

# CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

This document assists pupils, parents and staff in understanding the practices and procedures that form our school's Code of Behaviour.



Updated 2011-2012

- suspensions
- school buses

## educate together

*learn together to live together*

Gorey Educate Together National School is committed to the Educate Together Charter.

Our Code of Behaviour reflects the multi-denominational, co-educational, child centred and democratic principles of the Charter. The Code forms part of the school's undertaking to create a **teaching and learning atmosphere** that is **safe, effective, positive** and **respectful**. The practices contained in the Code reflect the developmental and educational needs of individual children and of 'the children of the school.' The practices empower boys and girls to fully participate in the Code. The staff, the children and their parents were involved in the Code's development during the 2005-2006 school year.

This Code of Behaviour was adopted as school policy by the Board of Management at their June 2006 meeting. (Amended 11/2010.)

The Code also meets the school's obligations under the Education Act, 1998, the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 and Department of Education and Science circulars on School Discipline.

**The following are the main steps that will be taken to promote a school environment that is safe, effective, positive and respectful:**

**1 Class Charters** At the beginning of every school year, the class teachers will guide the children through the formation of Class Charters.

This process will enable the children to learn that they — *and the children and adults around them* — have **rights** and **responsibilities**. The teachers will actively encourage each child in the class to contribute to their Class Charter.

The language used in class charters will be age appropriate. **Each charter will state in positive terms the behaviour that is expected in the classrooms, the playground and the school environment.** The example below is from the 1st/2nd/3rd class 2005/2006:



We agree that each child has the right to be  
**safe, happy and learn** in our school.

Helping everyone stay safe - examples: passing pencils, books and colours carefully; showing good example to the infants, telling an adult if we feel unsafe....

Helping everyone to be happy - examples: being friendly, respecting other children's work and belongings, including others in our games, being nice....

Helping everyone to learn - examples: using quiet voices in the classroom, talking and listening....

*(Every child gave examples of expected behaviours)*

The charters will be displayed in each classroom. Older children may be asked to gather ideas for charters as part of their homework, and they will share the finished Class Charter with their parents. Parents of infant children should make themselves familiar with the Charter during visits to the child's classroom.

As our school grows, and as the children mature, the teachers will examine the possibility of using elements of class charters to form a Whole-School Charter.

**2 Assemblies** The principal and teachers will plan whole-school assemblies that promote the aims of the Code of Behaviour. The children will be enabled to communicate the ideas in their Class Charters or new ideas on how to maintain positive school relationships during such assemblies.

**3 Programmes/Lessons** Particular programmes and lessons taught in the school will enable the children to develop values, social skills, attitudes and empathy. They include:

- The Learn Together Programme (lessons: Feelings; Co-operation; Honesty; Discrimination; Collective Responsibility; Wants, Needs and Rights; etc.)
- The Walk Tall Programme (lessons: Making choices, Standing up for Myself, Valuing Myself and Others, etc. This programme is being introduced on a phased basis.)
- Circle Time (lessons: Friendship, Cooperation, Solving problems, etc.)
- The Stay Safe Programme (lessons: Feeling Safe and Unsafe, Bullying, Secrets and Telling, etc. This programme is being introduced on a phased basis.)

A variety of methods will be used in these lessons, including social stories, discussion, drama/role play, worksheets, activities and games, etc.

**4 Encouragement and Praise** The staff will use encouragement and praise routinely. Praise may take many forms, including: positive oral or written comments, stickers and ink stamps in homework journals, good news scrapbooks, etc. Some teachers may also use incentive schemes to affirm desirable behaviour, resulting in rewards such as: extra computer time (or other special activity), lunch time music, no homework on an agreed night, class treat, etc. The teachers will monitor the outcomes of such schemes, in order to evaluate their effectiveness.

In giving praise, staff will be sensitive to the age and personality of the children. Certain children may prefer private praise (such as notes of approval in their copy books) to being singled out and embarrassed by public praise.

As well as praising individual children, the staff may direct praise at particular groups/classes - thus encouraging the children to share a positive group identity and fostering cooperative behaviour.

**The following procedures will apply when a child's behaviour does not meet the agreed expectations:**

**A Strategies and Sanctions** The following strategies and sanctions may be used to show disapproval of unacceptable behaviour. *(Please note that they are not in any 'rank order.')*

- • Non-verbal signals, such as a look or a frown
- • Reasoning with the child (and referring them to the class charter that they have agreed to)
- • Reprimand (including advice on how to improve)
- • Playground Timeout (stay at a specified point for 5 or 10 minutes)
- • Classroom Timeout (work at another table for 5-15 minutes, or work in another classroom for 5-15 minutes)
- • Loss of break time (usually part of the allocated time)
- • Communication with parents
- • Loss of privileges in relation to particular activities or outings
- • Prescribing additional work (including 'sorry cards' or behaviour related worksheets)
- • Referral to the Principal
- • Suspension

General problems may also be discussed with particular classes or during whole-school assemblies.

When implementing the strategies and sanctions above the principal and teachers will, where possible, be sensitive to the age and personality of the child. They will listen, at an appropriate time, to the child's explanations for behaviour. They will make clear that it is the behaviour that is being criticised and not the person. Where possible, teachers will encourage children to discuss, reflect on and contribute to the solving of behaviour problems. In such cases, the child and the teacher may agree on an appropriate way forward or sanction.

(In older classes, some strategies and sanctions may be discussed and agreed on when the children and their teacher formulate the Class Charter at the beginning of the school year.)

In all cases, the principal and teachers will make **fair and reasonable judgements** on the strategies or sanctions to be employed. They will avoid any early escalation to severe sanctions.

**B Informing Parents** When a child's behaviour does not meet expectations his/her parents will be involved at an early stage, rather than as a last resort. The normal channels of communication between school and parents will be utilised.

**C Referral to the Principal** Overall responsibility for discipline within the school rests with the Principal Teacher. Each teacher has responsibility for the maintenance of discipline within his/her classroom while sharing a common responsibility for good order within the school premises. A child will be referred to the Principal Teacher for a serious breach of discipline and for repeated incidents of minor misbehaviour.

**D Suspension or Expulsion** During 2010-2011 our Board of Management considered '*Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools*,' as issued by the National Educational Welfare Board. In particular, the Board decided to accept in full the recommended principles and procedures regarding Suspensions and Expulsions. Some of the key provisions include: an end to 'informal suspensions' - where a child is sent home early as a sanction, that sanction would be recorded as a suspension; the authority of the Principal to suspend a pupil for up to three days - longer suspensions would be referred to our Board for approval; principles regarding 'immediate suspensions' (**NB: as is already the case at this school, any physical fighting amongst older pupils would lead to children being sent home, and serious physical aggression involving younger pupils would usually lead to children being sent home**); procedures regarding investigations and the rights of pupils & parents to respond or appeal.

It remains the case that the Principal (or Board) would consider suspension (or expulsion, in accordance with Rule 130 for National Schools) as a possible sanction for gross misbehaviour or repeated instances of serious misbehaviour only. Immediate suspension may apply in the circumstances outlined above (fighting, etc.) or where the Principal has a serious safety concern.

Parents may appeal suspensions (over 20 days in any one school year) and expulsions to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills under Section 29 of the Education Act and Section 26 of the Education (Welfare) Act. (Details are available from the school.) See also [www.newb.ie](http://www.newb.ie), the website of the National Educational Welfare Board.

**E Written Records** The staff will keep a written record of all instances of serious misbehaviour, as well as a record of improvements in the behaviour of children who cause disruption.

Teachers may also use **behaviour charts** in, for example, the child's homework copy to record misbehaviour and improvements. Parents are asked to read and discuss such charts with the child.

# **Code of Behaviour - Anti-Bullying Policy**

The issue of bullying may be understood within the general context of School Discipline or a school's Code of Behaviour. However, the incidence and nature of bullying is such that, since 1993, the Department of Education and Science has recommended that additional measures are required in order to deal specifically with the problem.

This section of the document assists pupils, parents and staff in understanding the additional measures undertaken in this school to prevent and deal with bullying behaviour.

## **1. Increasing awareness of bullying - Definition, Types, Signs**

**Definition of Bullying** Bullying is *repeated* aggression, verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against others. Isolated incidents of aggressive behaviour, dealt with under the Code of Behaviour, would not be described as bullying. However, when the behaviour is systematic and ongoing it is bullying.

**Types of Bullying** Pupil Behaviour: Physical Aggression, Damage to Property, Extortion, Intimidation, Abusive Telephone Calls/Text Messages/E-mails, Isolation, Name Calling, Slagging, Threats (to family members, others) Staff Behaviour: Humiliation, Sarcasm, Demeaning Language, Gestures or expressions which may be threatening/intimidating.

**Indications of Bullying/Behaviour – Signs and Symptoms** 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; 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.

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

## **2. Reporting and recording bullying behaviour**

- It should be made clear that children reporting incidents of bullying are acting responsibly, as per the 'Stay Safe' anti-bullying lessons.
- If parents have concerns about their child being bullied they should inform the class teacher.
- The teacher will make an initial investigation. If the teacher suspects that bullying may have occurred the Principal or Assistant Principal will be informed.
- Parents of those involved will be notified and given an opportunity to discuss the matter with the teacher/principal/assistant principal.
- A written record will be kept of reports of bullying, how the matter was handled and the outcome.

## **3. Investigating and Dealing with Bullying Behaviour**

When teachers investigate and deal with possible bullying incidents a calm, problem-solving approach should be taken - thus setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict (in a non-aggressive manner.) When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour teachers should seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why.

All interviews should be conducted with sensitivity, and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned. An attempt should be made to get both sides of the story. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this regard.

Incidents may best be investigated outside the classroom situation, to avoid the public humiliation of the victim or the pupil engaged in bullying.

In cases where it has been determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, teachers will meet with the parents of the parties involved, as appropriate. They will explain the actions being taken and the reasons for them, referring parents to the school's Code of Behaviour. They will discuss ways in which parents can reinforce or support the actions taken by the school.

Teachers may also arrange separate follow-up meetings with the parties involved with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date, if they are ready and agreeable. This can have a therapeutic effect.

The child who has been subjected to bullying *and* the child who has engaged in bullying, may also need counselling and opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem. They may need opportunities to develop their friendship and social skills. Revisiting the programmes and lessons outlined earlier in this document can be of use in this regard. If requested, the school can provide information to parents on local support services.

**4. Adult Bullying** In the case of adult bullying, the school will adopt the procedures detailed in section C-C2 of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation publication 'Working Together: Procedures and Policies for Positive Staff Relations.'

### **The Code of Behaviour and Special Educational Needs**

Where children have special educational needs a multi-disciplinary approach (involving teachers, special needs assistants, parents, health professionals, others) may be taken to establish an individualised programme that will enable the child to participate in and contribute to a safe, effective, positive and respectful school environment.

The Board of Management has authorised the staff to use *Nonviolent Crisis Intervention* strategies, including - as measures of last resort - physical techniques, to contain or restrain a pupil who poses a danger to themselves or others. (Parents will be contacted in such instances.) Ref: Staff training course, August 2010; the course was funded by the *Special Education Support Service* and delivered by the *Crisis Prevention Institute*.

### **The Code of Behaviour and School Buses**

Our Code of Behaviour applies to all school activities (trips, sports events, etc..) including travel to and from locations.

The *Bus Éireann* Code of Behaviour applies to all journeys to and from school under the School Transport Scheme. (Copies of the *Bus Éireann* Code are distributed along with the children's tickets.)

Unsafe and inappropriate behaviour is not tolerated on school buses and may result in permission to travel being withdrawn (temporarily or, in more serious instances, permanently.) Families should speak with their child's bus driver as difficulties arise. If a serious matter remains unresolved families should contact the *Bus Éireann* Area Inspector, School Transport Office, Bus Éireann, Waterford.

### **Shared Responsibility**

It is hoped that staff, pupils and parents will share a sense of responsibility for implementing this Code. Parents can cooperate with the staff by:

- • Making themselves familiar with this Code of Behaviour and other school policies
- • Showing interest in the measures outlined in this document (such as their child's class charter, positive notes and comments s/he may take home, behaviour related worksheets s/he may take home, etc.)
- • Communicating to the school issues which may be affecting a child's behaviour
- • Supporting the implementation of the practices and procedures outlined in this document