



*Scoil Mhuire, Baile an Chollaigh, Co. Chorcaí
Scoil Mhuire, Ballincollig, Co. Cork*

Scoil Mhuire Code of Behaviour

1. Introduction

Scoil Mhuire's Code of Behaviour has been updated a number of times since the first Code was drawn up 15 years ago. This update is in keeping with the requirements of the National Education Welfare Board (NEWB) and follows the guidelines of its publication "Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools" (2008). As part of the updating process, discussions took place at staff level, at class level; discussions took place between the Principal and pupil representatives, parents' representatives as well as discussions at Board of Management meetings.

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2. Scoil Mhuire's Vision for Relationships and Behaviour in the School

(i) In Scoil Mhuire's Mission Statement (see Appendix 1) we commit ourselves to affording the pupils the best opportunity possible to avail of an all-rounded education, suitable to the ability of each child and in keeping with the Catholic ethos of the school. We aim to have pupils receive social skills to equip them for life.

This Code of Behaviour aims to provide a framework to promote positive constructive behaviour so that this mission is achieved.

(ii) An orderly and calm environment is important so that teachers can teach and so that pupils can learn and make maximum progress in all areas.

(iii) It is important that there is an atmosphere of respect, tolerance and consideration so that pupils can themselves develop these qualities.

(iv) High standards of teaching in Scoil Mhuire ensure pupils are interested and actively engaged with their work. This provides optimum conditions for the development of good behaviour.

(v) The motto of Scoil Mhuire is "*Mol an Oige agus Tiocfaidh Sí*". We believe that affirming good behaviour and putting emphasis on rewards will yield positive results. Self esteem is best nurtured in an environment of positive reinforcement.

(vi) Every member of the school community has a role in the promotion of good behaviour. Parents have a crucial role in supporting the Code and their involvement is of paramount importance.

(vii) When expectations are high, pupils respond accordingly. We believe that pupils are capable of developing a sense of responsibility and self-discipline that will help them throughout their lives.

(viii) Scoil Mhuire aims to be an inclusive school that prevents discrimination. It aims to respect, value and accommodate diversity (e.g. family status, religion, disability, race).

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3. Expectations for pupils, staff and parents and how they will treat each other.

Central to the Code of Behaviour is a set of expectations in relation to behaviour: the *standards of behaviour that are expected from all members of the school community* and the *standards of behaviour that members of the school community can expect to find in the school*. There is giving and receiving. Both sets of standards are outlined explicitly below. No single item stands alone; they are interrelated and interdependent.

3.1 Pupils

Pupils *can expect* to:

- be treated fairly, consistently and with respect;
- learn in a relatively calm environment;
- be safe from bullying and abuse;
- have their individual differences recognised and catered for in so far as is reasonable;
- be listened to, and to question, at appropriate times;
- have positive behaviour affirmed;
- have misbehaviour dealt with appropriately.

Pupils are *expected* to:

- attend school regularly and punctually;
- wear the school uniform;
- work quietly and safely to the best of their ability at all times;
- listen to their teachers and act on their instructions;
- listen to other pupils and await their turn to speak;
- respect the right of other pupils to learn;
- show respect for all members of the school community;
- have respect for their own belongings and have same clearly labelled;
- respect school property and the property of others;
- keep the school clean and tidy;
- have the correct books and materials in school;
- follow class rules and routines;
- move quietly around the school;
- line up in an orderly manner before and after break;
- stay on the school premises and within designated areas during school times;
- do their homework to the best of their ability;
- include other children in their games and activities.

3.2 Staff

Staff *can expect* to:

- be treated with respect;
- teach in a well maintained physical environment relatively free from disruption;
- get support and co-operation from colleagues and parents in order to achieve the school's aims and objectives;
- be listened to and participate in decision making which affects their own work and that of the school in general;
- work in an atmosphere that encourages professional development;
- have appropriate support services to cater for the psychological, emotional and physical needs of their pupils;

- get support and professional advice from the Board of Management, Department of Education & Skills, the National Education Welfare Board, the National Council for Special Education and the National Educational Psychological Services.
- have grievances dealt with according to agreed procedures.

Staff are *expected* to:

- support and implement the school's Code of Behaviour;
- be cognisant of their duty of care;
- create a safe, welcoming atmosphere for their pupils;
- develop and nurture a sense of self-esteem in each pupil;
- praise desirable behaviour;
- facilitate pupils to reach their full academic potential;
- recognise and provide for individual differences as far as is reasonable;
- be courteous, consistent and fair;
- keep opportunities for disruption to a minimum;
- deal appropriately with misbehaviour;
- keep a record of serious misbehaviour or repeated instances of misbehaviour;
- provide support for colleagues.

3.3 Parents

Parents *can expect* to:

- be treated with respect;
- have a safe and welcoming environment for their daughter;
- obtain recognition for individual differences among pupils having due regard for the resources that are available;
- have fair and consistent procedures applied to the school's dealings with pupils;
- have incidents of misbehaviour involving or affecting their child dealt with and followed up;
- receive progress reports in accordance with agreed school policy;
- receive information on school's policies and procedures;
- be consulted in relation to the school's Code of Behaviour;
- appeal in accordance with agreed procedures.

Parents are *expected* to:

- ensure their child attends school regularly and on time and that she is collected from school on time;
- encourage their child to follow the school's Code of Behaviour;
- ensure their child wears the school uniform;
- ensure their child has the correct books, material and a wash bag;
- have their child's belongings labelled;
- read written communication received from the school and respond appropriately;
- report to the office if calling to the school during the day for any reason;
- make an appointment beforehand if they need to see a teacher;
- help their children to learn and practise good behaviour and to have a positive attitude towards themselves, other people and towards the school;

- co-operate with teachers in instances where their child's behaviour is causing difficulty for others;
 - communicate to the school problems which may affect their child's behaviour;
 - attend meetings at the school if requested;
 - help their children with their homework and ensure it is completed.
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4. School Rules

A set of school rules are included in the School's Homework Journal each year. For pupils in Infants classes who do not use journals, a copy of the rules is sent home. These rules come from the expectations outlined above with some additional aspects e.g. lunches, administration of medicine etc. They are concrete and specific. Rules may need to be updated/modified during the school year. Parents and pupils are informed of such changes.

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5. Systems for acknowledging good behaviour, progress and effort.

Good behaviour is praised in a number of ways.

For Individuals, good behaviour may be acknowledged as follows:

- (i) A quiet word or gesture to show approval;
- (ii) A word of praise in front of group/class;
- (iii) A mention to the Principal;
- (iv) A comment/smiley/sticker in the exercise book;
- (v) A mention to parents (verbal or written);
- (vi) A treat e.g. if terms of a behaviour contract are fulfilled.

For Groups/Classes, good behaviour may be acknowledged as follows:

- (i) A Group/Class treat such as:
 - *reduction in homework*
 - *edible treat*
 - *DVD*
 - *time given to preferred activity*
 - *extra playtime*
 - (ii) For groups within a class a system of merit marks.
 - (iii) A mention to Principal;
 - (iv) A mention to parents;
 - (v) Announcement by Principal over Intercom.
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6. Consequences of unacceptable behaviour

Disapproval of unacceptable behaviour will be dealt with as follows:

- (i) Reprimand and Reasoning (making clear what behaviour was unacceptable);
- (ii) Loss of privilege;
- (iii) Referral to Principal/Deputy;
- (iv) Communication with parent;

- (v) Withdrawal temporarily from main class group to ‘time out’ area of classroom (e.g. side of classroom);
- (vi) Withdrawal from class temporarily (e.g. to another classroom) in extreme cases if other sanctions have failed and if serious disruption is being caused to the class;
- (vii) Losses and damage caused must be made good in all cases;
- (viii) Suspension/expulsion as outlined in Section 7 and 8.

7. Procedures for Suspension

It is our expectation that we will not have to resort to Suspension. However, in keeping with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act, Section 23(2), Scoil Mhuire has a policy on Suspension. This is outlined in Appendix 2 .

8. Procedures for Expulsion

As with Suspension, it is our expectation that that we will not have to resort to Expulsion for any pupil. However, in keeping with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act, Section 23(2), Scoil Mhuire has a policy on Expulsion. This is outlined in Appendix 3.

9. Procedures for notifying the school about reasons for absence from school.

Parents/guardians are expected to communicate the reasons for the non-attendance of their child in Scoil Mhuire by:

- (i) Notifying the school (e.g. phone call to Secretary/Principal) of the cause of the absence *not later than the end of the third day of absence*. (In the case of infectious illnesses, immediate notification is required);
- (ii) Sending in a signed and dated explanation of absence when the pupil returns to school. Such notes are an important part of the record keeping done to fulfil the requirements of reporting to the NEWB.

10. Other Scoil Mhuire Policies related to Code of Behaviour

The following Scoil Mhuire policies overlap in various ways with the Code of Behaviour:

- SPHE School Plan;
- Anti-bullying Policy;
- Safety Statement;
- Supervision Policy;
- Scoil Mhuire Equality Statement;
- Acceptable Use Policy (Computers);
- Enrolment Policy;
- Positive Staff Working Relations;
- Staff Bullying/Harassment;
- Grievance Procedure;
- Complaints Procedure.

11. When and where will behaviour be subjected to the Code of Behaviour?

Standards and rules in the Code of Behaviour will apply to all situations where pupils are the responsibility of the school. This includes not just activities within the school grounds but school tours, extra-curricular activities and other school events in which Scoil Mhuire staff are ‘in loco parentis’.

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12. Implementation Date and Communication

This policy will apply from September 2010.

All parents will be asked to sign their acceptance of the Code as recommended in Section 23 (4) of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 (that the Code is acceptable to them and that they will make all reasonable efforts to ensure compliance with the Code by their child). From the school year 2010/'11 on, all parents of new pupils will receive a copy of the Code and will be asked to confirm in writing that the Code is acceptable to them.

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13. Timetable for Review

The policy will be reviewed every two years. School rules (Section 4) will be reviewed annually.

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14. Ratification & Communication

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire at a meeting held on June 23rd 2010.

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Appendix 1: Scoil Mhuire Mission Statement

The **vision** of the school is set out in its **Mission Statement** as follows:

- 1. That the pupils will have been afforded the best opportunity possible to avail of an all-round education, suitable to the ability of each child and in keeping with the Catholic Ethos of the School;**
- 2. That the pupils will have received social skills to equip them for life which are age appropriate and in keeping with the religious ethos of the school;**
- 3. That the pupils will be exposed to extra-curricular and sporting aspects of life, as part of the mental and physical development and growing process;**
- 4. Coupled with self-development, that the pupils will have a clear understanding of life and be capable of understanding and appreciating the plight of the less fortunate sector of the community;**
- 5. Ultimately, that ‘The Fountain of Knowledge’, ‘The Light of Learning’, ‘The Leaves of Growth’ and ‘The Heart of Care and Love’ which are the underlying messages of the school crest will have touched all our pupils during their years in Scoil Mhuire.**

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Appendix 2 Procedures for Suspension

The procedures below are in keeping with the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) guidelines as outlined in ‘Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools’, Chapters 10 & 11.

(http://www.newb.ie/downloads/pdf/guidelines_school_codes_eng.pdf)

Suspension is defined as requiring a pupil to absent herself from school, as a sanction, for a specified, limited period of school days.

Suspension will only take place on serious grounds such that:

- the behaviour of the pupil has a seriously detrimental effect on the education of other pupils;
- the pupil’s continued presence in the school at this time constitutes a threat to safety;
- the pupil is responsible for serious damage to property.

A single incident of serious misconduct may be grounds for suspension.

Suspensions can provide respite for staff and the pupil, give the pupil time to reflect on the link between their action and its consequences and give staff time to plan ways of helping the pupil to change unacceptable behaviour.

Suspension will only occur after other interventions have been tried and school staff will have reviewed the reasons why these have not worked. A list of factors to be considered before suspending a pupil is given on p.72 of the Guidelines.

The Board of Management has the authority to suspend a pupil. One period of suspension will not last for more than a maximum of 10 days. If the suspension is for 3 days or less, the authority to suspend is delegated to the Principal. However, the Principal must first consult with the Chairperson (except in the case of Immediate Suspension - see below).

Suspensions of longer periods than 3 days are referred to the Board of Management for consideration and approval. Suspensions are never open-ended.

In the case of suspensions decided by the Principals (up to and including 3 days), parents have a right to appeal this decision to the Board of Management. In cases where the total number of days for which a pupil has been suspended in one school year reaches 20 days, the parents may appeal the suspension under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998, as amended by the Education (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2007.

Steps to be followed in the case of Suspension:

In all cases of Suspension special care will be taken to ensure that fair procedures will be followed. These are outlined in detail in Chapter 10 of the Guidelines (p67-68).

They include two essential parts: the *right to be heard* and the *right to impartiality*.

Fair procedures apply to *both* the investigation of the complaint and to the process of decision-making that follows the investigation.

The following steps apply:

- (i) Pupil and parents are informed about the complaint to be investigated and that it could lead to suspension. They will be informed how the issue will be decided. Parents will be informed by phone or in writing.

- (ii) Pupil and parents are given a chance to respond before a decision is made and before any sanction is imposed. In cases of serious misbehaviour, they are given an opportunity to be heard by the decision making body.
- (iii) A definite period of suspension is imposed. It is never open-ended.
- (iv) Parents and pupil will be notified in writing of the decision to suspend including details as follows: period of suspension, reasons for suspension; any study programme to be followed; the arrangements for returning to school including any commitments to be entered into by the pupil or parents (for example, parents may be asked to reaffirm their commitment to the code of behaviour); the provision for an appeal to the Board of Management or Patron as described above; the right to appeal under Section 29 if appropriate.
- (v) The Principal and/or Deputy Principal will meet the parents to emphasise their responsibility in helping the pupil to behave well on returning to school and to offer help and guidance on this.
- (vi) A suspension may be removed if the Board of Management decides to remove the suspension for any reason or if the Secretary General of the Department of Education & Skills directs that it be removed followed a Section 29 appeal.
- (vii) On reintegration of the pupil, a plan will be drawn up to help the pupil catch up on work missed. A member of staff will provide support for the pupil's reintegration and help her to make a fresh start.
- (viii) **Immediate Suspension:** In exceptional cases an immediate suspension by the Principal is allowed for reasons of the safety of the pupil, other pupils, staff or others. In this case a preliminary investigation is conducted. A formal investigation immediately follows the imposition of the suspension. Parents, in this case, are notified and arrangements are made for the pupil to be collected.

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Appendix 3 Procedures for Expulsion

The procedures below are in keeping with the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) guidelines as outlined in ‘Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools’, Chapter 12.

(http://www.newb.ie/downloads/pdf/guidelines_school_codes_eng.pdf)

Only the Board of Management has the authority to expel. It is never delegated. It is only taken in extreme cases of unacceptable behaviour.

A proposal to expel a pupil requires serious grounds such that:

- the pupil’s behaviour is a persistent cause of significant disruption to the learning of others or to the teaching process;
- the pupil’s continued presence in the school constitutes a real and significant threat to safety;
- the pupil is responsible for serious damage to property.

In the case of expulsion, the misbehaviour is more serious and persistent than in the case for suspension and all other interventions will have been tried.

The Board of Management will give serious consideration to a range of factors in deciding whether to expel a pupil. These factors are listed on p82 of the Guidelines and include: the nature and seriousness of the behaviour; the context of the behaviour; the impact of the behaviour; the interventions tried to date; whether expulsion is a proportionate response; the possible impact of expulsion.

Steps to be followed:

As in the case of suspension special care will be taken to ensure that fair procedures will be followed. These are outlined in detail in Chapter 10 of the Guidelines (p67-68). They include two essential parts: the ***right to be heard*** and the ***right to impartiality***. Fair procedures apply to ***both*** the investigation of the complaint and to the process of decision-making that follows the investigation.

- (i) A detailed investigation is carried out under the direction of the Principal;
- (ii) A recommendation is made to the Board of Management by the Principal;
- (iii) Consideration by the Board of Management of the Principal’s recommendation; and the holding of a hearing;
- (iv) Board of Management deliberations and actions following the hearing;
- (v) Consultations arranged by the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO);
- (vi) Confirmation of the decision to expel.

Details of each of the above steps are outlined in the Guidelines (Chap 12, p83-86). These details are in keeping with the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, Section 24.

A parent may appeal a decision to expel to the Secretary General of the Department of Education & Skills as in Section 29 Education Act 1998. An appeal may also be brought by the NEWB on behalf of the pupil. Such an appeal is carried out in accordance with DES practice.