

**Code of Behaviour**

**Introduction**

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, & management. The Board of Management places Parents/ Guardians responsible for ensuring that their child co-operates with said policies in an age-appropriate way. In signing the enrolment form you are agreeing to the terms of the school Code of Behaviour and you are undertaking 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 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.

**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 sound foundation for a whole-school approach to promoting good behaviour and for responding to unacceptable behaviour based on a shared understanding of what shapes the behaviour of children and positive strategies for affirming and promoting good behaviour.

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.

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, MindUp and Restorative Practice.

**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 climate in the school.
* Ensure that the Code of Behaviour is implemented in a fair and consistent manner.

**Staff**

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

* Be alert to what is going on in the classroom at all times
* Praise and reinforce positive behaviour e.g. by saying “I like the way you are/did/said …”, use appropriate reward systems such as star charts, allocate extra Golden Time, Weekly certificates for Good Behaviour, intercom announcements, kindness awards, etc.
* 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
* Enforce classroom rules promptly, consistently and equitably

Example of classroom rules:

* + Show Me Five
  + Be polite, say excuse me and thank you
  + Show kindness and respect, share, help others, take turns
  + Listen and put up your hand to talk out and wait to be asked by teacher
  + Keep your place tidy, respect school property
  + Be safe, walk while indoors

A warm and accepting classroom climate is one where children feel cared about and are encouraged to care about each other.

Practical strategies for staff to encourage and promote positive behaviour in the yard/toilet area:

* Staff will establish and maintain consistency in terms of expectations for behaviour, routines and boundaries for children in the yard or other areas
* Staff will enforce rules promptly, consistently and equitably
* Children line up and walk to and from the yard
* Children will play gently with regard to the safely of everyone in the yard.
* Sanctions: Children are removed to time-out space if behaviour is deemed to be unsafe or inappropriate.

**Parental involvement:**

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. This association/ committee will be consulted and involved in reviewing the school’s Code of Behaviour. The Code of Behaviour will be clearly communicated to all parents.

As part of the preventative nature of the school’s approach to positive behaviour, parents are informed at the earliest opportunity where their child’s behaviour is deemed to be unsafe and inappropriate.

Parents are encouraged to support children to have a sense of respect for themselves and for property 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
* Communicate with the school in relation to any problems which may affect child’s progress/behaviour.

**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 1.20 p.m., or 2.20 pm from 1st Class upwards.**

The Board of Management and school community will ensure that systems are in place to acknowledge behaviour, progress and effort, through reward systems as outlined previously, under positive strategies for promoting positive behaviour in the school.

Most children behave appropriately, with the help of consistent and clear rules and routines in class and in school. Occasional minor misbehaviour will be attended to routinely and effectively through the skill of the classroom teacher.

Some children need more active intervention to help them to manage their behaviour. Without additional help, they may be at risk of failing, behaviourally, socially and educationally. Additional inputs or interventions might include (in no set order):

* Referral to another teacher or adult who can work with the child
* Setting targets for behaviour and monitoring them with the child in a supportive way
* Behaviour contracts
* Exit strategy for other pupils in the room

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 sanctions and other strategies 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. These may include (not necessarily in this order):

* Quiet word
* Special mention
* Reminder of school or class rules
* Reasoning with pupil
* Verbal reprimand including advice on how to improve
* Time Out/ Thinking Chair
* Temporary separation from peers within class and/or temporary removal to another class, eg Thinking Chair
* Exit Strategy for class
* Loss of privileges
* Detention during break, eg child loses play time, seated at yard door
* Referral to Principal
* Communication with parents
* Principal communicating with parents
* Leave school early
* 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).

Pupils will not be deprived of engagement in a Curricular Area, except on the grounds of health/safety.

Suspension/Expulsion

Before serious sanctions such as detention, 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 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, 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. Suspension will be in accordance with the Rules for National Schools and the Education Welfare Act 2000.

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.

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.

**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. 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.

**School Rules:**

School rules are kept to a minimum and are devised within class with regard for the health, safety and welfare of all members of the school community. If a school is to function efficiently, it is necessary that rules and regulations are clearly stated and enforced consistently and fairly.

**PLEASE NOTE THE USE OF OUR ANTIBULLYING PROCEDURES AND POLICY IN TANDEM WITH THIS CODE OF BEHABVIOUR.**

**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-Service-NEPS-/neps_special_needs_resource_pack.pdf>

Where incidences of misbehaviour occur in the school yard the misbehaviour will be recorded in a Yard Incident Report Book and stored in the Principal’s office. Where there is any allegation of bullying this will be recorded and kept in the Principal’s office. All such records will be kept on file and stored securely.

**Attendance:**

**Procedure for notification of a child’s absence from school:**

The parent shall ensure their child will attend a recognised school on each school day. Where a child is absent from the school, the parent of the child is required under the Education Act 2000, to notify the child’s teacher, by means of a signed and dated written note detailing (a) **the dates absent** and (b) **the reasons for the child’s absence**. Standard Absence Notes, available to parents from the school, or homework diary pull-out templates, or plain paper can be used for these notes. These notes should be given to the child’s class teacher, on the day the child returns to school. In the interim where the absence exceeds 3 school days, the parent should communicate to the teacher, the reason for the child’s 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.

Pupils must also be signed out by a parent if the child is leaving the school early.

Holidays must be organised in accordance with regular school holidays and not during term.

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:

* Attendance awards & prizes
* Focus on punctuality
* Phonecalls home on the 3rd day of an unexplained absence
* Phonecalls home on the 1st day of an unexplained absence for target children
* Meetings with the class teacher regarding attendance
* Meetings with the teacher with responsibility for attendance
* Letters home after 10 days of absence
* Letters home after 15 days of absence
* Meetings with the NEWB Education Officer and School Principal

This Code of Behaviour was ratified by the Board of Management on 15th November 2016. It is given to parents along with their enrolment form when enrolling a child, and are informed that by enrolling in our school that they are agreeing to abide by our Code of Behaviour.