

CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

MERCY PRIMARY SCHOOL, BIRR, CO. OFFALY

INTRODUCTION

In compliance with Section 23 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, the Board of Management of *Mercy Primary School, Birr* has prepared and made available a Code of Behaviour for its Pupils, Staff and Parents.

The Code of Behaviour details:

1. The standards of behaviour that shall be observed by each pupil attending the school;
2. The whole school approach in promoting positive behaviour;
3. The measures that shall be taken when a pupil fails or refuses to observe those standards;
4. The procedures to be followed before a pupil may be suspended or expelled from the school concerned;
5. The grounds for removing a suspension imposed in relation to a pupil
6. The school's Anti-Bullying Policy; and
7. The procedures to be followed in relation to a child's absence from school.

The Code of Behaviour of *Mercy Primary School, Birr* has been developed in accordance with '*Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools*', *National Educational Welfare Board, 2008*. Mercy P.S. encourages the development of the core values of the Catholic tradition. Our school vision is as follows:

“We build on the legacy left us by former Sisters of Mercy, of a vibrant Catholic Parish School. We wish our pupils to enjoy learning in an atmosphere of mutual respect, co-operation and positive affirmation.”

POLICY FORMULATION

This Policy was drawn up in consultation with parents, pupils, staff and Board of Management and will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

AIMS & OBJECTIVES OF THE CODE

The aims and objectives of the code are:

- To allow the school to function in an orderly way where children can make progress in all aspects of their development
- To create 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 school staff, parents and pupils in understanding the systems and procedures that form part of the code of behaviour and to seek their 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.

WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH

The Board of Management recognises the importance of creating consistent values, policies, practices and relationships that support the Code of Behaviour. Such an environment may only be formed by involving the entire school community and in this respect the Board acknowledges the importance of the roles played by, the principal, teachers, ancillary staff and parents in the review and operation of the Code.

The Code of Behaviour is given to parents/guardians prior to enrolment who acknowledge in writing that they have read and understand the Code of Behaviour.

Part of the Code of Behaviour from the - Introduction to Level 3 Disciplinary Actions - is reproduced in the Homework Journal used by Classes 1st - 6th

STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOUR

General Behaviour

Each pupil is expected to:

- be well behaved and to show consideration for other children and adults
- show respect for the property of, the school, other children and their own belongings
- attend school on a regular basis and to be punctual
- do her best both in school and for homework.

Attendance

Usually, children like to be in school every day. Children should only be absent from school when it is genuinely necessary (e.g. illness). Parents/Guardians are strongly advised not to arrange holidays or other outings during the school time.

NOTIFICATION OF A CHILD'S ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL

Parent(s)/guardian(s) should adhere to the following procedures when notifying the school of a pupil's absence;

- Every absence must be accounted for in writing on the first day the pupil **returns** to school using the Absence Notification Form in the School Journal (1st – 6th) or the Absence Notification Form (Junior / Senior Infants) available from the Class Teacher, which specifies the reason for and duration of the absence.
- Significant absences caused by ill health (i.e. absences longer than 10 school days) should be certified.

In accordance with the Education Act 2000, the school is required to inform the Education Welfare Officer in writing

- Where a child has missed 20 days or more in a school year.
- Where attendance is irregular
- Where a child is suspended or expelled for 6 days or more
- Where a pupil is removed from the school register

Every absence of a child must be accounted for in writing by having the School's absence Notification Form signed by parent/guardian. (See Appendix 1)

Significant absences caused by ill health (i.e. absences longer than 10 school days) should be certified.

In accordance with the Education Welfare Act of 2000, absences of 20 days or more are reported to the National Education Welfare Board.

Uniform

- Full school uniform and appropriate securely fastened footwear must be worn by all pupils. Laced shoes should only have one lace per shoe. Tracksuits and securely fastened runners on PE days. (A white polo shirt or school white blouse is to be worn with the track suit).
- Tracksuits may also be worn on any day after Halloween Break until St. Patrick's Day.
- Make-up not to be worn in school.
- For education and hygiene reasons, hair to be clean and worn in such a way so as not to cover the face, not to be a distraction to the child herself or others, and not to interfere with other children.
- All pupils of whatever background or ethnic group are required to wear the full school uniform and school tracksuit. The Education Act 1998 obliges Boards of Management to take account of "the principles and requirements of a democratic society and have respect and promote respect for the diversity of values, beliefs, traditions, languages and ways of life in society". Therefore obligatory cultural items such as the hijab scarf may be worn as an extension of the uniform, in a colour consistent with the school uniform.

However, keeping in mind the joint statement issued on behalf of the Minister for Education & Science, Batt O'Keeffe, T.D., and the Minister for Integration Policy, Connor Lenihan, T.D., on 23rd September 2008 which stated that (they) "did not recommend the wearing of clothing in the classroom which obscures a facial view and creates an artificial barrier between pupil and teacher. Such clothing hinders proper communication", we do not allow the wearing of the burka.

Jewellery

- In the interest of health and safety the only jewellery allowed is a watch and small ear studs (one in each earlobe). No other body jewellery is to be worn.
- Any other jewellery might cause injury or be damaged during P.E./playtime.

Mobile Phone

- Pupils are not allowed to have mobile phones.
- If a pupil needs to contact home, the call is made through the office.
- If a pupil is found to have a mobile phone, the phone is taken and stored in the office for the day – returned at home time.
- If a pupil persists in bringing a mobile phone to school the phone may be confiscated for a number of days.

Homework

- It is the policy of the school to assign homework from Monday to Thursday.
- This may be oral, written or both.
- Parents/Guardians are strongly advised to take an active interest in their child's homework.
- We ask parents/guardians to sign the Homework Journal each night ensuring that homework is completed – (class 1 to class 6).
- As a general guide homework should take no longer than:

10 minutes	-	First Class
20 minutes	-	Second Class
30 minutes	-	Third Class
40 minutes	-	Fourth Class
50 minutes	-	Fifth Class
60 minutes	-	Sixth Class
- Junior and Senior Infants in consultation with class teacher.
- We would appreciate that any problems regarding homework be brought to our attention as soon as possible.

Classroom Behaviour

Each pupil is expected to:

- listen – to the teacher and other pupils if they are speaking
- work – to the best of her ability
- value – school property and the belongings of fellow pupils.
- follow – the direction of her teacher
- obtain – her teachers permission to leave the classroom
- respect – the teacher, other pupils and visitors to the classroom.

Yard Behaviour

Each pupil is expected to:

- play – safely avoiding any games or play that are rough or dangerous
- follow – the directions of the playground supervisor(s)
- remain – on school grounds at all times. If a child leaves school without permission, Gardaí are notified.
- obtain – permission before re-entering the school building during break periods
- respect – the yard supervisor and fellow pupils
- avoid – swearing, fighting or name calling

Behaviour in other School Areas

- Walk – quietly on corridors and stairs and in school yard when entering and exiting school.
- Do not climb onto walls or seats in shed.
- No cycling in school grounds.
- Chewing gum, tippex, glass containers, and weapons of any kind are not permitted in the school.
- No pupil is allowed to leave the school grounds during school hours.
- Any pupil needing to leave the premises during the school day must be accompanied by a parent/guardian who must first sign pupil out at office.
- **Exception:** Pupils from 5th and 6th class who serve mass (these pupils must sign a log book on leaving and returning to the school).
- Junior/Senior Infants must be collected from Class Teacher in the school grounds at 1.50 p.m. (under no circumstances may a child be lifted over the wall).

- An Internet Acceptable Use Policy has been approved by the Board of Management of this school.
- Children must give parents/guardians all notes, letters etc. from school.
- Children are requested not to bring pocket money to school.

given to the child on the misbehaviour and, the consequences of its repetition.

- Inform pupils when instances of misbehaviour on their part are being recorded.
- Report repeated instances of serious misbehaviour to the Principal. These reports will be kept in the Incident File in the Office.

Behaviour during School Outings/Activities

Each pupil is expected to:

- follow – her teacher’s directions at all times
- remain – with the teacher/supervisors and group of pupils at all times
- behave – politely towards those they meet on such trips
- observe – the rules of general good behaviour

Staff

It is the Principal’s responsibility to ensure the school’s Code of Behaviour is administered in a manner that is consistent and fair to all pupils. However, each staff member has responsibility for the maintenance of discipline within common areas of the school.

Teaching staff are specifically responsible for the management of behaviour within their own class. They will:

- Discuss the Code of Behaviour with their class in an age appropriate manner at the beginning of the school year and draw up, *Our Classroom Rules*, which will be written on the appropriate page of the Homework Journal to be signed by parents by mid-October – classes 1st – 6th.
- Ensure the rules are displayed in the classroom.
- Encourage self-discipline and positive Behaviour.
- Ensure there is an appropriate level of supervision at all times.
- Implement the reward/sanction scheme in a fair and consistent manner.
- Keep a written record of all incidents of continued, serious or gross misconduct. This record will indicate the advice and/or warnings

Parents/Guardians

Parents/guardians play a crucial role in shaping attitudes in their children which produce positive Behaviour in school. Parents/guardians can assist the school by encouraging their children to abide by the school rules, encouraging punctuality and regular attendance and by ensuring that homework is given due time and effort.

Should a parent/guardian be concerned about any aspect of their child’s behaviour they are welcome to make an appointment to discuss their concerns.

In cases of an identified pattern of misbehaviour parents will be invited to participate in the intervention process.

PROMOTING POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR

As a general rule the school will endeavour to create an environment where positive Behaviour is reinforced through praise and reward. School staff will use encouraging language and gestures, both in class and around the school, so that positive Behaviour is instantly recognised and positively rewarded. Special attention will be paid to pupils who have previously been associated with poor Behaviour so that not only good Behaviour but also improvement in Behaviour is acknowledged.

Strategies for Promoting Positive Behaviour

- Good preparation by class teacher
- Effective class organisation
- Supervision of all key areas at break times /entrances and exits.
9.00 Supervisor on duty to ensure pupils gather in designated class area where they may chat to each other until the bell rings.

For Health and Safety reasons, pupils do not engage in yard games at this time.

9.10 Bell rings. Pupils line up quietly in alphabetical order to avoid rushing to be first. Class teacher escorts pupils to class.

*11.00 / 1.00 When bell rings pupils **walk** to their class assembly area where they line up quietly in alphabetical order.*

2.50 – 3.00 Yard supervisor ensures orderly dismissal from school.

Note: *At 9.10, 11.00 and 1.00 the yard supervisor remains on duty until a class teacher arrives who then waits until another class teacher comes before taking in her/his own class, thus ensuring pupils are never left unsupervised.*

- Specific play areas

Jun Infs – 2nd Class The Junior Yard is an open area forming a large circle around the Junior Classroom Block. There are yard markings in place to stimulate play activities. At the beginning of the school year, pupils are taught how to use these during PE lessons. Pupils in 1st Class use one section of the yard for specific games utilising PE equipment, e.g. balls, bean bags, hoops, with the support of 4 pupils daily from 6th Class on a rota basis and under the guidance of the yard supervisor.

3rd – 6th Class. The senior playground consists of four separate areas. A particular activity, e.g. skipping, basketball, soccer, is assigned to each yard area with classes 3rd – 6th rotating daily. At the beginning of each school year, classes practise these activities during PE classes in order to ensure equitable play.

- Discrete SPHE time
- Circle time
- Agreed class rules (drawn up by pupils and teachers)
- Teachers strive to treat children in a fair consistent manner.
- Regular meetings/communications with parents/guardians.

Strategies for rewarding acceptable behaviour. Praise may be given by means of any one of the following:

- A quiet word or gesture to show approval.
- A comment in a pupil's exercise book.
- A visit to another member of Staff or to the Principal for commendation.
- A word of praise in front of a group or class.
- A system of merit marks.
- Delegating some special responsibility or privilege.
- A mention to parent/guardian (written or verbal communication).
- Extra "golden time".
- A treat.

INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR

In order to establish a common understanding and consistent response the Code of Behaviour classifies misbehaviour into three levels based on the degree of disruption caused by the misconduct. The Code also specifies the disciplinary actions and supportive interventions that will be employed.

Level One

Level 1: Behaviours

Level 1 behaviours are those that interfere with the orderly learning environment of the school, classroom, and common areas. Students learn through their mistakes. To this extent, responses to the daily behaviours, which occur in school, will be developmentally appropriate, instructive and positive. Children will be taught what is expected and how they should behave. Listed below are some examples of the types of Behaviour that are included in Level 1. Please note the list is not exhaustive.

- Failure to prepare for class, as defined by individual teachers
- Running in the school buildings
- Disturbing the work or play of others
- Disrespectful language, tone, or manner
- Ignoring staff requests
- Incorrect uniform

Level 1: Disciplinary Actions

Consequences for Level 1 behaviour are dependent upon the severity and frequency of the specific behaviour. Teachers will discipline students at level 1. Some examples of Level 1 responses are:

- Verbal reprimand/reminder(s)
- Reinforcement of alternative positive behaviour
- Temporary separation from peers, friends or others
- Prescribing additional work
- Loss of privileges
- Parent contact
- Behaviour contract or Think Sheet

Level 1 Supportive Interventions

Listed below are some examples of Level 1 supportive actions:

- Classroom-based interventions, such as Open Circle or class meetings, with the option of informal consultation, (e.g. with parent(s)/guardian(s) or staff members)
- Discussion of behaviour with the child
- Informal notes regarding incident/intervention/date. This information would be useful should a problem persist.

Level Two

Level 2: Behaviours

Level 2 behaviours are those that seriously interfere with the orderly environment of the school and are potentially dangerous to the safety and well being of the students and staff. Listed below are some examples of the types of behaviour that are included in Level 2. Please note the list is not exhaustive.

- Repeated instances of Level 1 behaviour which have not been modified by intervention

- Behaviour which is dangerous to self or others (e.g. shoving, pushing, hitting)
- Intentionally damaging school or personal property
- Stealing
- Cheating
- Use of profanity
- Derogatory reference to another person's race, gender, religion, physical condition, disability, or ethnic origin
- Disrespectful language or behaviour toward an adult
- Possession or use of dangerous toys or sporting equipment (e.g. bow and arrows, any kind of knives, etc.)
- Leaving the school without permission during the school day or leaving the care of school staff during school outings.

Level 2: Disciplinary Actions

The disciplining of students for Level 2 behaviour is dependent upon the severity and frequency of the specific behaviour and developmentally appropriate levels. The disciplinary actions at Level 2 are administered by the Principal, and include the formal notification of parents, with written documentation. Some examples of Level 2 responses are:

- In school supervised detention (5 – 15 minutes)
- Meeting with parent(s)/guardian(s)
- Suspension from school of one to five days, depending on the severity of the Behaviour
- Implementation of extensive Behaviour management plan

Level 2: Supportive Interventions

Listed below are some examples of Level 2 supportive actions:

- Team conference to include classroom teacher, other involved staff, Deputy Principal or Principal.
- Request for assistance from external agencies such as the National Educational Psychological Service, Health Service Executive Community Services, the National Behavioural Support Service, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, National Council for Special Education.

- Referral of a Child displaying behavioural problems for psychological assessment (with the parent(s)/guardian(s) consent).

Level Three

Level 3: Behaviours

Level 3 behaviours are considered the most serious violations. These behaviours endanger the immediate health, safety and personal well being of the pupils and staff of the school. They represent a direct threat to the orderly operation of the school environment. Situations, which include illegal activity, may result in contact with the Garda Síochána after parental involvement. Listed below are some examples of the types of behaviour that are included in Level 3. Please note that the list is not exhaustive.

- Deliberately causing damage/major disruption at school.
- Repeated or serious instances of Level 2 behaviour which have not been modified by intervention
- Setting fires
- Intentional possession or use of weapons
- Violent fighting or intentionally causing physical harm to others
- Discriminatory or prejudicial activities or actions toward another person or group involving race, gender, religion, physical condition, handicap, or ethnic origin
- Leaving the school without permission during the school day or leaving the care of school staff during school outings.
- Incidents involving alcohol, drug and tobacco use.

Level 3: Disciplinary Actions

Behaviour at Level 3 may involve suspension from school. The length of the suspension will depend upon the severity and frequency of the specific Behaviour. Specific information about due process and procedures in respect of the issuing of a suspension is contained in this document. Level 3 responses:

- **Suspension from school for one to five days:**
This response will occur with the first incidence of Level 3 behaviour or Level 2 behaviour of significant severity. The Principal following due process and procedure, can issue a suspension.

- **Suspension from school for five to ten days:**
This response will occur with the repeated incidence of Level 3 behaviour or a severe expression of this Behaviour. A suspension of this magnitude will only be issued with the approval of the Board of Management.
- If a child leaves school without permission Gardaí are notified.
- **Expulsion:**
Repeated incidents of Level 3 behaviour can result in a pupil being expelled.

PROCEDURES FOR SUSPENSIONS & EXPULSIONS

Suspension

Definition of Suspension:

'requiring the student to absent herself from the school for a specified, limited period of school days'

Developing A Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools, National Educational Welfare Board

Authority to Suspend:

The Board of Management of *Mercy Primary School, Birr*, has formally and in writing delegated the authority to impose an '*Immediate Suspension*' to the Principal Teacher. An '*Immediate Suspension*' may be for a period of one to three school days depending on the severity of the specific Behaviour, in exceptional circumstances and with the approval of the Chairperson of the Board the suspension may be for a longer period but in any event will not exceed 5 school days.

Furthermore, the Board of Management has formally and in writing delegated to the Principal Teacher the authority to impose an '*Automatic Suspension*' for named behaviours detailed in this policy. An Automatic Suspension may be for a period of one to three school days depending on the severity of the specific behaviour, in exceptional circumstances and with the approval of the Chairperson of the Board the suspension may be for a longer period but in any event will not exceed 5 school days.

The Board retains its authority to suspend a student in all other cases/circumstances.

Immediate Suspension and Automatic Suspension

An 'Immediate Suspension' will be deemed to be necessary where after a preliminary investigation the Principal reaches the determination that the continued presence of the pupil in the school at the time would represent a serious threat to the safety and well being of pupils or staff of the school. An 'Immediate Suspension' may be for a period of one to three school days depending on the severity of the specific Behaviour, in exceptional circumstances and with the approval of the Chairperson of the Board the suspension may be for a longer period but in any event will not exceed 5 school days.

An 'Automatic Suspension' is a suspension imposed for named behaviours. The Board of Management of *Mercy Primary School, Birr*, having given due consideration to its duty of care as prescribed by Health & Safety Legislation, has determined that the following named behaviours will incur 'Automatic Suspension' as a sanction;

- Physical assault/violence resulting in bodily harm to a pupil or member of staff

or

- Physical violence resulting in serious damage to school property

An Automatic Suspension may be for a period of one to three school days depending on the severity of the specific Behaviour, in exceptional circumstances and with the approval of the Chairperson of the Board the suspension may be for a longer period but in any event will not exceed 5 school days.

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) will be informed of an Immediate or Automatic Suspension by telephone, and arrangements will be made with them for the pupil to be collected. In no circumstance will a student be sent home

from school prior to his/her parent(s)/guardian(s) being notified. Formal written notification of the suspension will issue in due course, but no later

than **2 school days** after the imposition of the suspension. Such a notification will detail:

- the duration of the suspension and the dates on which the suspension will begin and end
- the reasons for the suspension
- any study programme to be followed
- the arrangements for returning to school, including any commitments to be entered into by the pupil and the parent(s)/guardian(s).

The Board of Management acknowledges that the decision to impose either an Immediate or Automatic Suspension does not remove the duty to follow due process and fair procedures. In this regard, and following a formal investigation, to be completed no later than **2 school days** after the incident, the Board will invite the pupil and his/her parent(s)/guardian(s) to a meeting to discuss;

- the circumstances surrounding the suspension,
- interventions to prevent a reoccurrence of such misconduct.

The Board of Management of *Mercy Primary School, Birr* acknowledges the fundamental importance of impartiality in the investigation process. In this regard the following undertaking is given;

- i. No person with a vested interest or personal involvement in the matter will be involved in the organisation or implementation of the investigation procedure.

Procedures in Respect of Other Suspensions:

In cases other than those of Immediate or Automatic Suspension the following procedures will apply;

Where a preliminary assessment of the fact confirms serious misbehaviour that could warrant suspension, the Board of Management of *Mercy Primary School, Birr* will initiate a formal investigation of the matter.

The following procedures will be observed;

A written letter containing the following information will issue to Parent(s)/guardian(s);

- Details of the alleged misbehaviour, details of the impending investigation process, and notification that the allegation could result in suspension.

- An invitation to a meeting, to be scheduled no later than **5 school days** from the date of the letter, where parent(s)/guardian(s) are provided with an opportunity to respond before a decision is made or a sanction imposed.

The Board of Management of *Mercy Primary School, Birr* acknowledges the fundamental importance of impartiality in the investigation and decision-making process. In this regard the following undertakings are given;

- No person with a vested interest or personal involvement in the matter will be involved in the organisation or implementation of the investigation procedure, nor will such a person be involved in the decision-making process.
- The person(s) involved in the investigation process will on presentation of a full report of the facts absent himself/herself/themselves from the decision-making process.

Where a decision to suspend has been made the Chairperson of the Board of Management will provide written notification to the parent(s)/guardian(s) and the pupil of the decision. The letter will confirm:

- The duration of the suspension and the dates on which the suspension will begin and end
- The reasons for the suspension
- Any study programme to be followed
- The arrangements for returning to school, including any commitments to be entered into by the pupil and the parent(s)/guardian(s)
- The provision for an appeal to the Board of Management.

Where a suspension brings the total number of days for which the pupil has been suspended in the current school year to twenty days the parent(s)/guardian(s) will be informed of their right to appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science under Section 29 or the Education Act 1998 and will be provide with information on the submission of such an appeal.

Expulsion

Definition of Expulsion:

'A student is expelled from a school when a Board of Management makes a decision to permanently exclude him/her from the school, having complied with the provisions of section 24 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.'

Developing A Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools, National Educational Welfare Board

Authority to Expel:

The authority to expel a pupil is reserved by the Board of Management.

Procedures in Respect of Expulsion:

Where a preliminary assessment of the facts confirms serious misbehaviour that could warrant expulsion the following procedures will apply:

- a) A detailed investigation will be carried out under the direction of the Principal (or a Nominee of the Board if required)

As part of the investigation a written letter containing the following information will issue to parent(s)/guardian(s);

- details of the alleged misbehaviour, details of the impending investigation process, and notification that the allegation could result in expulsion.
- An invitation to a meeting, to be scheduled no later than **5 school days** from the date of the letter, where parent(s)/guardian(s) are provided with an opportunity to respond

- b) The Principal (or BoM Nominee) will make a recommendation to the Board of Management

Where the Principal (or nominee) forms a view, based on the investigation of the alleged misbehaviour, that expulsion may be warranted, the Principal (or nominee) makes a recommendation to the Board of Management to consider expulsion.

In this event the Principal (or nominee) will:

- inform the parent(s)/guardian(s) that the Board of Management is being asked to consider expulsion
- ensure that parent(s)/guardians have records of: the allegations against the student; the investigation; and written notice of the grounds on which the Board of Management is being asked to consider expulsion
- provide the Board of Management with the same comprehensive records as are given to parent(s)/guardian(s)

c) Consideration by the Board of Management of the Principal's (or BOM's Nominee) Recommendations & the Holding of a Hearing

If, having considered the Principal's report, the Board of Management decides to consider expelling a student a hearing will be scheduled.

The parent(s)/guardian(s) will be notified in writing

- as to the date, location and time of the hearing
- of their right to make a written and oral submission to the Board of Management
- that they may if they so choose be accompanied at the hearing
- The Board of Management undertakes that the timing of such written notification will ensure that parent(s)/guardian(s) have enough notice to allow them to prepare for the hearing.

In respect of the expulsion hearing the Board gives an undertaking that;

- the meeting will be properly conducted in accordance with Board procedures
- the principal (or BoM nominee) and parent(s)/guardian(s) will present their case to the Board in each other's presence
- each party will be given the opportunity to directly question the evidence of the other party
- the parent(s)/guardian(s) may make a case for a lesser sanction if they so choose

d) Board of Management Deliberations & Actions following the Hearing

Where the Board of Management, having considered all the facts of the case, is of the opinion that the pupil should be expelled the Board

- Will notify the Educational Welfare Officer in writing by registered post of its opinion, and the reasons for this opinion.
- **Will not expel the student before the passage of 20 school days** from the date on which the Educational Welfare Officer receives this written notification
- Will in writing notify the parent(s)/guardian(s) of their decision and inform them that the Educational Welfare Officer is being contacted
- Will be represented at the consultation to be organized by the Educational Welfare Officer
- Will suspend the student, if it is deemed likely that the continued presence of the student during this time will seriously disrupt the learning of others, or represent a threat to the safety of other pupils or staff.

e) Confirmation of the Decision to Expel

Where the twenty-day period following notification to the Educational Welfare Officer has elapsed, and where the Board of Management remains of the view that the student should be expelled, the Board of Management will formally confirm the decision to expel.

Parent(s)/guardian(s) will be notified in writing that the expulsion will now proceed. They will also be informed of their right to appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science under Section 29 or the Education Act 1998 and will be provided with information on the submission of such an appeal.

The Board of Management of Mercy Primary School, Birr acknowledges the fundamental importance of impartiality in the investigation and decision-making process. In this regard the following undertakings are given;

- No person with a vested interest or personal involvement in the matter will be involved in the organisation or implementation of the investigation procedure, nor will such a person be involved in the decision-making process.
- The person(s) involved in the investigation process will on presentation of a full report of the facts absent himself/herself/themselves from the decision-making process.

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Introduction:

The aim of Mercy Primary School, Birr Anti-Bullying policy is

- To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, teachers, pupils, parents/guardians.
- To promote a school ethos which encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To ensure appropriate supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.
- To develop procedures for noting, investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To implement a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour.
- To work with appropriate agencies in countering all forms of bullying and promoting anti bullying behaviour.

Statement on Bullying:

- Every person in the School is entitled to respect and to be free of any type of bullying.
- The School will work proactively, as far as it can, to ensure that bullying does not take place.
- Reporting incidents of bullying is responsible behaviour.
- A record will be kept of all reported incidents of bullying in the Incident File in the Office.
- The matter will be dealt with seriously.
- The School has a programme of support for both the bully and the bullied.
- Appropriate action will be taken to ensure that it does not continue.

Definition:

Bullying consists of **repeated** inappropriate behaviour whether by word, by physical action or otherwise, directly or indirectly applied, by one or more persons against another person or persons which undermines the individual person's right to personal dignity.

Types of behaviour deemed to be inappropriate:

- Humiliation; including name-calling, reference to academic ability etc.
- Intimidation; including aggressive use of body language.
- Verbal abuse, anonymous or otherwise.
- Physical abuse or threatened abuse.
- Aggressive or obscene language.
- Offensive joke; whether spoken or by email, text messaging etc.
- Victimisation; including very personal remarks.
- Exclusion and isolation.
- Intrusion through interfering with personal possessions.
- Repeated unreasonable assignment to duties that are obviously unfavourable.
- Repeated unreasonable deadlines or tasks.
- Threats, including demands for money.
- An attack by rumour, gossip, innuendo or ridicule on any individual's reputation.

Indications of Bullying:

The following signs/symptoms may suggest that a pupil is being bullied:-

- anxiety about travelling to and from school - requesting parents to drive or collect them, changing route of travel, avoiding regular times for travelling to and from school;
- unwillingness to go to school, refusal to attend, 'mitching', 'ditching';
- deterioration in educational performance, loss of concentration and loss of enthusiasm and interest in school;
- pattern of physical illnesses (e.g. headaches, stomach aches);

- unexplained changes either in mood or behaviour; it may be particularly noticeable before returning to school after weekends or more especially after longer school holidays;
- visible signs of anxiety or distress - stammering, withdrawing, nightmares, difficulty in sleeping, crying, not eating, vomiting, bedwetting;
- spontaneous out-of-character comments about either pupils or teachers;
- possessions missing or damaged;
- increased requests for money or stealing money;
- unexplained bruising or cuts or damaged clothing;
- reluctance and/or refusal to say what is troubling him/her.

Those signs do not necessarily mean that a pupil is being bullied. If repeated or occurring in combination, these signs do warrant investigation in order to establish what is affecting the pupil.

Strategies for Prevention of Bullying

- The SPHE curriculum, including, Circle Time, the Walk Tall and Stay Safe programmes, is used throughout the school to support the anti bullying policy.
- Positive self-esteem is fostered among the pupils by celebrating individual differences, by acknowledging good behaviour and by providing opportunities for success.
- Pupils are helped to develop empathy by discussing feelings and by trying to put themselves in the place of others.
- Teachers respond sensitively to pupils who disclose incidents of bullying.
- The school's anti-bullying policy is discussed regularly with the pupils.
- Staff are particularly vigilant in monitoring pupils who are considered at risk of bullying/ being bullied.

- All disclosed incidents of bullying are investigated.
- Members of the BOM are familiar with the school's policy on bullying and actively promote it on a repeated basis among staff, parents and pupils.
- Parents contribute to and support the school's policy on bullying by encouraging positive behaviour both at home and at school, by being vigilant for signs and symptoms that their child is being bullied or is bullying others, by communicating concerns to the school.

Maintaining awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour

Mercy Primary School, Birr will emphasise and reinforce the view that bullying behaviour is unacceptable by

- Using school assemblies to remind pupils of the school's anti bullying policy
- Using both the formal and informal curriculum to emphasise that bullying is unacceptable... visual arts activities, posters, drama, role play, SPHE, cooperative games...
- Devising a school anti-bullying charter for display in classrooms and other prominent locations

Supervision

Insofar as is reasonably practicable school activities will be supervised and monitored at all times, with particular emphasis on those occasions when situations of bullying are more likely to occur, such as assembly time, play time and dismissal time.

9.00 Supervisor on duty to ensure pupils gather in designated class area where they may chat to each other until the bell rings. For Health and Safety reasons, pupils do not engage in yard games at this time.

9.10 Bell rings. Pupils line up quietly in alphabetical order to avoid running to be first. Class teacher escorts pupils to class.

11.00 / 1.00 When bell rings pupils **walk** to their class assembly area where they line up quietly in alphabetical order.

2.50 – 3.00 Yard supervisor ensures orderly dismissal from school.

Note: The yard supervisor remains on duty until a class teacher arrives who then waits until another class teacher comes before taking in her/his own class, thus ensuring pupils are never left unsupervised.

Specific play areas

Jun Infs. – 2nd Class *The Junior Yard is an open area forming a large circle around the Junior Classroom Block. There are yard markings in place to stimulate play activities. At the beginning of the school year, pupils are taught how to use these during PE lessons. Pupils in 1st Class use one section of the yard for specific games utilising PE equipment, e.g. balls, bean bags, hoops, with the support of 4 pupils daily from 6th Class on a rota basis and under the guidance of the yard supervisor.*

3rd – 6th Class. *The senior playground consists of four separate areas. A particular activity, e.g. skipping, basketball, soccer, is assigned to each yard area with classes 3rd – 6th rotating daily. At the beginning of each school year, classes practise these activities during PE classes in order to ensure equitable play.*

Disclosure:

Children will be encouraged to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour. They will be helped to differentiate between incidents of a minor nature and those that constitute bullying. They will also be taught the difference between 'telling tales' and asking for help.

Procedures for Dealing with Instances of Bullying:

- All incidents of bullying will be recorded in the Incident File which will be retained in the school.

- Pupils will be informed that when they report incidents of bullying they are acting responsibly.
- A calm unemotional problem solving approach will be used to deal with bullying.
- Incidents of bullying will initially be dealt with by the class teacher. Incidents that are of a serious nature, or those that involve pupils from a number of classes will be referred to the Principal.
- On being informed of an alleged incident of bullying, the teacher dealing with the report will first interview the victim(s) and discuss the feelings which the victim(s) experienced because of the bullying behaviour.
- An interview will then take place with the alleged perpetrator(s). If the bullying involves a group of pupils members of that group will first be met individually and then as a whole. Having discussed the negative impact which bullying has on both perpetrator(s) and victim(s) responsibility will be placed on all individuals within the group to resolve the difficulty and to take appropriate steps to ensure that it does not happen again.
- If on the conclusion of the preliminary investigation the teacher is convinced that bullying has occurred the Principal will be informed and parent(s)/guardian(s) of all concerned will be contacted.
- Depending on the seriousness of the bullying some or all of Level 2 Supportive Interventions will be utilised.
- Repeated incidents of bullying behaviour will result in the imposition of sanctions. Such sanctions will be proportionate to the seriousness of the bullying Behaviour.

RECORDS

A standardised record system will be used to track an individual pupil's Behaviour. Such records will contain;

- Incidents of misbehaviour,
- interventions used to improve behaviour, including contact with parent(s)/guardian(s) or referral to other agencies
- Evidence of improved behaviour
- Any sanctions imposed, and the reasons they were imposed

Pupils will be told when a record is being made about their behaviour, and the reasons for keeping a record will be explained.

All records will be kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1988 and the Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2003.

POLICY RATIFICATION

The policy was ratified by the Board of Management of *Mercy Primary School, Birr* at its meeting held on *31st May, 2010*.

PATRON'S APPROVAL

The policy has been approved by St. Senan's Education Office, acting on behalf of the Patron Bishop Kieran O'Reilly.

APPENDIX 1

Absence Notification Form - reproduced in Homework Journal classes 1st - 6th, and available from Class Teacher for Junior and Senior Infants.

Dear Teacher,

Pupil's Name: _____ was absent from

school on Date/s: _____



**Please tick the appropriate box that best describes the reason for the absence.
(In line with National Educational Welfare Board requirements)**

A. Illness

B. Urgent family reasons

E. Other

Signed: _____

(Parent/Guardian)