

Scoil Mhuire Code of Positive Behaviour

Scoil Mhuire is a Catholic all girls voluntary secondary school with a Catholic ethos under the trusteeship of CEIST (Catholic Education an Irish Schools' Trust).

The following is our **Mission Statement**: "Scoil Mhuire is a Christian, caring community which encourages the integrated development of every individual concerned."

Central to our Mission are the CEIST Core Values:

- Showing Respect for Every Person
- Creating Community
- Being Just & Responsible
- Achieving Excellence in Teaching & Learning
- Promoting Spiritual & Human Development

The management authority of Scoil Mhuire will comply with all legal requirements as outlined in

- The Education Act 1998
- The Education (Welfare) Act 2000
- The Equal Status Act 2000
- The EPSEN Act 2004

This Code of Positive Behaviour sets out to promote positive standards of behaviour which are easily understood and to which pupils, parents and staff can all subscribe. Promoting good behaviour is one of the main goals of the School's Code of Positive Behaviour. School management and staff actively foster a school ethos, policies and practices which help to promote positive behaviour and prevent inappropriate behaviour.

Co-operation of Parents/Guardians

Partnership with parents is important to our school. Parents are asked to support the Code of Positive Behaviour. This is a condition of enrolment in Scoil Mhuire in accordance with the school's Admissions Policy.

The Code outlines:

- The expectations for students, staff and parents and how they will treat each other.
- How students, teachers and parents can help to promote a happy school.

Aims of the Code of Positive Behaviour

- To create an atmosphere of mutual respect, trust and responsibility
- To promote a positive school ethos through positive behaviour strategies and celebrations of success
- To raise standards of attainment, behaviour and attendance for all pupils
- To involve pupils and staff in setting rules/standards of behaviour within the school

- To require pupils to manage their own behaviour effectively while respecting the rights of others
- To develop social and citizenship skills in a variety of school contexts

Strategies for Promoting Positive Behaviour:

- The school involves all members of the school community in the development of the Code of Positive Behaviour.
- The school involves students in the preparation of the school and classroom rules
- The school promotes and strengthens positive relationships between all partners in the school community.
- Interactions between members of the school community are based on principles of fairness and natural justice.
- The school sets high standards for student behaviour which are clearly explained, consistent and widely understood.
- Staff model respectful behaviour and attitudes to all members of the school community.
- The school helps students themselves to recognise and affirm good learning behaviour.
- The school facilitates conversations with students on how people should treat each other and what this looks like in our school environment.
- Specific teachers are available to offer support for students that may need them. Support is available through the Guidance and Counselling service, the SPHE, CSPE, RE and Wellbeing programmes offered in the school.
- School staff provides pastoral care to all students.
- Constructive feedback is given to students when behaviour does not meet expectations.
- There are good school and class routines
- The school welcomes and promotes partnership with parents to support positive behaviour and relationships in the school community.
- Parents support the school by encouraging good behaviour.
- We support opportunities for students to achieve leadership roles in our school e.g. class prefect, deputy prefect, class representative on the Student Council.
- Student voice and the role of the Student Council are valued and promoted.

In our school some of the rewards used to promote good behaviour are:

- Verbal praise is given to students in class or privately.
- Staff members notice, acknowledge and record positive behaviour on the school system.
- A letter affirming students' positive behaviour is sent to parents on an annual basis.
- Student work is displayed throughout the school.
- An End of Year Award ceremony recognises and affirms student achievement.
- A sense of community is fostered through co-curricular and extra-curricular activities and events.
- There is acknowledgement of positive behaviour in formal reports and through the social media channels of the school.
- Supervision of students promotes safety and security.

We see the following as key steps for success in school:

- Come to school prepared, on time and ready to learn.
- Be respectful, helpful and kind.
- Be responsible and safe.
- Try your best, whether working on your own or in a team.
- Support others and stay positive.

Courtesy, Respect and Anti-Bullying

- Every member of the school community should be treated with courtesy and respect in school, free from abuse or harassment.
- Bullying/intimidation is a completely unacceptable form of behaviour, which will not be tolerated in our school.
- There should be no unwelcome verbal abuse or aggression, name-calling, spreading rumours or unwelcome comments about a student or their family.
- There should be no unwanted messages sent by electronic means including by phone, internet, or by other written means.
- There should be no threatening behaviour or gestures including isolation or exclusion of a student.

If a student is being bullied, or if the student is aware that another student is being bullied, the student is encouraged to report this immediately in school by informing an adult they trust as soon as possible. Any incident involving any form of bullying that is brought to the attention of teachers or the school authorities will be taken very seriously and will be investigated, and appropriate disciplinary sanctions will be applied.

The School Journal

- The School Journal is necessary for a student's personal organisation and for home-school communication. Parents are requested to check and sign the journal on a weekly basis.
- The journal must be kept in good condition. Graffiti is strictly forbidden.
- All attendance notes are collected by the Year Head.

School Attendance

- School attendance is essential on all days when the school is officially open.
- Absences are officially recorded each morning and afternoon on Vs Ware and a text message is sent to the Parents/Guardians of absent students.
- A student's record of attendance may be checked by parents at any time.
- If a student is absent from school, a note written and signed by the parents must be included in the School Journal. This note must include a reason for the absence in accordance with the Education Welfare Act 2000. These notes are presented to the Year Head on the day following the student's absence.
- All students are required to remain on the school premises and grounds 8.55am-3.50pm Monday-Thursday and 8.55am-1.10pm on Friday. Students participating in After-School Study must remain on the premises prior to Study.
- If a student has to leave school during the course of the day, a note of explanation must be written by parent/guardian in the school journal and presented to the Year Head. Students who become ill during the school day should request permission from the Deputy Principal/Principal to have a phone call made from the School Office.

- Any student leaving the school during school hours should wait at Reception for collection and sign out at the main office when parents arrive. Any student returning to school during the school day should sign in at the main office.
- Students may not remain on the school premises after 3.50pm/1.10pm (Friday) unless participating in a supervised activity e.g. study, games, class etc.
- This policy on School Attendance has been drawn up in accordance with the Education Welfare Act 2000. A report is made to the School Attendance Officer if a student's cumulative absence exceeds 20 school days or is a cause of concern. Scoil Mhuire implements a school attendance strategy and full attendance is encouraged.

Punctuality:

- Classes begin punctually at 8.55am and 1.50pm each day.
- All students are required to be in each class on time each day and are expected to attend all timetabled classes. Absence from any class must be explained by a note in the School Journal. Students who are absent from class without permission will be subject to detention.
- Students who are late at 8.55am and 1.50pm must report to the Main Office and sign in.
- Year Heads will monitor student punctuality.

Homework

Students are expected to co-operate fully in the work of the class and to do homework as required. Students who experience difficulty with homework should discuss this with the class teacher.

School Uniform:

The school uniform is to be worn in full at all times during the school day, at official school functions and when representing the school.

The school uniform consists of:

- School skirt or trousers. Leggings are not to be worn except in PE (Physical Education) class.
- White shirt and school jumper
- Flat-soled plain tan/navy/black shoes (boots/runners/canvas shoes are not permitted). Only students furnishing a current medical certificate may wear alternative footwear.
- Black/navy tights or socks
- Student uniforms should be kept in a clean and presentable state at all times
- The wearing of jewellery should be kept to a minimum. Facial jewellery and body piercings are strictly forbidden, covered or uncovered.
- Gel nails/acrylic nails are not permitted.

Students are expected to wear the following for Physical Education classes:

- Plain track suit ends or suitable sports leggings
- Plain T shirt or School T shirt available at the uniform shop at Outfield Sports.
- Runners suitable for physical activity.

Health, Safety and Welfare:

- Chewing gum, permanent markers, correction fluid and aerosol sprays are completely forbidden in the school.
- Smoking/Vaping on school premises or grounds and during the school day is forbidden in accordance with Department of Health Regulations 1995.

- Periodic Fire Evacuation Drill must be carried out promptly according to instructions.
- Interfering with fire safety equipment/security systems/external doors is a serious offence.
- If a student comes to school using her own transport, the vehicle must be parked outside school grounds. Students are not permitted to park in the school car parks under any circumstances.
- Alcoholic drinks and illegal substances / drugs are strictly forbidden.

Covid-19 Measures

- Face masks must be correctly worn in the school building. Students are expected to maintain physical distance from each other at all times, whether inside or outside the building.
- Workstations including desks, chairs, computer keyboards and accessories should be thoroughly disinfected before moving to another class.
- Students are not permitted to leave the school grounds during the school day.

Mobile Phones/ Electronic Devices/ Internet Access:

- We recognise that mobile phones/electronic devices can enhance learning and have a positive educational impact. We ask parents to work with the school in guiding and supporting their children to become good digital citizens thereby helping to develop their children's knowledge in the correct and safe use of mobile technology. Students are permitted to bring phones to school, but phones should not be used unless under the specific instruction and supervision of the class teacher.
- The unauthorised use of mobile telephones (or other electronic devices) by students in any part of the school building is not permitted.
- Unauthorised use will result in the phone being confiscated and this will be recorded on Vs Ware. Confiscated phones may only be reclaimed from the school office between 3.50 and 4.00pm.
- Misuse of mobile phones/devices/social media is a serious breach of the school's Acceptable Use Policy and will be subject to sanctions as outlined below.
- Students may use Computer Room facilities only when supervised by a staff member.

Substance Abuse

- Parents and students are advised that procedures for dealing with an incident of substance abuse in the school are outlined in the School Policy on Substance Abuse.

Outside the School Premises

- Students are expected to follow the School Code of Positive Behaviour and behave in a responsible way, when travelling to and from school. High standards of behaviour are also expected outside the school premises e.g. on school outings, activities and events, and when wearing the school uniform outside school hours.
- Where a student is alleged to have engaged in serious misbehaviour outside school, when not under the care or responsibility of the school, the Code of Behaviour will apply if there is a clear connection with the school and a demonstrable impact on its work.

Unacceptable Behaviour

Minor Misbehaviour and/or Misbehaviour of an isolated and/or intermittent nature

- Disruption of teaching & learning
- Eating/ chewing gum in class
- Failure to present homework
- Lateness for class
- Arrival for class without necessary books/equipment
- Uniform breach
- Graffiti
- Inappropriate behaviour - “messaging”
- Rudeness to staff/students
- Copying schoolwork or homework
- Unauthorised use of a mobile phone
- Refusal to follow instructions

More Serious Misbehaviour

- Any of the above behaviours of a persistent nature
- Leaving class without permission
- Absence from school without permission
- Use of social media to make inappropriate/disrespectful comment about any member of the school community
- Theft or vandalism
- Graffiti of a personal nature
- Defiance of a teacher/supervisor or other staff member
- Misuse of an electronic device
- Refusal to hand up mobile phone
- Breach of public laws e.g. smoking on school grounds
- Serious disobedience i.e. refusal to obey clear and reasonable instructions
- Verbal abuse including foul language
- Aggressive or threatening behaviour or language
- Harassment of another person because of gender, marital status, family status, age disability, sexual orientation, race, religion, or membership of the Traveller community.
- Forgery of parental signature
- Bullying i.e. actions/comments intended to cause distress to another person
- Interference with Health & Safety Equipment
- Refusal to co-operate with public health guidelines e.g. correct wearing of masks, hand sanitising, social distancing

Gross Misconduct

- Any of the above behaviours which are repeated or persistent
- Physical assault or retaliation using physical force against other students / staff
- Damage to school property
- Repeated bullying / intimidation of other students including cyber bullying
- Inappropriate use of social media including the sharing of inappropriate images
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- Sexual Assault
- Possession and/or use of illegal substances or breaches of the school policy on substance misuse
- Possession of an offensive weapon
- Any illegal activity
- Defiance of a member of school staff

School Sanctions

Sanctions are sometimes necessary to ensure that good order is maintained in the school.

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

- helping students to learn that their behaviour is unacceptable
- helping them to recognise the effect of their actions and behaviour on others
- 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
- helping them to learn to take responsibility for their behaviour.

A sanction may also:

- reinforce the boundaries set out in the code of behaviour
- 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:

- prevent serious disruption of teaching and learning
- keep the student or other members of the school community safe.

Sanctions which may be imposed at any time may include the following:

- Verbal warning
- Confiscation of device
- Change of seating position in class
- Note home in the School Journal
- Telephone call to Parents from Teacher/Year Head/ Deputy Principal/Principal
- Behaviour note on VsWare
- Referral to Year Head
- Placement on Report i.e. requesting a grade/comment from each teacher for every class period
- Withdrawal of certain privileges e.g. Permission to participate in a school event/activity for a defined period.
- Carrying out a useful task in school (community service)
- Lunchtime Detention
- Evening Detention
- Exclusion from group/class trips outside school, in certain circumstances.
- Suspension from school for a defined period
- Formal report to the Board of Management.
- Exclusion from the school as per Section 23 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2003 (in extraordinary circumstances and when all sanctions and attempts at

remediation of behaviour have proven unsuccessful). Exclusion requires the prior sanction of the Board of Management.

School Policy on Managing Behaviour

Each staff member encourages and promotes positive behaviour in the school setting.

Level 1

The staff member will correct the student verbally where necessary. This may be followed by speaking privately to the student to outline how behaviour can improve and issuing a verbal warning.

Level 2

A behaviour note will be recorded on VsWare. It is important to understand that a behaviour note may be issued immediately if deemed necessary. Our aim is to resolve issues quickly as possible.

Level 3

A staff member may use the School Journal to record any problems, for the information of parents. Parents are requested to monitor the Journal and to acknowledge receipt of a note regarding student behaviour and progress.

Level 4

Lunchtime Detention is arranged as necessary by the Year Head. The Year Head ensures that all such students are informed in advance. A student may be immediately scheduled for Lunchtime Detention as a result of serious misbehaviour. Students who are present in school but who do not present for Lunchtime Detention are automatically scheduled for Evening Detention after school hours.

Level 5

In the event of further misbehaviour or when dealing with more serious breaches of the School Code, students may be scheduled for Evening Detention. Parents and students will be informed of the impending detention in the week preceding the date of detention. Failure to present for Evening Detention may result in suspension.

Level 6

As per the school policy on suspension & expulsion, students may be suspended from school for a period of time as a result of serious breaches of the School Code of Positive Behaviour.

Suspension & Expulsion Policy Statement

This policy outlines the school's approach to suspension and expulsion and has been formulated taking due consideration of the rights and responsibilities inherent in the Education Act 1998, the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, the Equal Status Act 2000 and the principles of fairness and natural justice.

The Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire has a statutory obligation to provide students with a safe place of study and to provide staff with a safe place of work. Section 24 (5)

of the Education Welfare Act 2000 refers to “the right of a board of management to take such other reasonable measures as it considers appropriate to ensure that good order and discipline are maintained in the school concerned and that the safety of students is secured.”

Suspension Principles

In certain cases of unacceptable behaviour, it may be in the best interests of the school community and/or the pupil involved, to remove the pupil from school for a period of time. Under the Articles of Management for Secondary Schools, the Principal has the authority to suspend a pupil from attending school for a period up to and including three school days. Suspensions beyond three days may be sanctioned by the Board of Management of the school. The Principal/Board of Management will exercise this authority in a fair and non-discriminatory manner, having regard to their responsibilities to the whole school community and to the principles of natural justice.

The purpose of suspension is to allow pupils the time, under the supervision of their parents/guardians, to reflect on their unacceptable behaviour; accept responsibility for the behaviour that led to the suspension and to change their future behaviour to meet the future expectations of the school.

In general, there are two sets of circumstances under which suspension will be imposed:

- (a) Serious breaches of the School Code that indicate the pupil should be removed from the school immediately following due procedures.
- (b) Repeated less serious breaches of the School Code that have not been rectified by disciplinary measures short of suspension. In such cases, a warning detailing the unacceptable behaviour will have been notified to Parents/Guardians through the School Journal, in meeting(s), by letter, email or telephone communication.

Serious breaches of the School Code of Positive Behaviour include, but are not limited to:

- Endangering the health or safety of any member of the school community.
- Disrespect, defiance, harassment or intimidation of a member of staff or the harassment or bullying of another member of the school community.
- Possession, use or supply of prohibited substances (including alcohol, drugs or other illegal substances) in the school, on school trips or in the course of any school-related activity. Exception will be made only for legitimate medical use with prior notification to the school authorities.
- Deliberate vandalism including the writing of graffiti in relation to school property or the property of a member of the school community.
- Interference with or persistent disruption of teaching and learning.
- Refusal to obey clear and reasonable instructions of a member of school staff on a repeated basis.
- Smoking/Vaping anywhere in the school grounds or building.
- The repeated use of obscene, abusive or otherwise inappropriate language.
- Any physical assault on another member of the school community or retaliation using physical force.
- Stealing, fighting or the possession of offensive weapons. In addition to these being serious breaches that incur suspension, these are criminal offences that may be reported to the appropriate authorities.
- Misuse of social media/electronic devices.

Suspension Procedures

In the event that the Principal exercises the authority to suspend a student, the following procedure will be used:

1. In cases where the student is to be suspended immediately, parents/guardians will be informed by telephone with a written follow-up.
2. Pupils will not be sent home during the school day unless collected by a parent/guardian or appointed representative.
3. A formal letter of suspension will issue to the parent/guardian including the following information:
 - Notice of the suspension.
 - Effective date of the suspension.
 - Duration of the suspension.
 - Reason(s) for the suspension.

Where appropriate, this letter may include some or all of the following:

- Expectations of the pupil while on suspension.
- Reference to the importance of parental assistance in addressing the incident(s) causing suspension.
- A statement that the student is under the care of the parent/guardian while suspended.
- Information regarding appeal rights and procedures regarding the suspension.
- Requirements to be met for the pupil's return to school.

In the interest of ensuring a fair system for the imposition of suspension, the Principal will take into account the following factors in determining the duration of a suspension:

- The age and state of health (physical and emotional) of the pupil.
- The pupil's previous record of behaviour in the school.
- Any circumstances unique to the pupil that may reasonably be taken into account in connection with the behaviour leading to the suspension.
- The degree to which parental, peer or other pressure may have contributed to the behaviour.
- The severity of the behaviour, its frequency and the likelihood of recurrence.
- The extent to which the behaviour impaired or may impair the normal functioning of the pupil and others in the school community.
- The degree to which the behaviour was a breach of the School Code.
- The degree to which the pupil recognises and accepts that the behaviour was unacceptable and is prepared to exhibit genuine regret.

Suspension Removal

As the principles of Natural Justice demand that there should be a right of appeal to a higher authority, a pupil (aged 18) or the parent/guardian (if the student is under 18) may appeal the Principal's decision to suspend to the Board of Management/Manager. Such an appeal must be made in writing to the Secretary of the Board of Management stating

the grounds on which the appeal is being made. However, the school may insist that the pupil remain at home while the appeal proceeds. In the event that an appeal is successful, the suspension will be lifted and, if it has already been served, it will be deleted from the pupil's school record. An appeal of a suspension decision may also be made under Section 29 of the Education Act.

Beyond success in such appeals, a suspension may be rescinded in the following circumstances:

- The Principal may agree that an alternative sanction be applied following discussion with the pupil's parent/guardian.
- New circumstances come to light after the suspension has been applied that would have mitigated the sanction had they been known beforehand.
- Other mitigating factors consistent with the application of Natural Justice.

Suspension Completion

Upon completion of a suspension, the following procedures may apply for the formal reintroduction of the pupil into the school:

Parents may be requested to attend with the pupil on return to school.

A written or verbal apology may be required of the pupil for the misbehaviour.

The pupil may be required to enter into a contract of good behaviour before returning to school.

In cases where the possession of use of prohibited substances led to the suspension, the pupil and parents/guardians may be required to enter into a contract for return to school involving periodic independent medical testing and/or attendance at an appropriate substance misuse programme specified by the school.

Expulsion Principles

Expulsion is the ultimate sanction imposed by the school on a pupil and as such will only be exercised by the Board of Management in relation to cases of extreme indiscipline. In cases where the Principal judges that a pupil's actions are such that expulsion should be considered, the Principal will refer the matter to the Board of Management. Given the severity of the potential sanction, the school, in accordance with the principles of Natural Justice, will investigate extreme indiscipline cases thoroughly in advance of any hearing that could result in an expulsion.

In general, there are two sets of circumstances where expulsion may be considered by the Board of Management to be an appropriate sanction:

A. Cases where the indiscipline of the pupil is so pervasive that teaching and learning become extremely difficult. Such cases include but are not limited to:

- The pupil being so disruptive that she is seriously preventing others from learning.
- The pupil being uncontrollable and not amenable to any form of school authority or discipline.
- Parents/guardians being unable or refusing to exercise their responsibility for the pupil.
- The pupil being a danger to herself or to others.

- When guarantees of reasonable behaviour following repeated suspensions are not forthcoming or are not being met.
- The pupil's conduct acting as a source of serious bad example and having an adverse effect on other pupils in the school.

B. First time offences of a very serious nature. Such cases may include but are not limited to:

- Serious violence or physical assault.
- Supplying illegal drugs to other students of the school.
- Arriving in school under the influence of alcohol or drugs and causing a risk to health and safety.
- Serious burglary or theft.
- Causing serious damage to property.
- Gross insubordination to the Principal or any other staff member.

Expulsion Procedures

Except in exceptional circumstances, expulsion will be resorted to only after the Principal has:

- Ensured that all discipline sanctions under the School Code have been applied and documented.
- Ensured that all appropriate support personnel, both internal and external have been involved.
- Ensured all other procedures, referrals and supports have been exhausted.
- Ensured that discussion has occurred with the pupil and her parents/guardians regarding specific misbehaviour that the school considers unacceptable and which may lead to permanent expulsion.
- Provided formal verbal and written warnings at appropriate times dealing with such behaviours and provided clear expectations of what was required of the pupil in the future.
- Recorded all action taken and copies all correspondence.
- Informed the parents/guardians of the intention to recommend expulsion to the Board of Management.
- Invited the parents/guardians to a Board of Management meeting
- Invited the parents/guardians to make a written submission to the Board in advance of the meeting.
- Provided the parents/guardians with a full, written description of the allegations against the pupil and the case being made to the Board, together with copies of all documentation, statements and other materials supporting the case.
- Made a formal recommendation to the Board of Management with supporting documentation.

Following these actions by the Principal, expulsion will occur only if the Board of Management has:

- Heard the Principal's case against the pupil, which should be made in the presence of the pupil's parents/guardians.
- Heard the response of the parents/guardians.
- Examined all of the documentation.
- Considered the pupil's record in school.

- Taken legal/expert advice.
- Ensured that the Principal is not present for the Board's discussion and decision on the matter.
- Discussed the case in detail.
- Considered all commitments made in the School Code of Behaviour.
- Made a final decision to expel.
- Communicated the decision to expel to the parents/guardians formally by registered letter.
- Informed the Education Welfare Officer under Section 24 (1) of the Education Welfare Act 2000.

The formal letter of notification will include:

- Notice of the expulsion
- Effective date of the expulsion.
- Reasons for the expulsion.
- A statement that the Education Welfare Board has been informed of the expulsion.
- A statement that the pupil is under the care and responsibility of the parents/guardians for the period of 20 days required by the Education Welfare Officer to examine alternative provisions for the education of the pupil.
- Information and documentation on appeal rights.

Expulsion Appeals

Parents/Guardians (and pupils aged 18) have the right to appeal a decision of the Board of Management to expel a pupil to the Minister for Education & Science or to an authority delegated for such appeals by the Minister under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

Permanent expulsion may be appealed by a parent/guardian (or a pupil aged 18) or by the Education Welfare Office (TUSLA). Any such appeal must be lodged within 42 calendar days of the decision of the Board of Management.

Sanctions will be determined at all times by the seriousness of the violation of the School Code and will be applied with due regard to the principles of fairness and natural justice. Students will be offered opportunities within the school for counselling and support in changing their behaviour. Referrals may also be made to outside agencies in the best interests of the student(s) subject to the prior permission of parents and a willingness on the part of the student involved to engage with the referral agencies. Refusal to engage with such services may be interpreted as a rejection of all reasonable school efforts to improve student behaviour.

Ratified by the Board of Management 14 December 2021.