



**St Catherine's National School**  
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## Code of Behaviour

### Introduction

Following the publication of the document *Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools* by the National Education Welfare Board in May 2008, the Board of Management of St Catherine's National School decided to make an update and renewal of our Code of Behaviour a priority for the academic year 2008-2009. The following preliminary steps were undertaken:

- (1) The principal prepared a detailed briefing document for the Board of Management, summarising the content of the NEWB document and outlining the features of the Code of Behaviour currently in effect in the school.
- (2) The staff discussed the NEWB document at a staff meeting on. It was decided to trial a Behaviour Report Card system in the first term of the 08-09 year to deal with persistent low-level misbehaviour.
- (3) The principal wrote to all parents in the school asking for suggestions as to improving the Code of Behaviour. No written replies were received, but some informal oral responses expressed support for the Code as currently implemented.
- (4) The class teachers discussed the school rules at an age-appropriate level with the children and asked for their suggestions.

On March 30<sup>th</sup> 2009, the Board of Management held a meeting at which the briefing document was discussed thoroughly. A few points emerged which it was decided should be discussed at the next staff meeting by the class teachers: the development of an alternative sanction to keeping children in at break, and the preference for individual rather than group sanctions and rewards.

It was decided that:

- (1) The current Code of Behaviour in general has served the school well, but the written document needs to be expanded, with more details especially in the area of prevention, and including the Behaviour Report Card system. The Principal agreed to prepare this document for the June Board meeting.
- (2) A full audit of behaviour in the school is unnecessary. Few serious disciplinary incidents have occurred over the last few years, and parents, teachers and pupils all feel that the current situation with regard to behaviour is good. However, at a subsequent meeting of

the Board it was decided that there should be an anonymous survey each year to ascertain the extent of bullying.

- (3) A separate page on bullying – what it is, how it can be prevented and the steps we take to deal with it if it arises – should be included in the Code of Behaviour. The Principal agreed to prepare this.
- (4) The guidelines on Suspension and Exclusion included in the NEWB document should be adopted in full;
- (5) While every effort is made to help children with behaviour difficulties, especially those who have special educational needs, the primary responsibility of the Board of Management is to the health, safety and educational welfare of the whole school community.

## **Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of the School**

Our Ethos Statement states that in our school, the Golden Rule is paramount: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Our school rules are grounded in this philosophy and our Code of Behaviour is intended to help all members of the school community to live up to this ideal.

We also aspire to enabling all children attending our school to realise their potential. The Code of Behaviour aims to ensure that an atmosphere of calm, order, positivity, respect and friendship pervades the school so that both students and staff can focus on the primary tasks of learning and teaching.

## **Aims of our Code of Behaviour**

The goals of our Code are:

- to ensure that the high standards of behaviour we expect from students, members of staff and parents are clearly understood by the whole school community.
- to create a positive and safe environment for teaching and learning.
- to help our students take personal responsibility for their behaviour and learning.

## **Principles of our Code of Behaviour**

- Clarity: it should be clearly understood.

- Everybody's behaviour matters: children, teachers, ancillary staff, parents and other family members are all expected to live up to our ideals of respect and consideration for others.
- We promote and reward good behaviour.
- Balancing needs: the needs of the whole school community must be respected when considering how to meet the needs of any one student.
- Focus on quality relationships.
- Focus on personal responsibility.
- Fairness and natural justice.
- Promotion of equality and avoidance of any form of discrimination.
- Promoting the welfare of students, including those most vulnerable to behaviour problems.
- Promoting the welfare of staff: ensuring that all have a positive and safe working environment.

## **The Essence of the Policy**

### **(1) School Rules**

Our School Rules are as follows:

#### **1. Our Safety Rule:**

Everyone should be safe at school.

No fighting, hurting, threatening or bullying.

No dangerous games, no play-fighting, no climbing.

Wear sensible shoes and clothing suitable for work and play.

No running in the school building.

## **2. Our Healthy School Rule:**

Bring a healthy lunch to school. One treat per week is allowed, on Friday only.

Be clean and tidy coming to school.

Keep hair and fingernails especially clean.

Long hair should be tied back.

Wash hands after using the toilet.

Keep the toilets clean.

Put all your litter in the bin.

No cigarettes or chewing gum allowed.

No alcohol or illegal substance should be brought into school.

## **3. Our Respect for Others Rule:**

Make our school a happy place for everyone.

Be polite, friendly and helpful to teachers, helpers,

visitors, parents and other children.

Be truthful.

No name-calling, jeering, or teasing.

Remember simple good manners – saying please, thank you and excuse me, knocking on doors, etc.

No rude or disruptive behaviour in class.

Mobile phones must remain switched off while you are on the school premises.

## **4. Our Respect for Property Rule:**

Use all school equipment with care, and put it back when you are finished.

Never steal or deliberately damage the property of other people.

If you accidentally break or lose property belonging to others, explain honestly what happened and replace the item if possible.

No scribbling on walls or furniture.

Look after your own property – keep it clean and tidy.

Schoolbooks must be kept in good condition.

Throwing equipment is strictly forbidden.

Follow the rules for the Computer Room.

#### **5. Our Attendance Rule:**

Come to school every day unless you are sick.

Bring in a note if you have been absent.

Come to school on time.

#### **6. Our Schoolwork Rule:**

Always do your very best in school.

Do all your homework.

Bring all necessary equipment to school.

We also have rules which pertain specifically to the playground, as follows:

#### **Our Rules For a Happy Playground**

- No fighting.
- Be kind: everyone is allowed to play, people are not teased or insulted.
- No play-fighting, wrestling, or games that involve pulling at each other, even in fun.
- No climbing.
- Stay away from the ramps and the car-park area.
- Keep your rubbish in your pocket or lunch-box / bag.
- Enjoy the games equipment in the box and put it back when you're finished.
- Respect property.
- Wear suitable shoes for play.
- Respect zoned play areas.
- Stay in the yard except to go to the toilet or get a drink (ask permission!).
- Obey the adult on duty. Tell if you have a problem.

## **(2) How We Encourage Good Behaviour**

- The school rules are sent to the parents of every new entrant to the school, and every two years, at the start of the academic year, to all parents. We ask the parents to go through the rules with their children at an age-appropriate level, and to support the school in setting these expectations with regard to behaviour.
- Each class teacher discusses and agrees classroom rules with her / his class at the start of each year. Although the details of these may differ, all are grounded in the overall ethos of the school and in the School Rules. Teachers use praise and simple incentive schemes to encourage good behaviour and work; these can be at individual, group, and or class level. Sanctions, if used, are at an individual level only. Methods of classroom

management are discussed regularly at staff meetings, and the Principal is available to advise staff members with regard both to the whole area of effective classroom management and also to a specific difficulty that may arise. There are a number of books on the topic available in the staff library.

- A positive classroom climate is created through positive teacher-pupil interactions, the use of active learning methods, an emphasis on personal improvement in achievement, and frequent use of group work to encourage co-operation. Classrooms are bright, well-organised and well-equipped.
- Through the monthly Good News Assembly, the children's and staff's achievements are regularly celebrated. This does not apply solely to academic achievement; for example, the names of children who have been particularly helpful and kind that week are read out and they are applauded. For those children who have been struggling with behaviour issues, improvement is noted and praised.
- All staff who engage in playground supervision are made aware of the rules for the playground and asked to enforce them. We go through those rules periodically with the children and stress the reasoning behind them. There are playground markings and boxes of playground equipment to encourage the children to have fun and play safely. Through the democratically elected Green Committee, the children are regularly consulted as to ways of improving playtimes.
- Children are supervised at all times and staff are asked to be vigilant in spotting and dealing with bad behaviour. Children are not allowed to congregate in the toilets.

### **(3) What happens when Behaviour Expectations are not met**

- In both the classroom and elsewhere in the school, teachers may use a variety of approaches to deal with a child who is misbehaving. The child may be spoken to with a view to clarifying the rule, why it is there and why it was broken. While it is acceptable for a teacher to be assertive in expressing disapproval, humiliation, ridicule and sarcasm are not permitted. Isolation within the classroom / playground, extra work to be done at home, or loss of privileges such as Golden Time (a 'free choice' period) or computer time may be used as sanctions. Group sanctions are not used (e.g. a whole class or group being punished for the misbehaviour of a small number).
- A child who is persistently being corrected for misbehaviour may be put on a Daily Behaviour Report Card (example below). This decision will be taken by the class teacher and the Principal in consultation. The parents of the child will be informed by

letter that the card is in operation and why, and invited to come to the school to discuss the behaviour and ways that they can help. The child is issued a fresh card daily for a specified period of time, typically a fortnight. Staff members who come in contact with the child during the day (class teacher, SNA, yard supervision teacher, Learning Support Teacher) each write a brief comment on his / her behaviour. The card is then taken home by the child to be signed by the parent(s). The aim would be that parents would reward a good report and give a reasonable sanction for a poor one. After the specified period, the child will be congratulated by the Principal for improving his behaviour if this is warranted, and a note will be sent home to parents to confirm this.

- Children whose behaviour fails to improve after the Daily Report Card has been tried will be issued a 'white card' (example below). A white card can also be issued immediately for a piece of gross misbehaviour, e.g. violence, stealing, dangerous behaviour or complete refusal to co-operate with reasonable demands by those in authority. Parents are asked to sign the white card and return it to the school, and to meet the Principal and class teacher as soon as possible afterwards to discuss the behaviour and to give an undertaking that they will help their child to ensure that it does not recur. If a child receives three white cards within one academic year, the Principal will call an emergency Board meeting at which s/he will request that the child be suspended for three days. The parents will be immediately informed of the decision to issue a third white card and given a chance to make their views known to the Board.
- In all cases in which serious behaviour difficulties arise (i.e., when a Daily Report Card is warranted), the Principal will raise with parents the possibility of seeking professional help, from HSE Child Psychiatry services, parenting courses, NEPS, or any other agency that the Principal deems advisable. If parents agree, the Principal will arrange for the child to be referred to the appropriate service.
- In very rare cases, where a child is endangering himself and / or others, is posing a threat to the health and safety of the staff or other students, or is grossly interfering with the learning of other children, and where the procedures outlined above have been tried without avail, the Principal will request the Board to suspend the child for a longer period (not exceeding ten school days) or to exclude the child permanently. In either case, the procedures outlined in the NEWB handbook will be followed. (See attached document photocopied from the NEWB Guidelines).
- All children attending the school will be subject to the Behaviour policy as outlined above. This includes children with special educational needs. The school will do its very best to adapt classroom and playground management and procedures for children with a need that includes a difficulty with normal social behaviour, e.g. by providing a Special Needs Assistant if sanctioned, visual timetables, separate playtimes with a small group, behaviour target cards, extra one-to-one teaching, circle time, etc. However the care and education of any individual child does not take precedence over the welfare of the whole school community.

#### **(4) Bullying**

Please see separate policy document on bullying. While the co-operative approach to addressing bullying behaviour will be generally used, it should be stressed that bullying behaviour such as physical assault, damage to property, stealing, using insulting language and other behaviours which are against the school rules will be dealt with according to our normal procedures.

#### **Review**

The operation of the Code of Behaviour will be reviewed on a continuous basis by the staff of the school at staff meetings. Once a year the Principal shall prepare a report for the Board detailing how the Code of Behaviour is working. The Board will then review the policy and decide if changes need to be made.

**Ratified by the Board of Management on: 7/09/09**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**(Chairperson)**