



# Vicarstown NS

## Code of Behaviour



Good behaviour is based on good relations between parents/guardians, child and school.

In Vicarstown NS, we hope to foster this ideal in co-operation with our parents/guardians. We have adopted a positive code of behaviour with emphasis on encouragement and reward so that good behaviour can prevail in our school.

The Board of Management of the school has ultimate responsibility for behaviour in the school. Within the school, the overall day to day responsibility for behaviour rests with the Principal. Each teacher has the responsibility for the maintenance of good behaviour and good order within his/her classroom while sharing a common responsibility for good behaviour within the school premises.

Parents/guardians can support the school by encouraging their children to understand the need for school rules, and by communicating any relevant concerns to the school.

### **Aims of the code**

- To create a positive learning environment that encourages and reinforces good behaviour
- To promote self-esteem and positive relationships
- To encourage consistency of response to both positive and negative behaviour
- To foster a sense of responsibility and self-discipline in pupils and to support good behaviour patterns based on consideration and respect for the rights of others
- To facilitate the education and development of every child
- To foster caring attitudes to one another and to the environment
- To enable teachers to teach without disruption
- To ensure that the school's expectations and strategies are widely known and understood through the parent's handbook, availability of policies and an ethos of open communication
- To encourage the involvement of both home and school in the implementation of this policy

### **Responsibility of Adults**

The adults encountered by the children at school have an important responsibility to model high standards of behaviour, both in their dealings with the children and with each other, as their example has an important influence on the children.

As adults we should aim to:

- Create a positive climate with realistic expectations.
- Promote positive behaviour, through example, honesty and courtesy.
- Provide a caring and effective learning environment.
- Encourage relationships based on kindness, respect and understanding of the needs of others.
- Ensure fair treatment for all regardless of age, gender, race, ability and disability.
- Show appreciation of the efforts and contribution of all.
- To discourage physical aggression and encourage '*Kind Hands, Kind Words, Kind Feet*'.

A Code of Conduct for staff, pupils and volunteers ensures that the rights of all are upheld.

### **School Rules**

1. We show respect for self and others. We are inclusive.

2. We show respect for our own property and the property of others
3. We show respect to other students and their learning
4. We are kind and willing to help others
5. We follow instructions from staff immediately
6. We walk quietly in the school building and enter/exit in an orderly fashion.
7. We walk to our line at the end of break time.
8. We ask permission to re-enter the school at break time.
9. We show courtesy and good manners
10. We try to use respectful ways of resolving difficulties and conflict
11. We ask permission to leave the classroom/school.
12. We do our best in class
13. We take responsibility for our own work
14. We wear the appropriate uniform.
15. We follow our Healthy Eating Policy.

These can be summed up as 6 Golden Rules:

1. We listen. We don't interrupt.
2. We are gentle. We don't hurt others.
3. We are honest. We tell the truth.
4. We are kind.
5. We work hard. We don't waste time.
6. We look after property. We don't damage things.

These 6 "Golden Rules" will be the main ones used for infant classes. Rules apply during school-time and during all school related activities.

### **Discipline for Learning (DFL)**

In our school, we have a positive approach to teaching and learning. Positive rules for behaviour in class and out of class are learned by pupils at the beginning of their school year. Pupils are disciplined by being motivated to keep these rules.

We have many ways of recognising good behaviour and effect including awards, stamps, positive cards, smiles, positive comments, tickets and vouchers. Good behaviour and achievement will be recognised. Consistent positive influences are the key to success in our school.

### **Restorative Practice**

Restorative Practice in our school provides a focus on developing positive relationships between all members of the school community. It gives opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their behaviour and learning. Restorative Practice is a process whereby children are given the opportunity to reflect on their behaviour and how they and others have been affected by it so as to help heal broken relationships and prevent reoccurrence. Where suspension occurs, the school will use restorative practice involving all parties affected to help repair the harm done.

### **Restorative Questions to respond to Challenging Behaviour**

1. What happened?
2. What were you thinking about at the time?
3. What have your thoughts been since?
4. Who has been affected by what you did?
5. In what way have they been affected?
6. What do you think needs to happen to make things right?

## **To help those harmed by other actions**

1. What did you think when you realised what had happened?
2. What have your thoughts been since?
3. How has this affected others?
4. What has been the hardest thing for you?
5. What do you think needs to happen to make things right?

## **Rules for Good Order at Vicarstown NS**

- 1) Pupils shall arrive in good time for school – 8.50am at latest. BOM provides supervision from 8:40am to 8:50am.
- 2) Please note that pupils arriving at school before 8.40am or remaining on school premises after 2.30pm are not covered by School Insurance – unless expressly agreed with school principal.
- 3) Junior Infants and Senior Infants finish school at 1.30pm and shall be collected promptly.
- 4) Full school uniform or school tracksuit shall be worn each day. Please note that correct footwear should be worn, i.e. black school shoes with uniform and trainers/runners with tracksuit.
- 5) Parents shall respect private property adjacent to the school entrances at all times.
- 6) Parents/Guardians shall not drive onto the school property at drop-off or collection times in any circumstances – in the interest of pupil and staff health and safety.
- 7) Parents shall provide a nutritious lunch each day. A small treat shall be allowed on Wednesdays. See **Healthy Eating Policy**.
- 8) School milk is recommended and available at school.
- 9) No child shall leave the school premises without the permission of the class teacher or school principal. To leave the school, a note appointment card, or personal call from parent/guardian or nominated guardian shall be furnished.
- 10) Every absence of a child must be accounted for. Infant classes may get an Absence Form from the office or download from the school website. 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> Class student are to use absence slip at back of HW Journal, in line with National Education Welfare Board recommendations. Absences of 20 days or more must be referred by the school to Education Welfare Board.
- 11) Name tags/labelling shall be attached to all clothing and school books/copies, sports wear etc. --- the school is not responsible for personal belongings left behind by pupils.
- 12) Pupils shall have all books and required materials in class at all times.
- 13) Every pupil shall have a school homework journal from 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> classes. (Ref. School Book List). These are provided by school.
- 14) School property shall always be treated with respect and due care.
- 15) Entering onto private property adjacent to the school is strictly forbidden.
- 16) Glass bottles are not allowed at school in any circumstance.
- 17) Alcohol, solvents, smoking and drugs are strictly prohibited. Prescribed medication required by pupils, will be administered only by teachers, on written request by parents/guardians.
- 18) The wearing of body piercing items (nose, eyebrows rings etc.) is not allowed and the wearing of make-up is forbidden. Studs in both ears are allowed.

## **Homework**

It is the policy of the school to assign homework on a regular basis. The time taken for this will vary from child to child, but should in most cases take between 30 minutes and one hour. Homework is recorded in the pupil's journal. Parents should sign the homework journal to confirm that the work has been fully attempted.

If for some reason homework (or part of it) cannot be completed, parents are asked to note this in the homework journal.

Generally, homework is not given at weekends. Written work must be done neatly and carefully. Graffiti on textbooks and copy books is not permitted. Please refer to the school Homework Policy for further information.

### **Class Rules**

At the beginning of each academic year, the class teacher will draft a list of class rules with the children, based closely on the "Golden Rules". Class rules will be kept to a minimum and are devised with regard for the health, safety and welfare of all members of the school community. Where possible they emphasise positive behaviour (e.g. 'Walk' and not, 'Don't run'). Rules will be applied in a fair and consistent manner, with due regard to the age of the pupils and to individual difference. Where difficulties arise, parents will be contacted at an early stage.

### **Incentives/Reward System**

Part of the vision of Vicarstown NS is to help children achieve their personal best and thus prepare them for further education, life and work. We recognise that there are many different forms of intelligence and similarly that children use a variety of approaches to solve problems. Our reward system seeks to provide encouragement to all children of all abilities and talents. Children will be encouraged, praised and listened to by adults in the school. Praise is earned by the maintenance of good standards as well as by particularly noteworthy personal achievements. Rates of praise for behaviour should be as high as for work.

The following are some samples of how praise might be given:

- A quiet word or gesture to show approval
- A comment in a pupil's copy or homework journal
- A visit to another member of Staff or to the Principal for commendation
- A word of praise in front of a group or class
- Delegating some special responsibility or privilege
- A mention to parent, written or verbal communication
- 'Bualadh Bos' in class or special mention at assembly.
- Class 'Positive Reinforcement' method, e.g. tickets, vouchers or stars.
- A mention at school assembly.
- Certificates of Attendance will be issued each 'End of Year' Assembly.

Field trips, annual school tours and our end of year Sports Day will be reserved for those who have consistently strived to behave well.

### **Unacceptable Behaviour**

Three levels of misbehaviour are recognised: Minor, Serious and Gross. All everyday instances of a minor nature are dealt with by the class teacher, or the supervising teacher at break-times. In cases of repeated serious misbehaviour or single instances of gross misbehaviour parents will be involved at an early stage and invited to meet the teacher and/or the principal to discuss their child's behaviour.

Examples of minor misbehaviour include:

- Bringing electronic equipment or mobile-phones to school
- Not wearing appropriate uniform; bringing in chewing-gum
- Not following instructions.

Examples of serious misbehaviour include:

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

- Behaviour that interferes with teaching and learning
- Threats or physical hurt to another person
- Damage to property
- Theft
- Bringing dangerous equipment to school
- Leaving school/school activities without permission.

Examples of gross misbehaviour include:

- Assault on a teacher or pupil
- Serious Theft
- Serious Damage to property
- Serious bullying
- Carrying drugs, alcohol, cigarettes

Bullying is repeated aggression – physical, verbal or emotional - conducted by an individual or group against another or others.

- PHYSICAL: includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking, tripping, etc.
- VERBAL: name calling which hurts, insults or humiliates.
- EMOTIONAL: threats or persistent hurtful remarks regarding sensitive areas e.g. appearance, dress, progress, colour, culture and disability. Isolating or shunning a child. Threats to extort money or possessions. "Cyber/text" bullying (does not need to be repeated, can be once off).

The school takes particular care to intervene early in responding to the needs, fears or anxieties of individual members in a sensitive manner.

Issues in relation to Bullying are explored continually during SPHE lessons and using Circle Time, Drama etc.

*Should a parent/guardian have any concerns which need to be discussed with a teacher, all staff members are more than willing to facilitate a meeting, made through the proper channels i.e. a phone call to the office, or a note to the class teacher to arrange a convenient time for both parties. The first person to be informed should be the class teacher.*

This arrangement ensures that all concerns are dealt with in a dignified, meaningful manner, without infringing on valuable teaching time.

Isolated incidents of aggressive behaviour, while not to be condoned, cannot be described as bullying.

Incidents of bullying will be dealt with in the same manner as breaches of discipline – already outlined in our Code of Behaviour.

*In the case where a parent reports a bullying incident, the school reserves the right to inform the relevant parties of the identity of the person making the complaint, when this is deemed necessary.*

## **Sanctions**

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 students or adults, safe.

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

1. Reasoning with pupil
2. Verbal reprimand including advice on how to improve
3. Temporary separation from peers within class and/or temporary removal to another class. May include 'standing out' for a short period.
4. Prescribing extra work/ writing out the story of what happened
5. Loss of privileges
6. Detention during break or after school
7. Communication with parents
8. Referral to Principal
9. Principal communicating with parents
10. Exclusion (Suspension or Expulsion) from school (in accordance with Rule 130 of the Rules for National Schools as amended by circular and Education Welfare Act 2000)

Usually sanctions will relate as closely as possible to the behaviour.

### **Suspension and Expulsion**

Before serious sanctions such as detention, suspension or expulsion are used, the normal channels of communication between school and parents will be utilised. Communication with parents may be verbal or by letter depending on the circumstances.

Where there has been an incidence of gross misbehaviour or repeated instances of serious misbehaviour, the Chairperson of the Board of Management will be informed and the parents will be requested in writing to attend at the school to meet the Chairperson and the principal. If the parents do not give an undertaking that the pupil will behave in an acceptable manner in the future the pupil may be suspended for a period. Prior to suspension, where possible, the Principal may review the case in consultation with teachers and other members of the school community involved, with due regard to records of previous misbehaviours, their pattern and context, sanctions and other interventions used and their outcomes and any relevant medical information. If considered warranted the Principal reserves the right to suspend the pupil for 3 days initially. This power of suspension is delegated to the principal by the school Board of Management. In certain circumstances the Principal with the approval of their Chairperson of the BoM may suspend a pupil for 5 school days. A meeting of the BoM may authorise further suspension up to a maximum of 10 days. Suspension will be in accordance with Section 23 of the Education Welfare Act 2000.

Following or during a period of suspension, the parent/s may apply to have the pupil reinstated to the school. The parent/s must give a satisfactory undertaking that a suspended pupil will behave in accordance with the school code and the Principal must be satisfied that the pupil's reinstatement will not constitute a risk to the pupil's own safety or that of the other pupils or staff. The Principal will facilitate the preparation of a behaviour plan for the pupil if required and will re-admit the pupil formally to the class.

## **Automatic Expulsion**

### **BoM may sanction automatic expulsion for certain prescribed behaviours:**

1. Sexual Assault
2. Possession of illegal drugs
3. Supplying illegal drugs to other pupils in the school
4. Actual violence or physical assault
5. Serious threat of violence against another pupil or member of staff.

### **Procedures in Respect to Expulsion**

1. Detailed investigation by school principal
2. Recommendation by principal to BoM
3. BoM considers Principals recommendation and holds hearing
4. BoM decision, is expulsion appropriate? If BoM recommends expulsion, the BoM will propose a date which will allow a 20-day cooling off period
5. Education Welfare Officer is informed of proposal to expel pupil and effective date of that proposal
6. Parents of the pupil are informed of rights to invoke a Section 29 appeal under the Education Act 1998
7. Education Welfare Officer arranges consultations
8. Confirmation of decision. Removal of Suspension (Reinstatement)

### **Children with Special Needs**

All children are required to comply with the code of behaviour. However the school recognises that children with special needs may require assistance in understanding certain rules. Specialised behaviour plans will be put in place in consultation with parents and the class teacher, learning support/ resource teacher, and or principal will work closely with home to ensure that optimal support is given. Cognitive development will be taken into account at all times. Professional advice from psychological assessments will be invaluable.

The children in the class or school may be taught strategies to assist a pupil with special needs adhere to the rules and thus provide peer support. This will be done in a supportive and safe way, acknowledging and respecting the difference in all individuals.

### **Communicating with Parents**

Communicating with parents is central to maintaining a positive approach to dealing with children. Parents and teachers should develop a joint strategy to address specific difficulties, in addition to sharing a broader philosophy which can be implemented at home and in school.

A high level of co-operation and open communication is seen as an important factor encouraging positive behaviour in the school. Structures and channels designed to maintain a high level of communication among staff and between staff, pupils and parents have been established and are being reviewed regularly.

Parents are encouraged to talk in confidence to teachers about any significant developments in a child's life (in the past or present), which may affect the child's behaviour. Parents/guardians can

assist the school by promoting respect, tolerance and understanding, by not speaking negatively about the school in front of their children and by approaching the school about any problem, which might arise.

The following methods of communication are to be used within the school:

- Informal/formal parent/teacher
- Through children's homework journal (infants do not have a homework journal, please check bags for notes)
- Letters/notes from school to home and from home to school( Usually on Thursdays)
- School notice board
- Newsletters/school web-site/e-mails
- TextaParent service.