

# Belcarra National School – Code of Behaviour

The school has a central role in the children's social and moral development just as it does in their academic development. In seeking to define acceptable standards of behaviour it is acknowledged that these are goals to be worked towards rather than expectations that are either fulfilled or not.

The children bring to school a wide variety of behaviour. As a community environment, in school we must work towards standards of behaviour based on the basic principles of honesty, respect, consideration and responsibility. It follows that acceptable standards of behaviour are those that reflect these principles.

Children need limits set for them in order to feel secure and develop the skills for co-operation. Therefore any rules will be age appropriate, with clear agreed consequences.

Parents can co-operate with the school by encouraging their children to understand the need for school rules, by visiting the school and by talking to the members of staff.

A code of behaviour is established to ensure that the individuality of each child is accommodated while at the same time acknowledging the right of each child to education in a relatively disruption free environment.

The Board of Management has ultimate responsibility for discipline in the school, and a duty to ensure that a code of behaviour applies within.

## Aims of the Code

- To create a positive learning that encourages and reinforces good behaviour
- To promote self-esteem and positive relationships
- To encourage consistency of response to both positive and negative behaviour
- To foster sense of responsibility and self-discipline in pupils and to support good behaviour patterns based on consideration and respect for the rights of others
- To facilitate the education and development of every child
- To foster caring attitudes to one another and to the environment
- To enable teachers to teach without disruption
- To ensure that the school's expectations and strategies are widely known and understood through the parent's handbook, availability of policies and an ethos of open communication
- To encourage the involvement of both home and school in the implementation of this policy

## Responsibility of Adults

The adults encountered by the children at school have an important responsibility to model high standards of behaviour, both in their dealings with the children and with each other, as their example has an important influence on the children.

### As adults we should aim to:

- Create a positive climate with realistic expectations
- Promote, through example, honesty and courtesy

- Provide a caring and effective learning environment
- Encourage relationships based on kindness, respect and understanding of the needs of others
- Ensure fair treatment for all regardless of age, gender, race, ability and disability
- Show appreciation of the efforts and contribution of all
- To discourage physical aggression

### **School Rules**

- Respect for self and others
- Respect for other's property
- Respect other students and their learning. Pupils are expected not to engage in name calling, foul language or other activities which may cause distress to other pupils
- Kindness and willingness to help others
- Follow instructions from staff immediately
- Walk quietly in the school building
- It is an aspiration of the school that uniforms be worn
- Remain inside school boundary during school hours
- Courtesy and good manners. Respect to be shown at all times to all members of the teaching staff, both in and out of class. This would also include visitors to and guests of the school
- Readiness to use respectful ways of resolving difficulties and conflict
- Ask permission to leave classroom
- Do your best in class/Take responsibility for your own work
- Pupils who leave school early should have a note from home stating when and by whom they will be collected
- Any form of bullying is strictly forbidden
- We encourage healthy lunches i.e. sandwiches, fruit etc., and we ask parents to support this policy, responsibility lies with parents/guardian to provide a healthy lunch for their child
- Children are not allowed crisps or chewing gum. Food or drinks may not be brought to yard at playtime
- Toilet area must be kept clean and tidy
- Should parents/guardians decide their child needs a mobile phone for after – school use only, the following apply: Phone must be switched off and kept in teacher's desk until pupils are released from school by the teacher. The use of mobile phones during school hours including break times is totally forbidden. Breach of these rules means phone will be confiscated for the duration of the day and parents will be notified. Continual breach of this rule may result in confiscation of the phone. The school does not accept responsibility for the loss of phones.

## **Class Rules**

At the beginning of each academic year, the class teacher will draft a list of class rules with the children. These reflect and support the school rules, but are presented in a way that is accessible to the children. Class rules should be kept to a minimum and are devised with regard for the health, safety and welfare of all members of the school community. They should where possible emphasise positive behaviour (e.g. “Walk” and not “Don’t run”). Rules will be applied in a fair and consistent manner, with due regard to the age of the pupils and to individual difference. Where difficulties arise, parents will be contacted at an early stage.

## **Incentives**

Part of the vision of Belcarra National School is to help children achieve their personal best- academically, intellectually and socially. We recognise that there are many different forms of intelligence and that similarly children use a variety of approaches to solve problems. Reward systems which are based on academic merit or particular extrinsic goals continuously apply to only a limited number of children and undermine the individuality of children. All children deserve encouragement to attain their own best. Children will be encouraged, praised and listened to at all times by adults in the school. Praise is earned by the maintenance of good standards as well as by particular noteworthy personal achievements. Rates of praise for behaviour should be as high as for work.

The following are some examples of how praise might be given;

- A quiet word or gesture to show approval
- A comment in a pupil’s exercise book
- A visit to another member of Staff or to the Principal for commendation
- A word of praise in front of a group or class
- A system of merit marks or stickers
- Delegating some special responsibility or privilege
- A mention to parent, Written or verbal communication

## **Unacceptable Behaviour**

Three levels of misbehaviour are recognised: Minor, Serious and Gross. All everyday instances of a minor nature are dealt with by the class teacher. In cases of repeated serious misbehaviour or single instances of gross misbehaviour including non compliance with Covid regulations, parents will be involved at an early stage and invited to meet the teacher and/or the Principal to discuss their child’s behaviour.

### **Examples of serious misbehaviour:**

- Behaviour that is hurtful (including bullying, harassment, discrimination and victimisation)
- Behaviour that interferes with teaching and learning
- Threats or physical hurt to another person
- Damage to property
- Theft

### **Example of gross misbehaviour**

- Assault on a teacher or pupil
- Serious theft
- Serious damage to property

### **Sanctions**

The use of sanctions or consequences should be characterised by certain features;

- It must be clear why sanction is being applied
- The consequence must relate as closely as possible to the behaviour
- It must be made clear what changes in behaviour are required to avoid future sanctions
- There should be a clear distinction between minor and major offences
- It should be the behaviour rather than the person is the focus

However sanctions should relate as closely as possible to the behaviour. Therefore a child, who does not do his work in class or has not completed his homework, may have unfinished work sent home to be completed that night or the following weekend. It is not school policy to detain children at break-time to complete unfinished work.

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

The following steps will be taken when children behave inappropriately. They are listed in order of severity with 1 being for a minor misbehaviour and 8 being for serious or gross misbehaviour. The list is by no means exhaustive. Teachers may put in place alternative measures bearing in mind the features by which sanctions should be characterised. The aim of any sanction is to prevent the behaviour occurring again and if necessary to help the pupil devise strategies for this.

1. Reasoning with pupil
2. Verbal reprimand including advice on how to improve
3. Temporary separation from peers within class and parents informed if deemed necessary
4. Loss of privileges, parents are informed as in no. 3
5. Detention outside staffroom during break or if incident occurs on the yard child is removed from the playground, parents informed in writing if deemed necessary
6. Referral to the Principal
7. Principal communicates with parents
8. Exclusion (Suspension or Expulsion) from school (in accordance with Rule 130 of the Rules for National schools, NEWB Guidelines and Education Welfare Act2000).

***Due to current Covid restrictions Number 5 has been altered"Children will remain on the yard but will not be allowed participate in activities".***

Time out in another class may be necessary if the work of the class is being disrupted or if there is a risk of injury to anyone.

## **Suspension and Expulsion**

Before serious sanctions such as detention, suspension or expulsion are used, the normal channels of communication between school and parents will be utilised. Communication with parents may be verbal or by letter depending on the circumstances.

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 Chairperson of 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 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 regards to records of previous misbehaviours, their patterns 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. If suspension is still decided upon

- Principal notifies parents in writing of the decision to suspend. The letter should confirm:
- The period of the suspension and the dates on which the suspension will begin and end
- The reason 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
- The provision for appeal to the Board of Management or Secretary General of DES. (Only where the total number of days for which the student has been suspended in the current school year reaches 20 days)
- Where the cumulative total of days reached is 6, the NEWB will be notified

In the case of gross misbehaviour, where it is necessary to ensure that order and discipline are maintained and to secure the safety of the pupils, the Board 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. Expulsion will be used in extreme cases of unacceptable behaviour. The school will have taken other significant steps to address the misbehaviour except in exceptional circumstances.

Due process and fair procedure will apply in all circumstances.

### **Procedures in respect of expulsion (Ref NEWB Guidelines pp83-86)**

- A detailed investigation carried out under the direction of the Principal
- Inform parents in writing of alleged misbehaviour, how it will be investigated and that it could result in expulsion
- Give parents and students the opportunity to respond before a decision is made

### **A recommendation to the BOM by the Principal (See p84 NEWB Guidelines)**

- Consideration by the BOM of the Principal's recommendation and the holding of a hearing. (See p84 NEWB Guidelines)
- BOM deliberations and actions following the hearing (p85 NEWB Guidelines)

If the BOM is of the opinion that the student should be expelled, the Board must notify the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) in writing, of its opinion and the reasons for this opinion. The intention to expel a student does not take effect until twenty days have elapsed after NEWB have received written notification. The NEWB should be notified using a Notice of Intention to Expel form which is available on [www.schoolreturn.ie](http://www.schoolreturn.ie) or from NEWB Helpline (1890363666). This form should be completed and sent to School Return Section, National Educational Welfare Board, 16-22 Green Street, Dublin 7.

- Consultation arranged by the EWO
- Confirmation of the decision to expel

### **Appeals:**

Parents will be informed of their legal right to appeal

- A parent may appeal a decision to expel to the Secretary General of the DES (Education Act 1998, Section29)

### **Records and Reports (Ref p78 NEWB Guidelines)**

Formal written records will be kept of:

- The Investigation (including notes of all interviews held)
- The decision-making process
- The decision and rationale for the decision

### **Removal of Suspension (Reinstatement)**

Following or during a period of suspension, the parents may apply to have the pupil reinstated to the school. The parents 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.

### **Children with Special Needs**

All children are required to comply with the code of behaviour. However the school recognises that children with special needs may require assistance in understanding certain rules. Specialised behaviour plans will be put in place in consultation with parents and the class teacher, Special Education Teacher, and NEPS if necessary. The Principal will work closely with home to ensure that optimal support is given. Cognitive development will be taken into account at all times. Professional advice from psychological assessments will be invaluable.

The children in the class or school may be taught strategies to assist a pupil with special needs adhere to the rules and thus provide peer support. This will be done in a supportive and safe way, acknowledging and respecting the difference in all individuals.

### **Methods of Communicating with Parents**

Communicating with parents is central to maintaining a positive approach to dealing with children. Parents and teachers should develop a joint strategy to address specific difficulties, in addition to sharing a broader philosophy which can be implemented at home and in school.

A high level of co-operation and open communication is seen as an important factor encouraging positive behaviour in the school. Structures and channels designed to maintain a high level of communication among staff and between staff, pupils and parents have been established and are being reviewed regularly.

Parents should be encouraged to talk in confidence to teachers about any significant developments in a child's life, in the past or present, which may affect the child's behaviour.

### **The following methods are to be used at all levels within the school:**

- Informal parent/teacher meetings and Formal parent/teacher meetings
- Through children's homework journal
- Letters/notes from school to home and from home to school
- School notice board

This Code of Behaviour was reviewed at a Board of Management meeting on September 28<sup>th</sup> 2020

Chairperson: *Eileen Castella*    Principal: *Maureen Gaggins*    Date: 28/09/2020

I/We have read and agree that our child/children will abide by the Code of Behaviour of Belcarra N.S.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Mother  
          \_\_\_\_\_ Father                      Date: \_\_\_\_\_

