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**Code of Behaviour**

**Introduction:**

This Code of Behaviour has been drawn up in accordance with the “Developing a Code of Behaviour – Guidelines for Schools”, issued by the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB). It aims to ensure a whole school approach to behaviour in our school and to ensure that the individuality of each pupil is respected, while acknowledging the right of each pupil to education in a relatively disruption free and safe environment.

Children enrolled in Merlin Woods Primary School are required to co-operate with and support the School Code of Behaviour as well as all other policies on curriculum, organisation and management. The Board of Management places Parents/ Guardians responsible for ensuring that their child co-operates with these policies in an age-appropriate way. In signing the enrolment form parent(s)/guardian(s) are agreeing to the terms of the school Code of Behaviour while also agreeing to co-operate with and support the school in implementing this Code of Behaviour, both in its general application and in its application to your child. This policy applies to all pupils both in school and away from the school on events.

Parents are encouraged to contact the main office if they would like to meet with the class teacher about their child’s behaviour. In addition, the principal, deputy principal and behaviour co-ordinator are available to support the pupil, parents and staff in relation to the Code of Behaviour in Merlin Woods Primary School.

This policy complements and works in conjunction with our other school policies, with particular links to our Anti-Bullying Policy, Child Safeguarding Statement and our Personal Electronic Device Policy. Our school prohibits the use by students of personal mobile/smart phones, smart watches and other personal devices, while on school premises or involved in school activities such as tours, trips or extra-curricular activities. This is in order to ensure a safe environment and to lessen intrusions on and distractions to children’s learning.

## Aims

The following aims of the Code of Behaviour for Merlin Woods Primary School articulate our vision for positive relationships and behaviour in our school:

* To allow for the smooth and harmonious running of the school.
* To promote the safety and happiness of all children and staff in the school.
* To facilitate the development and education of all the children.
* To promote good behaviour and self-discipline among the children.
* To promote equality and fairness among all.
* To enhance the learning environment of the school by promoting a sense of mutual respect among all members of the school community.
* To increase the co-operation between home and school.
* To ensure consistency in the application of rules and sanctions.
* To outline the structure of fair and agreed sanctions that will be available to teachers in response to negative behaviour.

## Whole school Approach to Promoting Positive Behaviour:

This Code of Behaviour will provide a solid foundation for a whole-school approach to promoting good behaviour and for responding to unacceptable behaviour. The emphasis is on the promotion of good behaviour and positive relationships with high levels of self -awareness.

**“Be Respectful, Be Responsible, Be Kind” is central to our Code of Behaviour in Merlin Woods Primary School. Children will also learn about “Kind Hands, Kind Heart, Kind Feet” as they progress from Junior Infants to Sixth Class.**

All staff in Merlin Woods Primary School concentrate on setting consistent behaviour standards and expectations through policy, practice and modelling. As a team we explicitly teach behaviours which will enable the child to become a successful learner. Classroom management and effective teaching are of a very high standard in the school and all staff are very dedicated to setting consistent positive behaviour standards.

Every member of the school community has a role to play in the implementation of this Code of Behaviour. Emphasis is on a holistic, preventative approach which involves all partners (Board of Management, Staff, Parents and Pupils) in the school community in understanding, drafting and implementing the school’s Code of Behaviour. Restorative Practice methods are used in our school to promote good behaviour and restore relationships. Through Restorative Practise children discuss incidents and feelings, the impact on themselves and others, and how to restore the relationship and move forward. Children are encouraged to deal with conflicts, arguments and errors in judgement in a way that improves their self-awareness and behaviour into the future. **See appendix 1 for Restorative Practice questions we use to deal with conflicts.**

The School’s SPHE Curriculum is used to support the Code of Behaviour. It aims to help our children develop communication skills, appropriate ways of interacting and behaving and conflict resolution skills. It also aims to foster self-esteem and to help children accommodate differences and develop citizenship.

In our school, we use a range of whole-school approaches to promote positive behaviour. This includes ***Dina School, The Incredible Years, Friends for Life, Mind Up, Circle Time, Restorative Practice, Whole \School Raffle Ticket Reward System, Weekly Assemblies, Zones of Regulation, Continuum of Support and The Student Council.* Our school assemblies on Friday have a focus on promoting positive behaviour in the school. We celebrate positive behaviour week every year where children experience fun opportunities to engage in positive behaviour.**

The in-school leadership team along with the Droichead trained members (Droichead is the national programme for mentoring newly qualified teachers) ensure that the whole school approaches above are carried out and new teachers to our school are supported in implementing them. Our principal arranges training for teachers in the Incredible Years Programme and all staff engage in continuing their professional development especially in behaviour programmes.

**Code of Behaviour and Pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) / Additional Educational Needs (AEN)**

It is recognised that some misbehaviour can arise from children with additional needs. The following preventative measures have been developed to provide a more positive approach including the explicit teaching of relevant skills for students that are more vulnerable to behaviour problems. Depending on the child’s level of understanding they may or may not follow the ladder of intervention for behaviour in full that is used in the school. **See appendix 2 for ladder of intervention.**

**SEN/AEN Provision: Special Educational Needs & Additional Educational Needs**

* Identification of pupils with SEN involves reviewing existing information on pupils needs using school-based data and information from parents and professional outside agencies. Identifying pupils with AEN is a whole school approach and we match their needs to the appropriate level on the Continuum of Support. The Continuum of Support is a framework set out by the Department of Education to assist schools in identifying and responding to their student’s needs.
* The Continuum of Support documents (targets) are set in October, reviewed in February and June.
* Planning for AEN includes identifying the methodologies that best suit the pupil whether it’s in class interventions, withdrawal in a small group setting or withdrawal 1:1.
* Class teachers and SET teachers collaborate on the setting of targets for progression in their development and learning, they chose interventions carefully to suit the needs of the child. Parents and pupils are active participants in this process.
* Staff make changes to the environment where necessary (visual, hearing, sensory, physical)
* All teachers and/or SNAs associated with the child will endeavour to assist him/her with adhering to the code. This team could include: the class teacher, special education teacher, SNA, principal etc.
* Children from our Clever Acorns and Wise Oaks classroom maybe integrated into the mainstream class to the level appropriate to each child.

## A Whole School Approach:

**The Role of the Principal:**

Positive and supportive leadership from the principal promotes successful implementation of the Code of Behaviour across the school community. The principal will:

* Promote a positive environment in the school.
* Ensure that the Code of Behaviour is implemented in a fair and consistent manner.
* Arrange planning meetings for staff, gathers and reviews feedback at meetings.
* Identifies areas for continued professional development and delegates arrangements of these events such as paired teacher observations within the school.
* Provides guidance for staff in relating to the Code of Behaviour.
* The principal continues to work on the standards set out in DES Inspectorate Looking at Our Schools 2022.

**The Role of the Board of Management (BOM):**

The Board of Management and school community will ensure that systems are in place to acknowledge behaviour, progress and effort. The Board of Management has particular responsibility for the ethos of the school as well as having overall responsibility for school policies. The Board should play an active part in exploring the kinds of relationships and behaviours that reflect the school’s ethos and responsibilities. The BOM provides input and feedback on the Code of Behaviour and supports the principal and staff on the implementation of the code. The BOM hears appeals by parent(s) /guardian(s) against the decision of the principal to suspend or expel a student.

**The Role of Staff Members**

All staff members in Merlin Woods Primary School use practical strategies to encourage and promote positive behaviour in the classroom. Strategies such as:

* Be alert to what is going on in the classroom at all times.
* Praise and reinforce positive behaviour using appropriate language e.g., by saying “I like the way you are/did/ I like the way you said…”. Staff are trained on using positive language as per the incredible years programme. **See appendix 3 for positive language we use in our school.**
* Use appropriate reward systems such as Star Charts, allocate extra Golden Time, Weekly certificates for Good Behaviour, intercom announcements, kindness awards, etc…
* We acknowledge the importance of intrinsic rewards with the children rather than the over-use of extrinsic.
* Establish and clearly communicate expectations for behaviour, class routines and boundaries.
* Explain the connection between a child’s behaviour and its consequences e.g., removal from disruption if distracting others to appropriate time-out space.
* Use strategies to help children maintain these routines and boundaries e.g., using prompt card systems for keeping children on task, use of visual time-tables.
* Keep children actively involved in their learning, vary teaching methodologies e.g., mixture of whole class collaboration, group work, pair work and individual work.
* Ensure smooth transition between subjects and classrooms.
* Short effective classroom rules. Examples of classroom rules:
  + Show Me Five, kind hands, kind feet, kind heart.
  + Be polite, say excuse me and thank you.
  + Stop, Look, Listen.
  + Show kindness and respect, share, help others, take turns.
  + Put up your hand to have a turn to speak.
  + Keep your place tidy, respect school property.
  + Be safe, walk while indoors.

**See appendix 4 for what “Be Respectful, Be Responsible, Be Kind looks like in Merlin Woods Primary School.**

Practical strategies for staff to encourage and promote positive behaviour outside of the classroom:

* Staff will establish and maintain consistency in terms of expectations for behaviour, routines and boundaries for children in the yard or on excursions outside the school.
* Staff will enforce rules promptly, consistently and equitably.
* Children walk on the right-hand side of the corridor and stairs.
* Children will play gently with regard to the safety of everyone in the yard.
* Sanctions: Children are removed to a time-out space if behaviour is deemed to be inappropriate or unsafe. Examples include: Constantly disturbing the class and making it difficult for the rest of the class to learn, throwing books in the room.
* Physical fighting of any sort is considered a gross misbehaviour and those involved will be asked to meet with the principal to discuss the incident. **See Appendix 5 for a sample list of misbehaviours.** Please note this list is not exhaustive.

Factors that may be taken into consideration when labelling it a minor, serious or gross behaviour include:

* The type of behaviour that occurred and other children’s involvement
* Is the child’s behaviour repeated?
* Have interventions taken place?
* Do they need the positive behaviours to be reinforced and explicitly taught again?
* Is the misbehaviour a threat to the teaching and learning of the class and to the safety of others?
* Staff will also take into consideration any other factors that may be relevant.

**Role of the Pupils / Children:**

Children are more likely to support a code of behaviour when they have helped to develop it. Children will set the class rules together, learn about taking responsibility for their actions and for the well-being of others and their teachers. Every child must have a commitment to accept the code of behaviour and to fulfil the expectations set out in the code. Children will be taught about the schools expectations and how to have “kind hands, kind heart, kind feet”. This will be repeated and reinforced as they move up through the school.

**The Student Council:**

The Student Council Pupil voice is very important in Merlin Woods Primary School. We endeavour to create a climate of openness, consultation and participation, where pupil’s views are sought, listened to and respected. Two representatives are elected by each class from 3rd to 6th. Elected children are members of the Student Council. The council meet regularly to discuss relevant issues and contribute their feedback on policies and practices in the school. They share their thoughts on how to improve behaviour throughout the school and what rewards they might like to introduce to promote positive behaviour.

## The Role of Parents/Guardians:

Parental involvement is a key element to the successful implementation of a school’s Code of Behaviour. Merlin Woods Primary School supports and encourages the formation of a Parents Association /Committee as a representative group for parents.

Parents are encouraged to support children to have a sense of respect for themselves and to:

* Ensure that children attend school regularly and punctually.
* Be interested in, support and encourage their children’s school work.
* Be familiar with the Code of Behaviour and support its implementation.
* Co-operate with teachers in instances where their child’s behaviour is causing difficulties for others.

# Attendance Procedures:

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| --- | --- |
|  | Send an email to the office (info@merlinwoods.ie) regarding your child’s absence. Dates and reasons for absence is required.  ***or***  Send a note to the child’s class teacher stating reason for absence and dates. |
|  | If the child is absent longer than three days, please communicate to the school the reason for absence.  When the child eventually returns the written note of explanation is also required. |
|  | If a child has a significant absence due to illness, the school will require a doctor’s note. |
|  | Parent must sign out the child if their child is leaving school early. |

|  |  |
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| **Procedures for notifying parents and NEWB (National Welfare Board)** | |
| 1 | An automatic text reminder is sent to the parent(s) via databiz on the following days of absence: 10, 15, 18 and 20 days. |
| 2 | On 15 days of absence the attendance co-ordinator will meet with the child’s class teacher. |
| 3 | On 20 days of absence the attendance co-ordinator will arrange a phone call/meeting with the parent(s) of the child |
| 4 | On 20 days of absence the child will be referred to National Educational Welfare Board. |
| 5 | Meetings with the NEWB Education Officer and School Principal |

For target children phone calls are made home on the 1st day of an unexplained absence. The school is required under the obligations of the Education Welfare Act 2000 to record and report children’s absences to the National Education Welfare Board. The school is obliged to report to the NEWB when a student has reached 20 days absence cumulatively.

Strategies used by the school to promote good attendance include:

* + Overall positive environment and very inclusive ethos in the school.
  + Encouraging children to speak about something they enjoyed at school.
  + Attendance awards & prizes.
  + Holistic approach in providing extra opportunities to the children. For example: Arts Week, Active Schools Week, Music lessons, Sports Teams, extra cross curricular activities.
  + Discuss friendships and the importance of friends at school.
  + Focus on punctuality.

## Parents are reminded that the staff of the school do not accept responsibility for pupils before official opening time of 8.40 a.m. or after the official Infants closing time of 1.20p.m., or 2.20 pm from 1st Class upwards.

**Acceptance of Code**

When enrolling a child as a student in Merlin Woods Primary School, the Principal will provide the parents with a copy of the school’s Code of Behaviour. Parents are informed that by enrolling in our school they are agreeing to abide by our code of behaviour. As stated in the school’s Admissions policy, as a condition of registering the child, the principal will require his / her parents to confirm in writing:

1. The Code of Behaviour is acceptable to them.

2. They shall make all reasonable efforts to ensure that their child complies with the code.

The child will also be required to confirm in writing that he/she complies with the code if it is age appropriate to do so.

**Standards of Behaviour:**

All staff in Merlin Woods Primary School concentrate on setting consistent behaviour standards and expectations through policy, practice and modelling. **See Appendix 6 for a list of consistent behaviour standards we use during yard time.**

“Be Respectful, Be Responsible, Be Kind”

**Expectations of Pupils:**

**The school expects the pupil to:**

* Attend school regularly and on time
* Respect all the school property
* Wear the school uniform
* Show respect for yourself and others
* Avoid fighting or hurting others
* Avoid bad language
* Keep the school tidy and litter free
* Participate in school activities by listening to the teacher’s instructions

**Teachers expect the pupils will:**

* Accept his/her responsibility to teach and impose consequences on those who behave inappropriately
* Show him/her courtesy and respect
* Come to school and have the necessary materials
* Complete all homework carefully
* Listen when others are talking
* Participate in class activities
* Follow the school expectations and class rules

**Expectations of Pupils and Parents:**

**Children expect the school will be:**

* Safe for them
* A happy place
* A place to learn
* A place of inclusion and respect
* A place where school and teachers should always be fair
* Kept tidy and litter free
* Warm

**Parents expect the school will provide:**

* A safe and happy environment for their child
* Educational development as they progress through the curriculum each year
* Healthy friendships and a secure learning environment
* Awareness to children about global citizenship and how to be a green school
* Inclusion to all learners
* Support to all medical needs
* Fairness and consistency in the way children are dealt with
* Respect for different cultural and religious background

**Strategies for Dealing with Unacceptable Misbehaviour:**

**Sanctions**

Every effort will be made by all members of staff to adopt a positive approach and to encourage good behaviour among pupils in the school. When this fails, a series of interventions along the Ladder of Intervention will be implemented. (See Ladder of Intervention in appendix 2) The intervention checks are a step-by-step procedure for dealing with pupils who don’t follow school rules. They are clearly listed on a wall chart in each room and are explicitly taught and regularly discussed. Pupils know precisely how they operate.

Every day is a fresh start (except for repetitive poor behaviour where a child may start on Step 2). Pupils know that when they come to school in the morning that it is they who choose how their day will go. If unwise behaviour leads to a step on the ladder, it is important that pupils know what stage they are on as they have a choice to make going forward. The choice is their responsibility and they are responsible for their behaviour. The aim of these intervention steps is to encourage the children to become aware of and to monitor their own behaviour.

The following is a guide to matching the misbehaviour with the appropriate intervention step: **See Appendix 2 for details.**

1. Minor Misbehaviour *(Follow Steps 1 – 3)*

*2.* Serious Misbehaviour *(Follow Steps 4 – 6)*

*3.* Gross Misbehaviour *(Follow Steps 7 – 9)*

Pupils will not be deprived of engagement in a Curricular Area, except on the grounds of Health and Safety.

**Behaviour Plan:**

For pupils with re-occurring behavioural difficulties a behavioural plan is drawn up using the NEPS Continuum of Support. The plan will assist teachers and the child to find alternative desirable behaviours. This NEPS Continuum of Support is drawn up with parents, pupils, class teachers, special education teachers and school psychologist (if appropriate).

Where a child’s behaviour is particularly challenging the school and parents together may engage the support of local support services such as NEPS, HSE, NCSE agencies etc.

The purpose of the intervention steps on the ladder is to promote positive behaviour and discourage misbehaviour. Sanctions will be applied according to the gravity of the misbehaviour, with due regard to age and emotional development. **Appendix 5 outlines examples of unacceptable behaviour.**

## Suspension/Expulsion

## Suspension

Suspension will be in accordance with the Rules for National Schools and the Education Welfare Act 2000. Before serious sanctions such as suspension or expulsion are used, the normal channels of communication between school and parents will be utilised. For gross misbehaviour or repeated instances of serious misbehaviour suspension may be considered. Parents concerned will be invited to come to the school to discuss their child’s case. Aggressive, threatening or violent behaviour towards a teacher or pupil, will be regarded as serious or gross misbehaviour.

Where there are repeated instances of serious or gross misbehaviour, 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/or 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.

They will look at the following factors before suspending a student:

1. The nature and seriousness of the behaviour: Has the behaviour escalated even though interventions have been tried?
2. The context of the behaviour: Are there any factors associated with the behaviour e.g., particular home circumstances or additional educational needs?
3. The impact of the behaviour: What is the impact of the behaviour on the teaching and learning of the class?
4. The interventions tried to date: What interventions have been tried and for how long have they been running?
5. The possible impact of suspension: Will suspension help the student to change the inappropriate behaviour?

See appendix 8 for more factors to consider before suspending a student.

In the case of gross misbehaviour, where it is necessary to ensure that order and discipline are maintained and to secure the health and safety of pupils and staff, the Board of Management may authorise the Chairperson or Principal to sanction an immediate suspension for a period not exceeding three school days, pending a discussion of the matter with the parents.

The principal may determine whether an internal or external suspension is warranted.

**Internal Suspension:**

An internal suspension is where the child is sent to another class for the day. They will have no interaction with their peers and they will be given work for the day. A letter will be given to the parent after meeting with the behaviour co-ordinator and/principal. They will have a right to reply following the letter of suspension. An internal suspension will be used if the principal and board of management deem it to be more effective on the child than an external suspension.

**Procedures in Respect of Suspension:**

1. Informing the students and parents: At the earliest time the principal will make contact with the child’s parents/guardians regarding the difficulties they are facing with the child and the suspension that could follow.
2. The principal invites the parent to a meeting regarding the child.
3. Opportunity to Respond: Parents and child have the opportunity to respond before the decision is formally made and before a suspension is imposed.
4. If the suspension is immediate (e.g., in the interest of health & safety and constantly disturbing the rest of the class from the teaching and learning) an investigation will be carried out to establish the right to suspend immediately.
5. Upon returning to the school a behaviour plan will be put in place using the NEPS Continuum of Support (if they have not one already) and the parent will be consulted in its process.

**Implementation of Suspension:**

Should a suspension be imposed, the principal will notify the parents and the student in writing of the decision to suspend. The letter will outline the notice of suspension, date, length of suspension and reason for suspension.

**Appeals:**

The Board of Management should offer an opportunity to appeal a principal’s decision to suspend a student. In the case of decisions to suspend made by the Board of Management an appeals process may be provided by the Patron. All appeals will be heard as soon as possible but if it’s a case where the suspension has already been served it may be the case that the suspension will be removed from the students file or record.

## Removal of Suspension (Reinstatement)

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.

**Expulsion:**

A student is expelled from a school when the Board of Management makes a decision to permanently exclude him/her from school, having complied with provisions of section 24 of the Education Welfare Act 2000 and NEWB Developing Code of Behaviour Guidelines for Schools. The Board of Management in Merlin Woods Primary School has the authority to expel a student. Expulsion may be considered in an extreme case, in accordance with the Rule for National Schools and the Education Welfare Act 2000. Before suspending or expelling a pupil, the Board shall notify the Local Welfare Education Officer in writing in accordance with Section 24 of the Education Welfare Act.

**Record Keeping:**

In situations which require active intervention to assist children to improve their behaviour the class teacher will record observations. Teachers will use the NEPS Continuum of Support document for recording various levels of support. Link:

[https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-](https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/neps_special_needs_resource_pack.pdf) [Service-NEPS-/neps\_special\_needs\_resource\_pack.pdf](https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/neps_special_needs_resource_pack.pdf)

Where there is any allegation of bullying this will be recorded on the Bullying Incident report form and kept in the child’s file every year. All such records will be kept on file and stored securely in compliance with GDPR.

**Who to contact on behaviour matters:**

* Children report incidents in the yard to the teachers on yard duty.
* Incidences in the classroom to be reported to the class teachers.
* Parents wising to raise any matter relating to behaviour are to contact the school secretary to arrange an appointment with the class teacher.
* Teachers will keep written records of incidences of misbehaviour under the students file in the office. These records are dated and actions taken are noted. See appendix 7. These records are stored securely.
* Incidences of misbehaviour should be noted, the action taken and the people (parents, principal, other agencies) informed.
* SET’s should be informed if a child needs to be on their workload and supported with a behaviour plan. The support teacher works in conjunction with the class teacher.

We ask that all parents read over the policy carefully with their child each September.

**Reviewed and ratified**

This updated Code of Behaviour Policy was reviewed by staff, parents and student representatives.

It was ratified by the Board of Management on 23rd May 2023.