

St. Catherine's Special School

CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

2018

St. Catherine's Special School

The Code of Behaviour is informed by our school's characteristic spirit and ethos. Therefore it is appropriate to include our school ethos statement as part of this document.

Mission Statement

St. Catherine's Special School, under the patronage of St. Catherine's Association Ltd, will deliver a service of excellence that is student centred, responding to their identified needs, ensuring that each achieves their full potential and is supportive of both students and their families.

The Code of Behaviour must be read in conjunction with other relevant policies, in particular, the Student Anti-Bullying Policy, the Student Digital Acceptable Use Policy, the Child Protection Policy and the Safety Statement.

This Code of Behaviour was drawn up to ensure that school policy is in compliance with legal requirements and good practice as set out in the Developing Code of Behaviour Guidelines for Schools (National Educational Welfare Board 2008).

Aims of the Code

The aims of this Code of Behaviour are:

- To respect and safeguard the dignity and the particular needs of all our individual students
- To provide a safe and secure learning environment for all our students and staff
- To promote high standards of behaviour while noting the differences between individual students and the need to accommodate these differences
- To allow the school to function in an orderly and harmonious way where students can make progress in all aspects of their development
- To teach, foster and encourage socially acceptable behaviour within the school and in the community at large
- To ensure that the individuality of each student is accommodated while acknowledging the right of each child to education in a relatively disruptive-free environment
- To create an atmosphere of respect, tolerance and consideration of others
- To assist parents and students in understanding the systems and procedures that form part of the code of behaviour and to seek their co-operation in the application of these procedures
- To ensure that the system of rules, rewards and sanctions are implemented in a fair and consistent manner.

Standards of Behaviour

The most effective methodology in attempting to manage behaviour that might challenge is to try to prevent it happening in

the first place. All members of the school community are expected to behave in ways that show respect for others.

Behaviour will reflect values such as respect, understanding, kindness, courtesy, fairness and forgiveness. Respectful ways of resolving difficulties and conflict will be implemented. Standards are also a way of signalling the kinds of behaviours that are not acceptable in the school e.g. behaviour that is hurtful, demeaning, behaviour that interferes with teaching and learning or is threatening and/or causes physical hurt to other students and/or staff.

Promoting high standards of behaviour is the central aim of this Code of Behaviour. Teachers, staff and the wider school community use a range of strategies for promoting good behaviour at class and school level. A Code of Behaviour works well when there are good relationships between teachers, SNAs, students, parents and the wider school community.

Communication with parents/guardians is an important element in maintaining a positive approach in dealing with our students. Co-operation and communication with parents/guardians is seen as an important factor in encouraging positive behaviour. The following methods of communication are used at all levels within the school.

- Individual Education Plan (IEP) process
- Informal parent/teacher meetings and formal parent/teacher meetings
- Through the use of student's home/school communication books
- Letters, notes or text messages to and from school to home
- Meetings held in the school
- End of year report
- Phone calls to/from home
- Parent's Association

To Promote Positive Behaviour

A whole school approach will help to create, maintain and foster a positive school climate that will support and promote good behaviour. We aim to achieve this by:

- Creating a positive, respectful and encouraging attitude at all times
- Creating a calm structured environment in all aspects of school life
- Creating a consistent approach to students by all staff
- Promoting self esteem amongst the students at all times
- Creating a sense of fairness taking into account the competence, understanding and functional abilities of the students
- Making rules positive, "do's" rather than "don'ts" in a language that is appropriate to the student's ability to understand
- Developing and supporting relationships between students and staff
- Using class and school settings e.g. circle time and school assembly to promote and encourage positive behaviour
- Using positive language appropriate to the student's level of understanding that is affirmative, respectful and fair

Encouraging and Promoting Good Behaviour

Good behaviour is encouraged and promoted in the school at all times. All of these strategies will be implemented in the school, in the classroom, on the school bus, in the playground, on school related activities e.g. swimming, class outings etc.

- positive everyday interactions between students, teachers, SNAs and other staff
- good school and class routines
- good communication with parents and in particular parents informing the school where situations arise at home that might influence behaviour in school
- clear boundaries and rules for students

Attendance

Following an absence from school the parent/guardian must notify the school of the absence on the Reason for Absence form (see Appendix 1 & 2) or by phone message. In the event of a student being absent for over three days without communication from the parent/guardian the Principal will be in contact with the parents to discuss the absence.

In accordance with the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, section 21 the Principal is obliged to notify Tusla when a child has been absent for a total of 20 days within a school year or is not attending school regularly. The following strategies aim to foster an appreciation of learning and encourage regular attendance

- Students are taught in a positive environment and are rewarded for their efforts
- Families are encouraged to communicate through communication copies, homework journals and formal and informal parent/teacher meetings
- Links are established with schools/bodies in the area which provide link programmes, shared placement programmes, cultural and sporting activities that are appropriate for our students
- Individual Education Plans (IEPs) which are written plans specifying learning goals that are to be achieved by a student over a period of time

School Rules

The school rules are kept to a minimum and are mindful of the level of understanding of our students.

- We are helpful
- We are kind
- We listen
- We try our best
- We make good choices

Each class teacher will develop and maintain class rules appropriate to the age and needs of the students. The teachers

and SNAs will aid and assist the implementation of the class rules. As with school rules, class rules should also be kept to a minimum. Rules will be applied in a fair and consistent manner and should reflect school rules. A high level of co-operation and open communication is seen as an important factor in encouraging positive behaviour in the school.

Strategies to affirm desirable or appropriate behaviour

When affirming desirable / appropriate behaviour the following factors are taken into consideration: □

- the individual strengths and needs of each student
- the student's stage of intellectual development
- the student's age, maturity, physical, social and emotional development
- individual learning styles

Students are rewarded for effort, good work, good interaction and appropriate behaviour. Rewards given must be meaningful to the student. To give praise and encouragement we give rewards appropriate to each student such as:

- A smile, clap, a word of recognition or praise or a written comment
- Stickers, certificates, stars, stamps
- Student of the week
- Display of work
- Class treats
- Public acknowledgement
- Verbal praise and encouragement
- Prizes / Lucky dip
- Being given special responsibilities or privileges
- Special praise from Principal, other teacher or other adult
- Positive behaviours and participation in school communicated to parents
- Rewards
- Reinforcers
- Points recorded on, for example, chart / snake / ladder / blackboard
- Awards or Certificates at Assembly
- Student being given opportunity to choose what activity they would like to do for a short period of time

Strategies to prevent or de-escalate anxiety or defensive behaviours

When deciding which strategies to employ the following factors are taken into consideration:

- the individual strengths and needs of each student
- the student's stage of intellectual development
- the student's age, maturity, physical, social and emotional development
- individual learning styles

To de-escalate difficult situations and promote positive behaviour we:

- Provide students with a means to communicate
- Support
- Encourage
- Provide clear rules and expectations
- Use positive phrases
- Adopt consistent approach, staff working as a team
- Be aware of objects/triggers and remove them
- Show awareness of the effect of own behaviour, body language, verbal communication style
- Be aware of environmental effects and alter as necessary
- Be aware of student's physiological needs
- Adopt calm response in difficult situations
- Give student time
- Use visual timetable and schedules when appropriate
- Communicate regularly with parents
- Ignore if safe to do so
- Redirect
- Distract
- Provide appropriate standard of work
- Provide structured timetable and routine
- Give a sense of purpose – responsibilities – classroom jobs
- Use reinforcement system, for example, token economy
- Motivate by introducing things we know the student responds positively to
- Remove student/other students from situation
- Listen
- Talk through behaviour with student
- Include student in classroom activities while removing verbal/other reinforcement
- Honour student requests for time away/to work away from others
- Give student space and time to calm/self-regulate
- Have class discussion about behaviour without singling out any particular student's behaviour
- Make school fun
- Teach the difference between 'telling tales' and responsible telling
- Teach about expression of feelings and emotions
- Implement rewards and reinforcement systems that are meaningful to the student.

Procedure for dealing with recurring incidents of defensive or risk behaviours that can cause barriers to learning and/or social inclusion

Specific events such as ill health, changes of medication or unusual home circumstances may temporarily affect behaviour and in these cases often no action may be required.

When recurring incidents of anxiety, defensive or risk behaviour (see Appendix 3) that can cause barriers to learning and/or social inclusion occur these are discussed with the parent/guardian by the class teacher as they may be able to provide relevant information as to the cause of the behaviours or may offer advice regarding strategies they use successfully.

Following recurring incidents of defensive or risk behaviour, antecedent, behaviour, consequence (ABC) forms and/or incident report forms are completed by the class team. A class team meeting is held. Incidents are discussed with a view to identifying the cause of the behaviours. The school ethos supports a functional approach to the management of behaviour that cause barriers to learning and/or social inclusion. The identified defensive or risk behaviour/s can be functional for the student; that is to say that the behaviour/s may exist in the student's repertoire because it has been learned and serves a function for the student (e.g. a student may engage in tantrum behaviour as a means of escaping a task that he/she finds particularly demanding). The approach of school staff is to decrease the identified behaviour/s by teaching and reinforcing appropriate replacement behaviours that serve the same function (e.g. teaching the student an appropriate means of asking for a break from a demanding task without resorting to undesirable behaviour). At the class team meeting strategies such as reinforcement schedules or break cards are decided on.

The class teacher discusses and agrees the strategies with the Principal and the teacher informs Parents. A procedure for informing parents/guardians of recurring incidents is agreed with them as part of the class team plan. They may be informed by telephone call, in person or through the homework journal or communication copy. Notes written by the teacher in the homework journal must be signed by the parent/guardian to show they have received them.

Within our school all staff capitalise on learning opportunities throughout the day across all school settings to teach appropriate functional communication using whatever supports necessary (e.g. gestures, verbal & visual prompts; schedules of reinforcement, communication devices, Irish Sign Language & Lámh etc.) in order to reduce, as much as possible, instances of undesirable behaviour for all students.

The positive school ethos extends to all members of the school community adopting a positive, calm approach to challenges that may be encountered from time to time. Every effort should be made to ensure that the classroom and school environment is enriched with frequent opportunities for students and staff to encounter social praise and acknowledgement for achievements and to experience a varied schedule of activities to be enjoyed across the school day.

In the case that defensive or risk behaviours that can cause barriers to learning or social inclusion continue to occur and are being emitted with high intensity, frequency or duration, the Principal or the class team, through the Principal, may make a referral to the Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) Department of St Catherine's Association.

Management of Actual or Potential Aggression (MAPA)

The Board of Management is satisfied that the Management of Actual or Potential Aggression (MAPA) programme, developed by the Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI) will be used as an approach to manage serious incidents of defensive and risk behaviour that can cause barriers to learning and/or social inclusions.

The MAPA programme has been designed to enhance understanding and management of difficult situations and aims to ensure that everyone involved can maintain the *Care, Welfare, Safety and Security* of all involved. The ultimate focus of MAPA training is to ensure that staff gain the essential knowledge, skills and confidence to prevent, decelerate, and de-escalate difficult situations so that restrictive practices can be avoided. Additionally, the training will ensure that staff have the necessary skills to manage risk behaviour when it does occur, using a range of MAPA physical interventions that aim to minimise risk to the student and others.

Every effort will be made to resolve conflicts positively and without risk to students, visitors, staff, property or the environment. Many situations can be defused. The CPI Crisis Development Model forms the foundation of the MAPA programme and connects the programme to the philosophy of *Care, Welfare, Safety and Security*. The model represents a series of recognisable behaviour levels and the corresponding staff attitude/approach used to de-escalate the situation..

The CPI *Crisis Development Model*SM

Crisis Development/<u>Behaviour Levels</u>	Staff Attitudes/<u>Approaches</u>
1. Anxiety	1. Supportive
2. Defensive	2. Directive
3. Risk <u>Behaviour</u>	3. Physical Intervention
4. Tension Reduction	4. Therapeutic Rapport

Integrated Experience

The model identifies that once anxiety behaviours (a change in behaviour – pacing, fidgeting, change in form) are recognised staff can respond in a supportive manner in order to move into tension reduction without the behaviours escalating to defensive or risk behaviour. Likewise, the model identifies that once defensive behaviours (beginning to lose rationality – shouting, refusal, throwing) are recognised staff can respond in a directive manner in order to move to tension reduction without the behaviours escalating to risk behaviour.

However, a very small number of incidents may continue to escalate, and, as a last resort and in proportion to the level of behaviour, the staff members may ascertain that the incident is of such an actual risk as to warrant the use of MAPA physical intervention so to protect the safety of the student involved, as well as the safety of other students and staff. Physical interventions deemed appropriate in our school setting are disengagement techniques. These will be taught and assessed on MAPA training days. There will be opportunities throughout the school year to refresh these skills.

If a student is presenting with extremely risky behaviour and an area is deemed unsafe for the student, physical intervention may be used as a last resort and for as short a period as is necessary to guide the pupil to a safe location. For example,

when on community outings, if a student attempts to move onto the road, he/she will be guided physically to the path.

When an incident has concluded, it is recommended that the student and staff involved avail of an appropriate break if they choose and resume duties following a consultation with the Principal. If it is not possible to have a consultation with the Principal at the time, this consultation should take place by the end of the same day.

If an injury has occurred which causes a staff member to be absent for more than three days, the school is legally obliged to make a report to the Health and Safety Authority.

Each incident will be reviewed at a meeting with participating staff and the Principal if the participants or Principal consider this necessary.

If parents/guardians wish to make a complaint in relation to any incident, the Complaints Procedure should be followed.

Suspension

When the student's behaviour is an actual risk to themselves and others the Principal may, in consultation with the Chairperson of the Board of Management, suspend a student. The procedures as set out by the National Education and Welfare Board (NEWB) in Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools will be followed (see Appendix 6).

A single incident of high risk behaviour may be grounds for suspension. The decision to suspend a student requires serious grounds such as that:

- the student's behaviour has had a seriously detrimental effect on the education of other students
- the student's continued presence in the school at this time constitutes a threat to safety
- the student is responsible for serious damage to property
- the student is responsible for serious injury or injuries to self, other students or staff

Suspension may be necessary to allow time for the following:

- to make changes to the physical environment
- to make the school environment a safer place for students and staff
- planning and preparing a relevant intervention
- consulting with the clinical team/other professionals

The suspension will:

- enable the school to set behavioural goals with the student and their parents/guardians
- give school staff an opportunity to plan other interventions, this may include the student returning to school on a phased basis or on a shorter day
- impress on a student and their parents/guardians the seriousness of the behaviour

Before suspending a student the following factors will be taken into account

- The nature and seriousness of the behaviour
- The context of the behaviour
- The impact of the behaviour
- The interventions tried to date
- Whether suspension is a proportionate response
- The possible impact of suspension
- Suspension as part of a behaviour management plan.

When the student is re-introduced to the school, the student will be starting on a 'clean slate'.

Expulsion

The Board of Management has the authority to expel a student. In the event that the Board of Management decide to expel a student the procedures as laid out in the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, section 24 will be followed (see Appendix 7).

Parents have the right to appeal permanent exclusion from a school under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998 / DES Circular 22/02

Expulsion should be a proportionate response to the student's behaviour. Expulsion of a student is a very serious step, and one that will only be taken by the Board of Management in extreme cases of high risk behaviour. The school will take significant steps to address the behaviour and to avoid expulsion of a student including, as appropriate:

- ensuring that all other possible options have been tried
- meeting with parents/guardians and the student to try to find ways of helping the student to change their behaviour
- seeking the assistance of the relevant multi-disciplinary team members and relevant support agencies

A proposal to expel a student requires serious grounds such as that:

- the student's behaviour is a persistent cause of significant disruption to the learning of others or to the teaching process
- the student's continued presence in the school constitutes a real and actual risk to safety
- the student is responsible for physically assaulting another student or a staff member
- the student is responsible for serious damage to property

The grounds for expulsion may be similar to the grounds for suspension. In addition to factors such as the degree of seriousness and the persistence of the behaviour, a key difference is that, where expulsion is considered, a series of other interventions have been tried and it is believed that all possibilities for changing the student's behaviour have been

exhausted.

Given the seriousness of expulsion as a sanction the Board of Management will undertake a very detailed review of a range of factors in deciding whether to expel a student.

Factors that will be considered before proposing to expel a student:

- The nature and seriousness of the behaviour
- The context of the behaviour
- The impact of the behaviour
- The interventions tried to date
- Whether expulsion is a proportionate response
- The possible impact of expulsion

Responsibilities

Students' Responsibilities

- To follow the school rules to the best of their ability

Teachers' Responsibilities

- To consult with parents
- To discuss, explain and write up the School Rules in a way that is understood by the students
- To make themselves aware of the Code of Behaviour and be guided by it
- To create a safe, caring and positive classroom and school environment
- To promote good learning practices To be fair and approachable
- To affirm work well done and good behaviour
- To liaise with parents, other staff and students to devise behaviour strategies and plans
- To inform the Principal of recurring incidents of student's behaviour
- To inform parents of recurring incidents of student's behaviour as per the agreed procedure
- To inform staff about the behaviour plans
- To ensure that behaviour plans are implemented consistently by the class team
- To maintain accurate records of behaviour
- To report to the Principal
- To attend all training recommended by the school and to keep training up to date

Special Needs Assistants' Responsibilities

- To make themselves aware of the Code of Behaviour and be guided by it
- To create a safe caring and positive classroom and school environment

- To promote good practices
- To be fair and approachable
- To ensure that behaviour plans are implemented consistently
- To report to the teacher

Principal's Responsibilities

- To make staff, students and parents aware of the Code of Behaviour
- To ensure the safe and smooth running of the school
- To mediate in times of difficulty
- To be informed of students who may be experiencing difficulties and guide/support class team members
- To inform the Chairperson of the Board of Management following an incident of high risk behaviour
- To inform the Chairperson of the Board of Management when a student's behaviour is a potential risk to themselves and others
- To refer students to the PBS department, liaise with the PBS team and ensure that procedures, as laid out, are followed

Parent's/Guardian's Responsibilities

- To discuss the Code of Behaviour with their child
- To endeavour to have their child attend school and arrive on time
- To notify the class teacher if their child is absent from school and return the Reason for Absence form
- To endeavour to have their child come to school prepared - with books and other requisites and also that homework is completed
- To provide a note if homework is not completed
- To liaise with teachers to the benefit of the child and to work to implement any agreed plan of action
- To notify teachers of extenuating circumstances at home

The Board of Management's Responsibilities

- To support the Principal, staff and students
- To ensure procedures are followed

Following an incident of behaviour that presents as actual risk to the student and others the Chairperson will call a meeting of the Board of Management if deemed necessary by the Chairperson and the Principal. At this meeting a decision may be made to suspend the student.

When it is not possible for the Board of Management to assemble at immediate notice the Board of Management has empowered the Principal in consultation with the Chairperson with the right to suspend a student for up to three days. This

may be necessary to allow time for the following:

- crisis management strategies to be decided on
- if necessary, strategies to be implemented, for example, changes to the physical environment
- to make the school environment a safe place for students and staff

Provision for review

This policy was ratified by the Board on 18th January 2018

This policy will be reviewed every two years.



ST. CATHERINE'S
SPECIAL SCHOOL

Kilmullen Lane,
Newcastle, Greystones, Co. Wicklow A63 X985

Telephone: 01 2819525
Roll No. 19522L

Website: www.stcatherinesspecialschool.ie
info@stcatherinesspecial.ie

Dear Parent / Guardian,

This letter is to inform you of the procedure to be followed if your child is absent from school.

On the first day of your child's absence please inform the school. Also, please inform the bus as usual. If your child will be late into school or is being collected early, please inform the school.

If your child is absent from school please fill in an Absence form (see attached) for each period of absence and return it to the class teacher on your child's return. If your child is sick or absent for other good reasons the form must still be filled in.

Schools are obliged by law, under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, to submit reports on school attendance to the Educational Welfare Services of the Child and Family Agency (www.tusla.ie) when:

- a student has reached 20 days absence cumulatively
- a student has been suspended for 6 days or more cumulatively
- a student's name is to be removed from the school register for whatever reason
- a Principal is concerned about a student's attendance
- the Board of Management decides to expel a student

If there is a concern about your child's attendance at school or about the reasons given, you may be visited by an Education Welfare Officer who will discuss your child's education with you.

Yours truly, _____

Teresa Smith

Principal

Appendix 2 – Reason for Absence form

Student's Name: _____

Class: _____

Date of Absence: _____

Reason for Absence: _____

Signature of Parent / Guardian: _____

Anxiety Behaviours

The following list identifies some anxiety behaviours that can present as barriers to learning or social inclusion. Staff will respond to anxiety behaviours in a supportive manner.

- Pacing
- Fidgeting
- Restlessness
- Withdrawing from the group
- Stereotypy – repetitive behaviours that are emitted with such intensity, frequency or duration that they interfere with learning and social inclusion
- Repetitive vocalisations

Defensive Behaviours

The following list identifies some defensive behaviour that when emitted with intensity, high frequency or duration can present as barriers to learning and social inclusion.

- Absconding
- Property Destruction
- Non-compliance/protest behaviour – which can take more than one form
- Refusal/difficulty transitioning to other locations
- Dropping/flopping to floor/ground and refusing to comply
- Refusal to engage in an instruction/activity
- Removing clothes including underwear and refusing to dress
- Hitting/kicking surfaces (walls, doors, tables, etc.)
- Tantrums
- Attempted assaults on others
- PICA – (ingesting non-edible items e.g. dirt, wood chips, velcro, plastic)

Risk Behaviours

Risk behaviours are behaviours that can present as an actual risk to the student involved or others. These may require the use of MAPA physical intervention as a last resort, in proportion to the level of behaviour and for the shortest amount of time. Risk behaviours include:

- Assaults on others including but not exclusive to, pushing, grabbing, hitting, kicking, scratching, biting, head butting, hair pulling where there is an actual risk to the student or others
- Inappropriate body contact – with adult/peer or object and can include a student pressing or rubbing his/her genital area repeatedly against a person or object
- Self-injurious behaviours such as where there is an actual risk to the student
- PICA – (ingesting non-edible items) where there is a risk of choking
- Absconding where there is an actual risk to the student

Appendix 5 - Suspension

Procedures in respect of Suspension based on National Educational Welfare Board (2008) Developing a Code of

Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools (p.74-78)

Schools are required by law to follow fair procedures when proposing to suspend a student.

Where a preliminary assessment of the facts confirms behaviour that could warrant suspension, the school will observe the following procedures:

- inform the student and their parents/guardians about the complaint/behaviour
- give parents/guardians and student an opportunity to respond
- let the student and their parents/guardians know about the complaint/behaviour, how it will be investigated, and that it could result in suspension

Parents/guardians may be informed by phone or in writing, depending on the seriousness of the matter. Informing parents/guardians in writing has the benefit of ensuring that there is a formal and permanent record of having let them know that an incident has occurred. It also ensures that parents/guardians are clear about what their son or daughter is alleged to have done. It serves the important function of underlining to parents/guardians the seriousness with which the school views the alleged risky behaviour.

Parents/guardians and student will be given an opportunity to respond before a decision is made and before any sanction is imposed.

A meeting with the student and their parents/guardians provides an opportunity for them to give their side of the story and to ask questions about the evidence of high risk behaviour, especially where there is a dispute about the facts. It may also be an opportunity for parents/guardians to make their case for lessening the sanction, and for the school to explore with parents/guardians how best to address the student's behaviour.

If a student and their parents/guardians fail to attend a meeting, the Principal will write advising of the gravity of the matter, the importance of attending a re-scheduled meeting and, failing that, the duty of the school authorities to make a decision to respond to the behaviour that challenges. The school will record the invitations made to parents/guardians and their response.

Where parents/guardians do not agree to meet with the Principal, written notification will serve as notice to impose a suspension.

Immediate Suspension

Procedures in relation to immediate suspension.

Where an immediate suspension is considered by the Principal to be warranted for reasons of the safety of the student, other students, staff or others, a preliminary investigation will be conducted to establish the case for the imposition of the suspension.

The formal investigation will immediately follow the imposition of the suspension. All of the conditions for suspension apply to immediate suspension. No suspension, including an immediate suspension, should be open-ended. In the case of an

immediate suspension, parents/guardians will be notified, and arrangements made with them for the student to be collected.

The school will have regard to its duty of care for the student. In no circumstances will a student be sent home from school without first notifying parents/guardians.

Automatic Suspension

Particular named high risk behaviours may be agreed by the Board of Management as cause for automatic suspension. These behaviours may differ from student to student and suspension may be scripted into their behaviour plan.

Period of Suspension

A student will not be suspended for more than three days, except in exceptional circumstances where the Principal considers that a period of suspension longer than three days is needed in order to achieve a particular objective. If a suspension longer than three days is being proposed by the Principal, the matter will be referred to the Board of Management for consideration and approval, giving the circumstances and the expected outcomes.

However, the Board of Management may authorise the Principal, with the approval of the Chairperson of the Board, to impose a suspension of up to five days in circumstances where a meeting of the Board cannot be convened in a timely fashion, subject to the guidance concerning such suspensions.

The Board of Management should normally place a ceiling of ten days on any one period of suspension imposed by it. The Board will formally review any proposal to suspend a student, where the suspension would bring the number of days for which the student has been suspended in the current school year to twenty days or more. Any such suspension is subject to appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998. ??

Appeals

The Board of Management will 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.

Section 29 Appeal

Where the total number of days for which the student has been suspended in the current school year reaches twenty days, the parents / guardians, or a student aged over eighteen years, may appeal the suspension under section 29 of the Education Act 1998, as amended by the Education (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2007.

At the time when parents / guardians are being formally notified of such a suspension, they and the student will be told about their right to appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science under section 29 of the Education Act 1998, and will be given information about how to appeal.

Written notification

The Principal will notify the parents / guardians and student in writing of the decision to suspend. The letter will confirm:

- the period of the suspension and the dates on which the suspension will begin and end
- the reasons for the suspension
- any study programme to be followed
- the arrangements for returning to school, including any commitments to be entered into by the student and the parents / guardians (for example, parents / guardians might be asked to reaffirm their commitment to the Code of Behaviour)
- the provision for an appeal to the Board of Management
- the right to appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science (Education Act 1998, section 29)

The letter will be clear and easy to understand. Particular care will be taken in communicating with parents / guardians who may have reading difficulties or whose first language is not the language of the school.

Grounds for removing a suspension

A suspension may be removed if the Board of Management decides to remove the suspension for any reason or if the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science directs that it be removed following an appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

After the suspension ends

A period of suspension will end on the date given in the letter of notification to the parents / guardians about the suspension.

Re-integrating the student

- The student will be re-integrated in a non-judgemental approach

Records of investigation and decision-making

Formal written records will be kept of:

- the investigation (including notes of all interviews held)
- the decision-making process
- the decision and the rationale for the decision
- the duration of the suspension and any conditions attached to the suspension

Report to the Board of Management

The Principal will report all suspensions to the Board of Management with the reasons for and the duration of each suspension.

Report to NEWB

The Principal is required to report suspensions in accordance with the NEWB reporting guidelines (Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, section 21(4)(a)).

Review of use of suspension

The Board of Management will review the use of suspension in the school at regular intervals to ensure that its use is consistent with school policies, that patterns of use are examined to identify factors that may be influencing behaviour in the school and to ensure that use of suspension is appropriate and effective.

Procedures in respect of expulsion based on National Educational Welfare Board (2008) Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools (p.83-86).

Schools are required by law to follow fair procedures as well as procedures prescribed under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, when proposing to expel a student. Where a preliminary assessment of the facts confirms high risk behaviour that could warrant expulsion, the procedural steps will include:

1. A detailed investigation carried out under the direction of the Principal
2. A recommendation to the Board of Management by the Principal
3. Consideration by the Board of Management of the Principal's recommendation; and the holding of a hearing
4. Board of Management deliberations and actions following the hearing
5. Consultations arranged by the Educational Welfare Officer
6. Confirmation of the decision to expel

These procedures assume that the Board of Management is the decision-making body in relation to expulsions.

It is a matter for the Board of Management to decide which of the tasks involved in these procedural steps requires separate meetings and which tasks can be accomplished together in a single meeting, consistent with giving parents/guardians due notice of meetings and a fair and reasonable time to prepare for a Board hearing.

Step 1: A detailed investigation carried out under the direction of the Principal

In investigating an allegation, in line with fair procedures, the Principal will:

- inform the student and their parents/guardians about the details of the alleged
- high risk behaviour, how it will be investigated and that it could result in expulsion
- give parents/guardians and the student every opportunity to respond to the complaint of high risk behaviour before a decision is made and before a sanction is imposed.
- Parents / guardians should be informed in writing of the alleged high risk behaviour and the proposed investigation in order to have a permanent record of having let them know. This also ensures that parents/guardians are very clear about what their son or daughter is alleged to have done. It serves the important function of underlining to parents/guardians the seriousness with which the school views the alleged high risk behaviour.
- Parents/guardians and the student must have every opportunity to respond to the complaint of high risk behaviour before a decision is made about the veracity of the allegation, and before a sanction is imposed.
- Where expulsion may result from an investigation, a meeting with the student and their parents/guardians is essential. It provides the opportunity for them to give their side of the story and to ask questions about the evidence of high risk behaviour, especially where there is a dispute about the facts. It may also be an opportunity for parents/guardians to make their case for lessening the sanction, and for the school to explore with

parents/guardians how best to address the student's behaviour. If a student and their parents/guardians fail to attend a meeting, the Principal will write advising of the gravity of the matter, the importance of attending a re-scheduled meeting and, failing that, the duty of the school authorities to make a decision to respond to the negative behaviour. The school will record the invitations made to parents/guardians and their response.

Step 2: A recommendation to the Board of Management by the Principal

Where the Principal forms a view, based on the investigation of the alleged high risk behaviour, that expulsion may be warranted, the Principal makes a recommendation to the Board of Management to consider expulsion. The Principal will:

- inform the parents / guardians and the student that the Board of Management is being asked to consider expulsion
- ensure that parents / guardians have records of: the allegations against the student; the investigation; and written notice of the grounds on which the Board of Management is being asked to consider expulsion
- provide the Board of Management with the same comprehensive records as are given to parents / guardians
- notify the parents / guardians of the date of the hearing by the Board of Management and invite them to that hearing
- advise the parents / guardians that they can make a written and oral submission to the Board of Management
- ensure that parents / guardians have enough notice to allow them to prepare for the hearing

Step 3: Consideration by the Board of Management of the Principal's recommendation and the holding of a hearing

It is the responsibility of the Board to review the initial investigation and satisfy itself that the investigation was properly conducted in line with fair procedures. The Board will undertake its own review of all documentation and the circumstances of the case. It will ensure that no party who has had any involvement with the circumstances of the case is part of the Board's deliberations (for example, a member of the Board who may have made an allegation about the student).

Where a Board of Management decides to consider expelling a student, it must hold a hearing. The Board meeting for the purpose of the hearing will be properly conducted in accordance with Board procedures. At the hearing, the Principal and the parents/guardians, or a student aged eighteen years or over, put their case to the Board in each other's presence. Each party will be allowed to question the evidence of the other party directly. The meeting may also be an opportunity for parents/guardians to make their case for lessening the sanction.

In the conduct of the hearing, the Board must take care to ensure that they are, and are seen to be, impartial as between the Principal and the student. Parents/guardians may wish to be accompanied at hearings and the Board will facilitate this, in line with good practice and Board procedures.

After both sides have been heard, the Board will ensure that the Principal and parents / guardians are not present for the Board's deliberations. ▯

Step 4: Board of Management deliberations and actions following the hearing

Having heard from all the parties, it is the responsibility of the Board to decide whether or not the allegation is substantiated

and, if so, whether or not expulsion is the appropriate sanction.

Where the Board of Management, having considered all the facts of the case, is of the opinion that the student should be expelled, the Board must notify the Educational Welfare Officer in writing of its opinion, and the reasons for this opinion (Education (Welfare) Act 2000, s24(1)). The Board of Management will refer to National Educational Welfare Board reporting procedures for proposed expulsions. The student cannot be expelled before the passage of twenty school days from the date on which the EWO receives this written notification (Education (Welfare) Act 2000, s24(1)).

An appeal against an expulsion under section 29 of the Education Act 1998 will automatically succeed if it is shown that the Educational Welfare Officer was not notified in accordance with section 24(1) or that twenty days did not elapse from the time of notification to the Educational Welfare Officer to the implementation of the expulsion (Education (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2007, s4A).

The Board will inform the parents/guardians in writing about its conclusions and the next steps in the process.

Where expulsion is proposed, the parents/guardians will be told that the Board of Management will now inform the Educational Welfare Officer.

Step 5: Consultations arranged by the Educational Welfare Officer

Within twenty days of receipt of a notification from a Board of Management of its opinion that a student should be expelled, the Educational Welfare Officer must:

- make all reasonable efforts to hold individual consultations with the Principal, the parents / guardians and the student, and anyone else who may be of assistance
- convene a meeting of those parties who agree to attend (Education (Welfare) Act 2000, section 24).

The purpose of the consultations and the meeting is to ensure that arrangements are made for the student to continue in education. These consultations may result in an agreement about an alternative intervention that would avoid expulsion. However, where the possibility of continuing in the school is not an option, at least in the short term, the consultation should focus on alternative educational possibilities.

In the interests of the educational welfare of the student, those concerned should come together with the Educational Welfare Officer to plan for the student's future education. Pending these consultations about the student's continued education, a Board of Management will take steps to ensure that good order is maintained and that the safety of students is secured (Education (Welfare) Act 2000, s24(5)). A Board may consider it appropriate to suspend a student during this time. Suspension will only be considered where there is likelihood that the continued presence of the student during this time will seriously disrupt the learning of others, or represent a threat to the safety of other students or staff.

Step 6: Confirmation of the decision to expel

Where the twenty-day period following notification to the Educational Welfare Officer has elapsed, and where the Board of Management remains of the view that the student should be expelled, the Board of Management will formally confirm the decision to expel (this task may be delegated to the Chairperson and the Principal). Parents/guardians will be notified

immediately that the expulsion will now proceed.

Parents/guardians and the student will be told about the right to appeal and supplied with the standard form on which to lodge an appeal. A formal record will be made of the decision to expel the student.

Appeals

A parent/guardian, or a student aged over eighteen years, may appeal a decision to expel to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science (Education Act 1998 section 29).

An appeal may also be brought by the National Educational Welfare Board on behalf of a student.

The appeals process

The appeals process under section 29 of the Education Act 1998 begins with the provision of mediation by a mediator nominated by the Appeals Committee (DES). For further details about the Appeals process, including requirements for documentation, and the steps in the process, refer to current DES guidance.

Review of use of expulsion

The Board of Management will review the use of expulsion in the school at regular intervals to ensure that its use is consistent with school policies, that patterns of use are examined to identify factors that may be influencing behaviour in the school, and to ensure that expulsion is used appropriately.