



St. Kevin's National School Code of Behaviour (Conduct and Discipline) Policy 2021-2022

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Aims

In devising the code, consideration has to be given to the particular needs and circumstances of this school. The aim is to create an ordered and orderly environment in which pupils can, through developing self-discipline, feel secure and make progress in all aspects of their development

Every effort will be made by all members of staff to adopt a positive approach to the question of behaviour in the school. In essence our aims are;

- a) To create a positive learning environment that encourages and reinforces good behaviour*
- b) To promote self-esteem and positive relationships*
- c) To encourage consistency of response to both positive and negative behaviour*
- d) To foster a sense of responsibility and self-discipline in pupils and to support good behaviour patterns based on consideration and respect for the rights of others*
- e) To facilitate the education and development of every child*
- f) To foster caring attitudes to one another and to the environment*
- g) To enable teachers to teach without disruption*

Principles

The school recognises the variety of differences that exist between children and the need to tolerate these differences

It is agreed that a high standard of behaviour requires a strong sense of community within the school and a high level of co-operation among staff and between staff, parents and pupils

Every effort will be made to ensure that the code of discipline is implemented in a reasonable, fair and consistent manner

School Rules

Safety: For my own safety and that of others;

- a) I will be careful coming to and going from school*
- b) I will always walk while in the school building*
- c) I will always show respect for my fellow pupils*
- d) I will bring a note of explanation following absences*
- e) I will never leave the school grounds without the permission of the Principal*

Caring for myself

- a) I will respect myself and my property, always keeping my school bag, books and copies in good order*
- b) I will always be in school before the bell rings at 8.50a.m.*
- c) I will show respect for my school and be proud to wear the complete school uniform every day*
- d) I will always be aware of my personal cleanliness*
- e) I will always bring a sensible, nutritional lunch to school. Crisps, minerals, sweets or chewing gum are not permitted*
- f) I will always do my best in school by listening carefully, working as hard as I can and by completing my homework*

Caring for others

- a) I will be kind and respectful to teachers and fellow pupils by being mannerly and polite, by taking turns and by remaining silent and orderly in my class line*
- b) I will behave well in class so that my fellow pupils and I can learn*

- c) *I will always keep my school clean by bringing unfinished food and drinks, cartons, wrappers etc. home. I will show respect for the property of my fellow pupils, the school building and grounds*
- d) *I will be truthful and honest at all times*

Bullying Prevention

A safe, caring environment for child development is more difficult to create and maintain where bullying behaviour is not adequately addressed. In keeping with our school ethos, bullying behaviour is not tolerated and is taken seriously. Every child has the right to enjoy school and to feel safe and cared for. Therefore, the culture of the school is one of openness where children are encouraged to 'tell to stay safe'.

Many children are afraid to tell for fear of being seen as 'a rat' or 'a tout'. The wider environmental context within which our school operates presents a significant challenge to our school community in our attempts to address bullying and intimidation. Our school adheres to the definition of bullying as repeated aggression, verbal, emotional or physical by an individual or group against another. It is systematic and on-going.

Bullying can be

- a) *Physical – pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any other violent behaviour.*
- b) *Deliberate damage to another's property – schoolbag, books, lunches etc.*
- c) *Verbal – name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours and teasing.*
- d) *Emotional – excluding (e.g. not allowing another to join group), tormenting (e.g. hiding another's property, threatening gestures), taunting and teasing*
- e) *Racist – racial taunts, gestures, violent behaviour*
- f) *Sexual – unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments*
- g) *Homophobic – because of, or focusing on the issue of sexuality and sexual orientation*

Some indications of bullying behaviour

The following signs/symptoms may indicate a child is being bullied:

- a) *Unexplained physical injury or damage to property*
- b) *Anxiety going to and from school – changing regular patterns*
- c) *Unwillingness or refusal to go to school or missing*
- d) *A deterioration in school performance – loss of concentration or enthusiasm*
- e) *A pattern of unexplained physical illnesses – headaches, stomach upset etc.*
- f) *Unexpected mood or behavioural changes*
- g) *Visible signs of anxiety – stammering, nightmares, crying, not eating etc.*
- h) *Out of character comments about others*
- i) *Missing/damaged possessions*
- j) *Increased requests for money or stealing*
- k) *Reluctance and/or refusal to say what is bothering them*
- l) *These signs do not necessarily mean a child is being bullied, but a continuing pattern of such behaviour should provoke concern and warrant further investigation.*

Noting and reporting instances of bullying behaviour

Any instance or suspicion of bullying should be reported to Principal. People who should report are

Pupils

Parents/guardians

Non-teaching staff – caretaker, cleaners, secretary and SNAs

Teaching staff and BOM Members

- a) *It should be emphasised regularly to pupils that reporting instances of bullying is not 'ratting' it is 'telling to stay safe'. One strategy used to show this is explaining to pupils the difference between telling the teacher that another boy hasn't got his homework done (ratting on him) and telling the teacher that another boy is being hit all the time on the way home (telling to keep someone safe). Such explanations provide a context for pupils to differentiate. This proves important when meeting the challenge within the context of certain environmental norms.*
- b) *Reports of bullying are noted in the School Incident Book. The Principal will be informed and the matter investigated and dealt with accordingly. In cases of serious bullying the BoM will be informed.*
- c) *Parents and guardians of both victims and bullies shall be informed as a coordinated Home/School response proves most successful.*
- d) *Individual teachers, in consultation with the Principal will record and take appropriate measures regarding report of bullying behaviour.*

Procedures for dealing with an instance of bullying

- a) *Class teachers will investigate and record, speaking with both victim and bully separately. These interviews will be conducted calmly, sensitively, and unemotionally. If a group of children are involved each child will be spoken to separately and then the group together.*
- b) *Meetings will take place with the parents/guardians of the pupils involved. Parents/guardians will be asked for their support in resolving the problem and a solution will be arrived at jointly.*
- c) *The Principal will be informed immediately an issue comes to light. The Principal may decide to become actively involved at any stage of a given process. The Principal will be kept fully informed at all stages of the process.*
- d) *If a case remains unresolved the Chairperson of the BoM will be informed.*
- e) *A record of all reporting, interviews, meetings, conclusions and decisions will be kept.*
- f) *Summary of general school practices to counteract bullying behaviour*
- g) *The school emphasises awareness of the serious nature of bullying. Pupils are taught skills and given suggestions on how to deal with incidents of bullying. This is done formally through the Stay Safe and Walk Tall programmes, within the school SPHE policy and less formally/informally through the use of 'Circle Time' and teacher pupil conversations and chats.*
- h) *Teachers continually reinforce an anti-bullying culture across a range of curricular initiatives and school activities by teaching and emphasising positive behaviours such as participation, inclusion, sharing, turn taking, listening, courtesy, respect and consideration for others. These behaviours are reinforced through regular assemblies.*
- i) *Staffs are always vigilant in supervision and are aware of behaviour which may be bully oriented. The school will work with bullies and victims on an on-going basis. If necessary, in consultation with parents/guardians the school may seek assistance from outside agencies such as psychological services, social workers, doctors and Gardaí etc.*
- j) *While every effort is made to counteract bullying behaviour and to implement this policy in the interests of all pupils equitably from time to time issues can arise whereby parents may wish to make a formal complaint to the school. Such eventualities are dealt with in the following section 'Parental Complaints Procedure' outlined below.*

Parental Complaints Procedure

The purpose of this procedure within St. Kevin's is to:

- a) To foster fruitful and trusting relationships between school and parents.*
- b) To afford parents an opportunity to express opinions/grievances through the framework of a defined procedure.*
- c) To minimize the opportunity for conflict.*
- d) Through affording parents an opportunity to liaise with the class teacher.*

This policy does not cover:

- a) Complaints that are being dealt with through legal channels.*
- b) Matters of professional competence which comes under the remit of the DES.*
- c) Petty complaints which do not relate to the work of a particular teacher.*

In-School Procedures

If a parent has a concern in relation to the social or academic progress of their child, or the performance of a teacher the following steps are to be followed:

- a) The parent/guardian meets with the class teacher on appointment. Parents should not contact teachers at home. If the issue is not resolved the class teacher informs the Principal of the nature of the complaint. If the matter remains unresolved the parent/guardian may raise the matter with the chairman of the B.O.M.*
- b) If the grievance persists, the parent/guardian may pursue the matter by lodging a complaint in writing with the chairperson of the B.O.M. who will bring the nature of the complaint to the notice of the teacher and seek to resolve the issue.*
- c) If this process fails, the chairperson will supply the teacher with a copy of the written complaint and arrange a meeting with the teacher concerned and the Principal. This will happen within 10 school days of receipt of the written complaint.*
- d) If the complaint remains unresolved the chairperson will report formally to the B.O.M. within another 10 school days. If the B.O.M. does not uphold the complaint, both parties will be informed immediately. If the B.O.M. considers the complaint warrants further investigations, the teacher will be informed and supplied with any written evidence in support of the complaint.*
- e) The teacher will be requested to supply a written statement to the B.O.M. and given an opportunity to make an oral presentation to the Board. The complainant will be offered a similar opportunity.*
- f) Within 5 school days of this presentation to the board, the decision of the B.O.M. which is final is delivered in writing to the Teacher and the complainant.*

Homework

It is the policy of the school to assign homework on a regular basis. Parents are strongly advised to take an active interest in their child's homework and to sign their homework journal each night (ensuring that it is done).

Approval of Acceptable Behaviour

Strategies:

Praise may be given by means of any one of the following;

- a) A quiet word or gesture to show approval*
- b) A comment in a pupil's exercise book*

- c) *A visit to another member of staff or to the Principal for commendation.*
- d) *A word of praise in front of a group or class*
- e) *A system of merit marks*
- f) *Delegating some special responsibility or privilege*
- g) *A mention to parent, written or verbal communication*

Disapproval of Unacceptable Behaviour

Disapproval of unacceptable behaviour will be dealt with as follows; (The nature of the behaviour will determine the strategy)

- a) *Reasoning with pupils*
- b) *Reprimand (including advice on how to improve)*
- c) *Prescribing extra work*
- d) *Communication with Parents*
- e) *Temporary separation from peers and/or loss of privileges.*
- f) *Referral to Principal/Deputy-Principal*
- g) *Note to parents*
- h) *Take note of by teacher / member of staff*
- i) *Suspension/expulsion (in accordance with Rule 130 of the Rules for National Schools and the Education Welfare Act 2000).*

Procedures

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

Examples of minor misbehaviour

Interrupting class work

Running in school building

Littering around school

Consistent talking out of turn in class

Examples of steps to be taken by teachers when dealing with minor misdemeanours:

Verbal reprimand/reasoning with the pupil

Noting instance of yard misbehaviour in yard book

Examples of steps to be taken when dealing with regular occurrences of minor misdemeanours

Phase 1 (within the classroom):

1. *Write story of what happened*
2. *Note in homework journal to be signed by parent/temporary separation from peers*
3. *Sending to another teacher/denial of participation in some class activity*
4. *Warning to pupils whose name appears in yard book more than three times*
5. *Note to parents concerning further misbehaviour in yard (Misbehaviour in yard consists of any action that puts the safety of self/other pupil at risk)*

Phase 2:

1. *Send to the Deputy Principal*
2. *Send to the Principal*
3. *Class teacher meets one/both parents*
4. *Principal/Deputy Principal meets with one/both parents concerning yard behaviour*

Examples of serious misbehaviour

Behaviour that is hurtful (including bullying, harassment, discrimination and victimisation)

Behaviour that interferes with teaching and learning

Threats or physical hurt to another person

Damage to property

Theft

Examples of steps to be taken when dealing with serious misdemeanours:

- a) Send to the Deputy Principal*
- b) Send to the Principal*
- c) Principal call to parents / guardians*
- d) Principal meets with one/both parents*
- e) Chairperson of Board Of Management is informed and parents requested to meet with the Chairperson and Principal*

Examples of gross misbehaviour

Assault on a teacher or pupil

Serious theft

Serious damage to property

Carrying drugs, alcohol, cigarettes

Examples of steps to be taken when dealing with gross misdemeanours:

Chairperson/Principal to sanction immediate suspension pending discussion with parents

Expulsion will be considered in an extreme case in accordance with Rule 130 (6) 'No pupil can be struck off the rolls for breaches of discipline without prior consent of patron'

It should be noted that these lists consist of examples only: It is not meant to be a totally comprehensive list of misdemeanours and procedural steps.

Sanctions

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

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

A sanction may also:

- a. reinforce the boundaries set out in the code of behaviour*
- b. signal to other students and to staff that their wellbeing is being protected.*

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

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

The following steps will be taken when a child behaves inappropriately. The list is by no means exhaustive. Teachers may put in place alternative measures bearing in mind the circumstances involved. The aim of any sanction is to prevent the behaviour occurring again and if necessary to help the pupil devise strategies for this.

- a) Reasoning with pupil
- b) Verbal reprimand including advice on how to improve
- c) Temporary separation from peers within class and/or temporary removal to another class
- d) Prescribing extra work/ writing out the story of what happened
- e) Loss of privileges
- f) Detention during break or after school
- g) Communication with parents
- h) Referral to Principal
- i) Principal communicating with parents
- j) Exclusion (Suspension or Expulsion) from school (in accordance with Rule 130 of the Rules for National Schools as amended by circular and Education Welfare Act 2000)

Usually sanctions will relate as closely as possible to the behaviour

Suspension and Expulsion

Before serious sanctions such as detention, suspension or expulsion are used, the normal channels of communication between school and parents will be utilised. Where it is proposed to detain a pupil after school hours, the parents or guardians will be notified. Communication with parents may be verbal or by letter depending on the circumstances.

For gross misbehaviour or repeated instances of serious misbehaviour suspension may be considered. Parents concerned will be invited to come to the school to discuss their child's case. Aggressive, threatening or violent behaviour towards a teacher or pupil will be regarded as serious or gross misbehaviour.

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, with due regard to records of previous misbehaviours, their pattern and context, sanctions and other interventions used and their outcomes and any relevant medical information. Suspension will be in accordance with the Rules for National Schools and the Education Welfare Act 2000.

In the case of gross misbehaviour, where it is necessary to ensure that order and discipline are maintained and to secure the safety of the pupils, the Board may authorise the Chairperson or Principal to sanction an immediate suspension for a period not exceeding three school days, pending a discussion of the matter with the parents.

Expulsion may be considered in an extreme case, in accordance with the Rule for National Schools and the Education Welfare Act 2000. Before suspending or expelling a pupil, the Board shall notify the Education Welfare Officer in writing in accordance with Section 24 of the Education Welfare Act.

Parents / Guardians may appeal the decision of the school using a Section 29 Appeal:

Section 29 Appeals Administration Unit

Department of Education and Skills

Friars Mill Road

Mullingar

Co. Westmeath Tel: (044) 9337008

Removal of Suspension (Reinstatement)

Following or during a period of suspension, the parent/s may apply to have the pupil reinstated to the school. The parent/s 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 that of the other pupils or staff. The Principal will facilitate the preparation of a behaviour plan for the pupil if required and will re-admit the pupil formally to the class.

The Occupational Safety and Health of Staff

The European Agency for Occupational Safety and Health (OSHA) defines third party violence in the context of the workplace as 'physical violence, verbal aggression or the threat of physical violence where the aggressor is not a work colleague, e.g. the person, customer, client or patient receiving the goods or services'. It is clear that in the context of St. Kevin's, assaults by pupils or parents are included in this definition. As such it is an occupational health and safety hazard, covered by EU legislation. OSHA notes that workers in the education sector are more at risk of violence when their jobs involve working with children with special educational needs.

In Ireland, the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 sets out the duties of employers and employees in relation to the maintenance of safe workplaces. The Board of Management of a school, as the employer, 'shall ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare at work of his or her employees'. They are also obliged to assess the risks to health, safety and welfare at work, and minimize those risks through taking measures set out in the Act. In addition, they are required to report to the Health and Safety Authority incidents where employees suffer an accident or injury at work, which causes absence of 3 consecutive days or more. Employees are required to take reasonable care to protect their safety at work.

As outlined above, assaults and violence are categorized as risks to occupational health and safety, so in this context, school boards of management are required to assess the risk of assaults and violence against staff occurring and put measures in place to ensure that such risks are minimized. In addition, they are required to make reports to the authorities in relation to incidents which occur.

Defining Conduct with respect to the Occupational Safety and Health of Staff

Violence, harassment or assaults may also constitute criminal offences under the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act 1997, which states that

- 1) A person shall be guilty of the offence of assault who, without lawful excuse, intentionally or recklessly—*
 - (a) directly or indirectly applies force to or causes an impact on the body of another, or*
 - (b) causes another to believe on reasonable grounds that he or she is likely immediately to be subjected to any such force or impact, without the consent of the other".*

In cases where a criminal assault is suspected, the matter should be reported to the Gardaí. It must be borne in mind that an assault on an employee by a primary school pupil is unlikely to be classed as a criminal assault, as the criminal age of responsibility is 12.

A growing body of research indicates that verbal and physical attacks on teachers are on the increase. When they occur, the impact on the individual teacher can be profound. An INTO survey (2012) found that 20% of principals and 18% of teachers reported that they had been the subject of a physical assault. 54% of principals and 39% of teachers had experienced verbal assault. Most physical assaults were by pupils, and most verbal assaults were carried out by adults.

It should be noted that this policy includes incidents of defamation, libel and slander, particularly when using social media, to defame a member of staff or issue an allegation against a member of staff. Such conduct on the

part of parents will not be tolerated and will be dealt with in a similar manner to the steps outlined in the 'Assaults on Staff' section of this policy.

OSHA has outlined the consequences of violence at work, which include but are not limited to;

For the individual:

- a) physical harm*
- b) stress*
- c) emotional trauma*
- d) feelings of powerlessness*
- e) demotivation*

For the employer/organisation:

- a) higher staff turnover*
- b) increased absenteeism and sickness absence*
- c) higher insurance costs[2]*

Assaults on Staff (including use of social media)

Circular 40/97 emphasises the necessity to create and maintain a culture where acts of violence are not tolerated and where incidents when they do occur are effectively and speedily dealt with (including incidents of defamation, libel and slander, particularly when using social media, to defame a member of staff or issue an allegation against a member of staff) Such conduct on the part of pupils or parents will not be tolerated and will be dealt with in a similar manner to the steps outlined below.

Creating such a climate requires the cooperation of the whole community. However, where in a minority of cases parents do not abide by the agreed procedures the circular offers little practical assistance in how to proceed.

Circular 40/97 focuses on:

- a) The board's duty to provide a safe place of work for employees*
- b) Measures to be taken to prevent or minimise the risk of assaults to teachers or other staff employed in schools*
- c) Measures to be taken in support of staff who have been assaulted or threatened with assault; and ensuring that appropriate action is taken to safeguard against a recurrence*

Where an assault occurs, the following steps as outlined in Circular 40/97 should be taken:

(i) The incident should be immediately reported to the principal teacher/other colleague.

The details of the incident should be recorded in an Incident Book kept for this purpose in the workplace. Situations in which members have been intimidated or threatened with physical violence should also be recorded.

(ii) Where necessary immediate medical assistance should be sought.

(iii) The matter should be reported to the Gardaí, where appropriate. This report would normally be made by the teacher who was assaulted.

(iv) The Board of Management should be notified of the incident and where necessary an emergency meeting of the Board should take place. The Board should notify its legal advisors of the assault. The Board's insurance company should also be notified.

(v) Where the assault is by a pupil the matter should be dealt with in accordance with the school's Code of Discipline and as provided for in Rule 130(5) of the Rules for National Schools.

(vi) Repeatedly aggressive pupils should be referred, with the consent of parents, for psychological assessment in order to assess the pupils' social and emotional needs and to determine how these can be best met.

(vii) Where the assault is committed by a parent/guardian, the parent/guardian should be immediately instructed in writing not to make direct contact with the teacher/school pending full consideration of the matter by the Board. Subsequently the Board should correspond with the parent/guardian stating:

- a) that the Board considers the assault unacceptable*
- b) what action the Board intends to take*
- c) outlining what pre-conditions should be met before access to the school is restored*

(viii) Applications for leave of absence, in relation to a member who has been assaulted, should be forwarded to Primary Payments Section, Department of Education, Cornamaddy, Athlone, Co. Westmeath. Each application will be assessed on its merits. (It should be noted that paid assault leave will only be granted when a teacher's entitlement to paid sick leave has been exhausted.

Implementation

This policy is subject to review and will be fully implemented following ratification by the Board of Management.

Signed _____
Chairman

[1] EU- OSHA (2011), Workplace Violence and Harassment: a European Picture

[2] EU-OSHA (2003), FACTS 47 - Prevention of Violence to Staff in the Education Sector

Appendix

Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression whether it is verbal, psychological or physical, which is conducted by an individual or a group against others. It is behaviour which is intentionally aggravating and intimidating. It includes behaviour such as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting, exclusion or extortion by one or more pupils against a victim.

Bullying behaviour thrives in an atmosphere of uncertainty and secrecy in which the victim often feels a sense of hopelessness. Isolated incidents of aggressive behaviour, while not to be condoned, cannot be described as bullying.

In accordance with Circular 45/2013 our Anti-Bullying Policy has been reviewed and formulated. Furthermore and further to the Education Welfare Act 2000, Section 23, our Anti-Bullying Policy is set within the framework of this policy. The Education Act 1998 Section 15 indicates that schools must publish a Code of Behaviour / Conduct. Our Anti-Bullying Policy operates in conjunction with this Code of Behaviour (Conduct and Discipline Policy), which is used to address isolated instances of unacceptable behaviour.