

St. Colman's National School



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Code of Behaviour

Good behaviour is an essential condition for teaching and learning to take place and is an important outcome of education. Like all complex organisations a school requires generally accepted codes of conduct and rules of procedures by which the school community abides. The purpose of this Code of Behaviour is the creation of self-discipline, positive attitudes, tolerance, co-operation and respect between pupils and all the school community. It is reliant on a high sense of co-operation among teachers, ancillary staff, pupils, parents, Parent's Council and the Board of Management.

It is the school's responsibility to ensure an orderly community. St. Colman's N.S. places great emphasis on the need to give children every opportunity to develop patterns of good behaviour while ensuring that the individuality of each child is accommodated. The school acknowledges the right of each child to an education in a disruptive free and safe environment. This involves a Code of Behaviour, which is built around mutual respect, praise & rewards, and the development of a sound relationship between teachers and pupils.

Aims:

The Code of Behaviour has three main aims:

- a) The efficient operation of the school and the structuring of in-class discipline so that there exists an efficient learning environment.
- b) The maintenance of good order throughout the school and respect for the school environment.
- c) The development of good behaviour based on consideration, respect and tolerance of others.

In order for these aims to be achieved, the school believes that it is important for the happiness and smooth running of our school, that

- we foster positive caring attitudes to one another and the environment.
- we acknowledge that each pupil's talents will be valued, celebrated and enjoyed
- we support, through help and encouragement, the self-esteem of all
- teachers and pupils respond in a polite, thoughtful manner to one another.

We realise the importance to children of approval by their peers; to listen with care to the views of one another and to value them. On occasions when a wrongdoing or injury has been committed each child is encouraged to reflect on his/her actions and make an attempt to restore positive relationships.

Pupils should make every effort to fulfill their responsibilities with regard to:

- (1) punctuality
- (2) completing tasks to the best of their ability
- (3) taking responsibility for the school environment and its contents.
- (4) co-operating with other school members.

In St. Colman's N.S. we believe that emphasising positive behaviour in school tends to marginalise bad behaviour and decreases the number of misdemeanours.

A well managed, orderly environment in school will encourage children to react in a positive, caring way. For this to happen, a set of rules have been created to enable teaching and learning. These have been agreed, by the staff, parents and management. The rules will be taught to each class. However, rules, in themselves, do not encourage good behaviour. The two ways this is done is through praise and rewards.

Praise:

As a rule teachers should try to give about twice as much praise as correction. Praise can be given in a formal and informal way, in public or private for the keeping of good standards of behaviour as well as particular achievement. Praise can be given in both oral and written form. The communication of such praise between home and school is very important and central to our Code of Behaviour. This is done through the use of parent/teacher meetings, inviting parents into school to share the good news with them and through school reports.

Incentives:

The use of incentives is also very effective and creates a positive atmosphere in the classroom and school. Among those that can be used are:

- comments or reward stamp on children's work
- public praise in front of peers
- certificates to acknowledge effort made in different areas e.g wearing uniform, good behavior, attendance.
- regular class gatherings where public mention and note is made of good examples, both of work and good behaviour
- reward certificates, stickers and homework passes
- recording in school reports
- sharing achievements with parents
- being given greater responsibility in school
- specific privileges in use of school facilities or equipment
- Golden Time
- use of Circle Time
- use of Assembly

Privilege (Golden) Time

After the class rules have been developed, explained and are understood by each child it is then important to acknowledge and reward positive behaviour which results from obeying these rules. This may be done by giving privilege or bonus time with each class having a privilege or golden time of up to half an hour each week.

During the week a child may lose five minutes or more of Golden time-in class but his/her time can be earned back with good behaviour.

Class Rules:

- (1) Be on time for class
- (2) Have all necessary books and work completed
- (3) Respect school and other children's property
- (4) Sit calmly and allow other children to work
- (5) Respect other children's safety

- (6) Always use good manners and respect other children's work
- (7) Homework must be done neatly and on time & signed by parents
- (8) Uniform must be worn

Each class must understand the reasons for the rules and be given a forum to discuss them and how they can be adhered to in a positive way. Class discussion or the use of Circle time is crucial to this taking place. It is from this formal dialogue that children learn the concept of good behaviour which will have a direct bearing on their ability to adhere to the code.

Out of Class Rules:

- Pupils are expected to behave in a manner which ensures their safety and that of others.
- On entering or leaving the school the children are expected to line up in an orderly fashion and walk at all times with consideration of other children and adults.
- Any instructions given by supervisors are to be obeyed.
- After break all children are to walk in a calm and orderly fashion back to their classrooms.

Consistency:

It is important that there is a consistent policy for dealing with misdemeanours throughout the whole school. A child's behaviour is not just the responsibility of his/her class teacher but of the whole school. All rules should be encouraged and all misbehaviour dealt with in an even-handed way. To foster a positive atmosphere coupled with a consistent approach to children's behaviour in the school the Restorative Justice System will be adopted and implemented. It is central to our code that the age, maturity and social background of each child must be taken into account in respect to our expectations of their ability to have good behaviour. This has to be taken into account when we come to the area of sanctions and what is acceptable and unacceptable.

Unacceptable Behaviour:

Behaviour such as substance misuse, violence, bullying, vandalism or rudeness to adults is not acceptable in St. Colman's N.S. All occurrences of this type of behaviour will be noted, including the name of the victim. The Restorative Justice approach will be used and only if a pupil refuses to engage with this process or the approach is deemed to be ineffective will the Sanction strategy set out in this document be followed.

At St. Colman's National School we are deliberate in our relationship building and will not leave it to chance. In order to further develop these relationships we will use our assemblies to help develop emotional literacy and understanding focusing on

- Responsibility for the impact of our behaviour on others
- Accountability
- Thoughtfulness and Reflection
- Kindness and Compassion
- Honesty and Trustworthiness
- Reliability
- Integrity
- Respectful and caring behaviour

In the event of wrongdoing we will

1. First seek to understand – see the world from different perspectives
2. Focus on the harm done – not the rule broken
3. Include those harmed in fair problem solving
4. Work on making things right rather than punishment

To this end we will engage in the process of Restorative Practice which emphasises restoring relationships rather than punishing wrongdoers.

What is Restorative Practice?

Restorative Practice (RP) is based on the philosophy and principles of Restorative Justice (RJ).

- Viewing wrongdoing through a “rational” lens – understanding that harm has been done to people and relationships
- Understanding that when such harm is done, it creates obligations and liabilities
- Focusing on repairing the harm and making things right

How does it work?

This means that when things go wrong you

- Involve those responsible for and those affected by the behaviour in solving the problem
- Provide high levels of support for all parties, perpetrators or those affected
- Address the needs of all those involved in the harmful incident
- Provide strong messages and reminders about what behaviours are acceptable and unacceptable

The Restorative Continuum

The Restorative Chat

In the event of a minor issue there are 6 Stages. The teacher or adult will invite both parties to a Restorative Chat where they will

1. Engage– inviting the pupils directly involved into the dialogue
2. Reflect – Encouraging thoughtfulness and empathy
3. Understand – how people have been affected, the harm done
4. Acknowledge the harm done and possible apology
5. Agree – make a plan to fix things
6. Arrange for follow up – making sure the plan is working

The Small Group Conference

In the event of more serious incidents a small group conference may be required to which all pupils affected by the incident are invited.

The Seating plan is circular and the Conference is conducted by a facilitator – an adult familiar with the RP process but one who was not involved in the incident.

There are 5 Stages involved

1. Introduction – The facilitator invites all involved into a room and to take a seat before explaining the rules of engagement
2. Reflection - Encouraging thoughtfulness and empathy
3. Understanding – how people have been affected, the harm done
4. Acknowledgement of the harm done and possible apology
5. Agreement – make a plan to fix things and arranging a follow up
6. Wrapping up – the conference ends when everyone has been invited to contribute and is clear about what they have been asked to do

The Big Discipline Issues

The ‘No Blame Classroom Conference’ and the formal ‘Community Conference’ are natural extensions of the Small Group Conference.

No Blame Classroom Conference

The 'No Blame Classroom Conference' is usually facilitated by someone in the school with appropriate training and may be the first experience of RP for many pupils. It engages the whole class in a problem solving process that encourages reflection, mutual understanding and shared ownership of the problems that people are experiencing. The class, together with their teacher/teachers, plan a way forward aiming for a more positive learning environment. All parties, including the teachers, must be willing to examine their behaviour.

The Community Conference

As the behaviour becomes more serious, resulting in greater harm, the parents of those involved need to be brought in to provide support and assist the 'community' in deciding what consequences will provide the best learning experience and repair the harm. This very formal response is called the Community Conference.

A Community Conference is a face to face meeting of the community of people affected by an incident which causes serious harm within the school community. The conference provides a forum in which the wrongdoers, victims and their respective supporters seek ways to identify, repair and prevent future harm in the wake of serious incident.

Wrongdoers are given an opportunity to explain themselves and to understand the impact of their behaviour on other people, themselves and the school community. They are also invited to make things right by acknowledging the harm they have caused by way of apology or material reparation.

Victims have the opportunity to explain how they have been affected and to become involved in negotiating how to repair the harm.

A community Conference will only go ahead if the wrongdoer/s admits their involvement and everyone feels safe to participate in the process. Some reluctance is normal but refusal is rare.

Who attends the Conference?

- An experienced and trained conference facilitator
- The wrongdoer/s directly responsible for the incident
- The victim/s directly affected by the incident
- The bystanders/supporters/witnesses who were there when it happened and were affected or perhaps escalated the issue
- Other parties affected by the incident who, owing to their role or position have to manage the fallout.
- Supporters for the victims and wrongdoers – people who can provide a sense of safety for the victim and also assist in the exploration of the harm caused. They can also be a resource for reaching agreement and deciding on what needs to be done to repair the harm.

Preparations for the Conference

If the best process to try to resolve these issues is a conference, then it is crucial that the facilitator interviews all people involved before deciding the final participant list, to gain a clear understanding of who was involved and to inform each participant of the conference process. The facilitator will also prepare and send letters informing the families of dates and times and other conference information; prepare the conference documents; arrange a suitable room; liaise with the school administration; discuss transportation and childcare needs; organise refreshments.

There are two separate time elements; preparation and facilitation. Preparation time will depend on the circumstances and complexity of the issue but will normally be held within 1-5 days of the incident occurring. Facilitating the conference will take on average 1 ½ to 2 hours.

As in the Small Group Conference the Seating plan is circular and the Conference is conducted by a facilitator – an adult familiar with the RP process but one who was not involved in the incident.

Community Conference Agenda

1. Introduction
2. Telling the Story
3. Exploring the Harm
4. Acknowledgement and Apology
5. Agreement
6. Closing the Conference

At the outset each is asked to tell their story in the order

1. Wrongdoer/s
2. Victims
3. Victim's Supporters
4. Wrongdoer's Supporters

At the Midpoint of the conference the facilitator asks people for their ideas on how to right the wrongs. The facilitator checks with the group to gauge whether ideas and suggestions are fair and realistic. The conference agreement is then made. Closing the conference the facilitator will read the agreement reached for a final time and then invite people to make any final comments.

The 3 Golden Rules to guide our Restorative practice are
REFLECT, REPAIR & RECONNECT
In the end, it's the relationship which matters.

Children with Special Educational Needs and Children with Special Behavioural Needs:

Children with Special Educational Needs or with Special Behavioural Needs who are unable to understand or engage with the Code of Behaviour of the School will have an Individual Behavioural Plan drawn up for them in consultation with parents/guardians, staff and as far as is practicable the pupils themselves.

For pupils who do not engage with the Restorative Practice Approach we will revert to the sanctions which are outlined below.

Sanctions:

Where rules are broken there must be a system of appropriate sanctions which are applied consistently and fairly. Sanctions must be reasonable and factors affecting the child, such as age, ability to comprehend and background will be taken into account.

Behaviour strategies will be differentiated for children with special needs where deemed necessary on an individual basis.

Minor Infringement:

These can be dealt with by the teacher in charge.

They are:

- a verbal rebuke
- withholding praise
- completing tasks to the best of their ability
- loss of privilege

- give the child the space and time to reflect on his/her behaviour
- to allow the situation to be diffused and complete a reflection behaviour orally or in written form (see appendix)
- “time out” - having to sit apart from their group or not taking part in class
- in extreme cases, child may be sent into another area of the school, under supervision, in order to diffuse the situation

Unacceptable behaviour is dealt with in a more formal way:

- referral to the Principal
- the child is asked to tell their parents / guardians about the behaviour
- phone call or letter to parents if deemed necessary
- parents invited to school to discuss their child’s behaviour
- withdrawal of a major privilege
- suspension from the school for a set time
- in the event of the Board of Management suspending a pupil for 20 days or more permanently excluding a pupil, the parents/guardians may appeal the decision as per Primary Circular 22/2002
- Copies of the circular and the appeals application form are available from the school or from www.education.ie

Yard:

For the safety of all children, we ask them

- play and stay in designated areas
- stay in their yard unless they get permission to leave it from supervisory teacher
- refrain from dangerous play that causes harm to themselves or others
- to enter school building only when given permission from supervisory teacher
- not to sit on the steps or walls in and around the playground

Wet Days:

On wet days the children remain in their classrooms engaging in indoor activities such as playing suitable games or watching a DVD and supervised by teacher on duty assisted by SNA’s. Board games are to be distributed by assigned children as far as is practicable before the class teacher leaves the classroom. Children must not leave their seats or classroom without permission from supervisory teacher or S.N.A.

Yard Areas:

The yard is divided into three areas-

3rd - 6th Class on the court and the pitch

1st & 2nd classes play in the yard outside the Classrooms.

Infants play in the yard outside the Staffroom & Resource Rooms.

Role of the Board of Management:

The Board has the responsibility of ensuring that a Code of Behaviour is drawn up and has direct input into the policy of the school. Where there is a serious breach of behaviour, the Board may meet to discuss the matter and issue suspension proceedings.

The Parents:

No Code of Behaviour can operate successfully without the backing and support of the parents. It is expected that parents send their child to school with respect for the school rules and other pupils in the school. To help with this, parents, on enrolling their children into the junior infants, are given outlines of the school ethos, school rules and the behaviour which is expected in the school. It is crucial that our parents are aware of the aims and values in which our school rules are embedded.

If there is a constant breach of misdemeanours then parents are invited to come to the school to discuss the matter with the child's class teacher. For a serious breach of behavior, if the class/parent meeting had not been successful, parents will be invited to meet the principal to discuss the matter and ensure there is no repetition of the behaviour.

Teaching Staff:

Each teacher has responsibility for the maintaining of good behaviour within his/her classroom while having a shared responsibility for good order within the school.

A positive school community attitude and involvement is central to this Code of Behaviour. The overriding emphasis must be the encouragement of positive behaviour in children at home and school. The staff has now been trained in Restorative Practice and the programme has been piloted in the school. As we develop and encourage this practice in St. Colman's we hope that a climate of support, honesty and trust will prevail and all children's self-esteem, self-respect and respect for others will be enhanced.

The Code of Behaviour is not set in stone but will change and evolve as needed.

Signed:
Chairman of Board of Management

Signed:
Principal

Date: October 2017

Review Date: May 2018

