all the important adults in their lives, both at school and at home, and they may also require the support of external professionals. Where allegations of criminal behaviour are made, the school will contact the Gardaí.

4.2 Consequences of inappropriate behaviour

Children have to learn what behaviour is and is not acceptable, and why, and understand that there are consequences to poor behaviour. If used properly, sanctions provide opportunities for reflection, reinforce boundaries and signal to others that positive behaviour matters.

Whilst sanctions on their own are unlikely to change behaviour, they do play a key role in the management of inappropriate behaviour. Sanctions must be timely, defuse and not escalate a situation, and be applied in a fair and consistent manner. They must be clear, proportionate to the nature and seriousness of the misbehaviour, and appropriate to the age and developmental stage of the child(ren) concerned, taking into account any specific vulnerabilities they might have.

The following sanctions will never be used: ridicule; humiliation; persistent ignoring; scapegoating; leaving a student unsupervised; detention outside of school hours; cancellation of a curriculum subject as punishment; extra

homework/‘lines’ as punishment. Furthermore, there will be no whole class sanctions in cases of individual or small group wrongdoing. Specifically, sanctions will never be used in a way that would discriminate against any individual or groups of students under equality legislation. Finally, whilst a child will never be physically punished, staff may use reasonable force to restrain a child in a crisis situation to stop her/him from injuring her/himself or others.

4.3 Sanctions in use

A range of possible sanctions is available to teachers, which may be used on their own or in combination. Whilst the list below is not intended as a formal staged system, the earlier entries are more minor and the latter entries are more severe. Certain occasional misbehaviours will attract minor sanctions, whereas serious misbehaviours, including, but not limited to, persistent breaching of school rules, will attract major sanctions. As the school strives to ensure that serious misbehaviour does not occur, it is not expected that there will have to be regular recourse to major sanctions.

- Reasoned discussion with child, including advice on how to behave
- Verbal warning/reprimand
- Putting it right (for example, cleaning a table after marking it)
- Paying back time (making up for time that was wasted)
- Carrying out a useful task in school
- Confiscation of devices
- ‘Time out’: temporary removal from lesson or peer group
- A verbal or written summary of the incident either done in class or at home, including an undertaking to improve
- A verbal or written apology to child or adult
- Withdrawal of ‘privileges’ (such as Golden Time or a school outing)
- Sent to Deputy Principal or Principal
- Note to parents/guardians from teacher or (Deputy) Principal
- Meeting with parents/guardians to discuss behaviour, either with the child present or not
- Behaviour contract
- Report to BOM for consultation
- Suspension (dealt with below)
- Expulsion (dealt with below)
- Report to external agencies (for example, Gardaí, Tusla: the Child and Family Agency or social worker).

4.4 Suspension

Suspension is defined as requiring a student to absent her/himself from the school for a specified and limited number of school days. Suspension should be an appropriate response to serious misbehaviour. Normally, other

interventions will have been tried, although a single incident of serious misconduct may be grounds for suspension. Whilst suspension can offer respite at a critical time and can provide an opportunity for reflection and planning, it can also potentially be counterproductive, so must be used with extreme caution.

The BOM has the authority to suspend a student, but the Principal is delegated to order immediate suspension where there is a serious threat to the safety of others (in which case the parents/guardians should be telephoned for immediate collection of child). If the latter situation arises, the formal investigation begins as soon as the suspension is imposed. If suspension is being considered as a response to serious misbehaviour, there must be a preliminary assessment of facts. The Principal must then inform the child and her/his parents/guardians of the nature of the complaint, explain that it is being investigated and clarify that it could result in suspension. This will be done verbally in the first instance and then confirmed in writing. Both the child and her/his parents/guardians will be given the opportunity to respond during a meeting with the Principal and one other person (normally the Deputy Principal). If they fail to attend such a meeting, a letter will be sent outlining the gravity of the situation and inviting them to another meeting. An investigation will be carried out under the direction of the Principal, with a final decision being made by the BOM. A suspension will usually last for no more than three days unless there are very good reasons to extend it. Parents/guardians will be informed of the period of suspension, the reasons for the suspension, the study programme to be followed at home, the arrangements for returning to school and the procedure for appeals to the Patron, in writing and possibly also via a meeting. The Principal is required to inform Tusla: the Child and Family Agency of any suspensions of six days and over.

Children returning to school will be supported to reintegrate as quickly as possible using a behaviour contract. The focus will be on repairing damaged relationships and acknowledging responsibilities.

4.5 Expulsion

Expulsion is defined as the decision to permanently exclude a student from school. Only the BOM can expel a student. As with suspension, expulsion must be an appropriate response to extreme misbehaviour, having either exhausted all other avenues or in cases so serious that alternatives are impossible.

If expulsion is being considered as a response to extreme misbehaviour, there must be a preliminary assessment of facts. The BOM must then decide how the following actions will take place:

- The carrying out of a detailed investigation under the direction of the Principal

- A recommendation by the Principal to the BOM
- Consideration by the BOM of the recommendation and the holding of a hearing
- Deliberations and actions by the BOM
- If expulsion is proposed, the Educational Welfare Officer must be informed, who must then arrange further consultations
- If the BOM remains of view that the student should be expelled, the parents/guardians should be informed in writing.

Appeals may be made to the Secretary-General of the Department of Education and Skills and/or Tusla: the Child and Family Agency.

5 Record keeping

Staff members will keep thorough records of misbehaviour; this ensures clarity and accuracy. Written records may also help to identify patterns of behaviour. Pupil files include the following:

- Incident forms
- The child's written reflections on incidents
- Progress meeting notes
- Test results
- End of year reports
- Correspondence with parents/guardians and external bodies
Other information deemed relevant by the school.

Additionally, inappropriate yard behaviour is noted in the yard book (see section 3.6) and teachers also note inappropriate classroom behaviour in their behaviour books. Persistent misbehaviour may also be entered into the Principal's behaviour book.

6 Review

The implementation of these procedures will be monitored on an ongoing basis. If necessary, this policy and these procedures will be amended as a result of changed circumstances, and shall in any case undergo full review in 2017.

Approved by the BOM on 26 August 2014

Amendments to RETNS Behaviour Policy

During Covid-19 Epidemic

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Behaviour Principles

In light of the need for children to behave differently and to follow specific rules on their return to school during the Covid-19 epidemic, this amendment to the Behaviour Policy outlines specific changes to guidance for pupils. Our guiding principles when making any changes or adjustments to our policy is to keep all of our children, families and staff safe and to make every effort to ensure their well-being. These amendments will be communicated to pupils, parents and staff.

Children will be supported by staff in following new routines and rules, with levels of support depending on age and any additional needs.

Behaviour Expectations:

- We have high expectations around our pupils taking personal responsibility for their behaviour in RETNS.
- Behaviour in all communal areas of the school should be calm and orderly at all times.
- Shouting or screaming in the yard must be avoided as a health and safety measure.

School Routines and Procedures:

We expect children to:

- follow any altered routines for arrival or departure
- follow instructions on remaining in their own pod (in the classroom) and bubble (outside the classroom)
- move around the school as per specific instructions (for example, one-way systems, out of bounds areas, queuing, use of toilets)
- remain in their allocated zone in the yard
- follow procedures about sharing any equipment
- follow procedures about care of personal belongings including drinking bottles and books

Hygiene and Health Expectations:

We expect children to:

- follow school instructions on hygiene, such as hand washing and sanitising

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- follow guidelines on sneezing, coughing, tissues and disposal (re-enforce 'catch it, bin it, kill it') and avoiding touching their mouth, nose and eyes with hands
- tell an adult if they are feeling unwell

Mental Health and Emotional Support:

Children will be supported by:

- clear guidance and support, differentiated for age and need, in following routines and procedures
- using curriculum content/ methodologies to support children with changed procedures/routines or with specific anxieties, (e.g. social stories, circle time, SPHE, Learn Together).
- monitoring children to ascertain where additional support might be necessary (small group discussion, ANA/teacher check in)
- providing reassurance and support on a class and whole school basis (e.g. assembly)
- using a restorative approach when expectations are not met

- Where a child is struggling to co-operate, discussion, support and sanction if necessary, will be at class level in the first instance. Any sanction will be related to the age and level of understanding of the child
- If the behaviour is repeated or continues, the principal and parents will be informed. If the issue is serious or deliberate, the principal/parents/guardians may be involved from the outset
- Any intentional Covid-based poor behaviour eg. coughing or spitting on anyone on purpose or any taunting or teasing about Covid, anxiety, mask-wearing etc. will be considered serious misbehaviour

Related documentation: RETNS COVID Response Plan

Contact details: Queries about this policy should be addressed to the Principal in the first instance

The Principal

Rathfarnham Educate Together National School

Loreto Avenue

Rathfarnham

Dublin 14

Telephone: (01) 493 8677

E-mail: info@retns.ie

Approved by the Board of Management on 7 September 2020