

CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

This Code of Behaviour is effective on and from **September 2022** and supersedes all previous Codes which seek to address the same subject matter.

It has been prepared in accordance with “*Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools*”, as published by the National Educational Welfare Board in May 2008, and having due regard to relevant requirements of the Education Act, 1998 and the Education Welfare Act, 2000.

The Code has been approved by the Board of Management of St. Gabriel's Special School (**BOM**).

This Code of Behaviour addresses:

- A.** School values and ethos
- B.** Definition of challenging behaviour & extremely challenging behaviour
- C.** Possible causes of challenging behaviour
- D.** Promoting good behaviour
- E.** Strategies for the general management of pupils who present with challenging behaviour and resources available
- F.** Suspension & expulsion
- G.** Child protection
- H.** Pupil absences
- I.** Concerns/complaints
- J.** Modification

A. School values and ethos

In devising the Code of Behaviour at St. Gabriel's, consideration has been given to the needs and circumstances of this school which are particular to the pupils with severe or profound learning disability and associated autism. Our overall aim is to ensure that the individuality of each child is accommodated and respected while acknowledging the right of each child to education in a disruption-free environment. The positive ethos of St. Gabriel's ensures that both pupils and staff are valued and respected. Each pupil is treated with the utmost respect and dignity and every strategy is employed to ensure that each individual's needs are met in a way that suits that pupil. In keeping with this positive ethos, all staff adopt a positive and proactive approach to the management of behaviour. **The use of the term “bold” is strictly prohibited in the school.**

B. Defining challenging behaviour & extremely challenging behaviour

The behaviours presented by the pupils at St. Gabriel's are not always misbehaviour in the traditional sense, but may sometimes be a reaction to the

circumstances they find themselves in at any given moment. When behaviours are viewed in this way they may be interpreted as the pupil's means of communication at that time. Because it is not always easy to identify the underlying message in the behaviour, we label these acts as **"challenging behaviours"**, in the sense that the challenge/difficulty is for staff to understand the meaning of and respond to and manage them.

A **"challenging behaviour"** is any act by the child which disrupts their activities or the activities of others or their daily schedules, which causes injury or poses risk to themselves or others, which puts them or others in danger and which requires intervention from staff.

Examples of **"challenging behaviours"** in this context can include: pushing, pulling, spitting, grabbing, pinching, biting, hitting, striking, punching, slapping, scratching, kicking, refusal to comply/to move, throwing objects, attempting to choke another, head-butting, running away, persistent loud vocalisations, self-injury as well as inappropriate touch, smearing and stripping.

An **"extremely challenging behaviour"** then can be said to exist where a challenging behaviour is persistent, continual or is of increased or particular intensity, severity or inappropriateness.

For example, if any physical act results in a fellow pupil, member of staff or any individual requiring medical attention, that may be considered an extremely challenging behaviour.

C. Possible causes of challenging behaviours

- For those pupils enrolled at St. Gabriel's, especially those on the autistic spectrum, the most common cause of challenging behaviour can be raised levels of anxiety/stress. This may lead the pupil to de-regulate i.e. the pupil's reactions to the offending stimuli are such that the pupil loses control of their own behaviour and so is unable to calm easily by themselves without intervention. This may happen for any number of reasons e.g. unexpected change, pain, bombardment of the senses, hormonal changes etc.
- Another consideration is the fact that the majority of our pupils are non-verbal, relying on Augmentative Alternative Communication systems. At times their inability to express their needs can lead to challenging behaviour as their way of getting their needs met.
- Majority of pupils are highly mobile.
- Age range in the school 4-18years (junior and senior pupils together).
- Structural: School building is not a purpose designed building to accommodate pupils with special needs.

D. Promoting good behaviour

Given the complex needs of our school population, we endeavour to adopt a positive proactive approach to the management of behaviour. Each class team utilises an individualised approach to teaching and promoting appropriate behaviour and communication skills in the pupils with the support of the multi-disciplinary team.

This approach may include:

- Environmental adaptations – visual, structured environment according to the principles of TEACCh (Treatment & Education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children);
- Communication Environment – Augmentative Alternative Communication Systems available to the pupils such as TEACCh and PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System), Core Boards for choice-making, iPads etc.;
- Sensory adaptations, programmes and sensory “diet” for individual children
- Ongoing developing and updating of programmes to enhance pupils skill development;
- Relevant staff training and support;
- Regular liaison with parents/guardians, social care teams and multi-disciplinary teams;
- Positive Behaviour Support Plans.

E. Strategies for the general management of pupils who present with challenging behaviours & extremely challenging behaviours.

First Approach to Management of Challenging Behaviours

The primary objective of our approach to dealing with challenging behaviour is to enable the pupil to become regulated / calm again.

To achieve this, staff typically:

- Aim to identify what the individual pupil is trying to say through the challenging behaviour and respond appropriately to try to meet the pupil's needs;
- Reduce demands on the pupil in the short term, if pupil has reduced coping skills at that time;
- Reduce language, noise and other sensory input around the pupil e.g. where possible reduce the no. of pupils/staff in his / her company;
- If possible, remove the child to a calm environment, if necessary provide routine access to periods of quiet / calm;
- Where possible, provide routine sensory activities as prescribed by the Occupational Therapist;
- Risk assessment carried out and strategies recommended.

All of the above depend on the availability of staffing levels and resources: multi-disciplinary team, teaching and special needs assistant support.

In certain instances where resources and time permit, pupils with challenging behaviours may have Positive Behaviour Support Plans devised for them by the multi-disciplinary team. This plan would be reviewed on a regular basis. Its aim is to ensure that there is a consistency of response to the behaviour from the relevant staff and also teach the pupil new skills so that the same message/s can be communicated by the pupil in a more appropriate way in the future and replace the need for the challenging behaviours. Any such environmental and programme adjustments are recorded in the pupil's Positive Behaviour Support plan.

First Approach to Crisis Management of Extreme Challenging Behaviours

When a pupil presents with extreme challenging behaviour, some or all of the following procedures are used to respond to the pupil's needs, depending on the severity of the behaviour:

- Incident report/Accident report completed and submitted to the Principal;
- Team meeting with class to consider environmental adaptations and further individualisation of the pupil's timetable;
- Frequent meetings / phonecalls to parents/guardians as part of the process to manage the behaviours and to keep parents/guardians fully informed;
- Where possible use MAPA (Management of Actual & Potential Aggression) techniques including non-violent physical crisis intervention and personal safety techniques in which staff are trained.
- Referral to psychology and relevant other multi-disciplinary team members;
- In consultation with relevant multi-disciplinary team members, repeated incidents may be charted on daily observation charts for that specific behaviour;
- Positive Behaviour Support Plans compiled to outline how to respond at each level of behaviour (compiled in consultation with the parents/guardians and the multi-disciplinary team). This plan will attempt to identify the antecedents and triggers of the challenging behaviours and focus on both prevention and the teaching of new skills to replace the challenging behaviour. This plan will also be regularly reviewed by key stakeholders;
- Referral to Trasna Training Services as necessary for behaviour support;
- Referral to Psychiatry service as necessary;
- Informing the Special Educational Needs Organiser of the need for possible extra resources to support the pupil;
- Sourcing relevant extra training for staff;
- Parents/Guardians may be contacted and asked to take pupil home. If there is a known underlying cause for the challenging behaviour, that the parent/guardian would ensure that the pupil is given the appropriate treatment before returning to school;
- Deal with behaviour in situ with all necessary support if possible;

- If behaviour cannot be dealt with in situ, it should be dealt with in alternative setting within school with necessary support, if possible.

Throughout the process of responding to the pupil's extremely challenging behaviour, we will endeavour to ensure that communication with parents/guardians, either verbal or written, will be ongoing. Parents/guardians will be invited into the school to discuss their child's management and will always be informed of changes in their child's programme and environment to accommodate his/her changing needs.

F. Suspension & expulsion

- **Immediate Suspension**

In certain cases, it will not be possible to deal with an incident through the first approach procedures outlined above.

Accordingly, a single incident of extremely challenging behaviour may be grounds for immediate suspension.

The procedure for dealing with cases of immediate suspension is detailed further at Appendix A.

- **Non-automatic suspension after all the school's first approach procedures for dealing with extreme challenging behaviours have been exhausted**

Should the situation arise that despite the first approach procedures outlined above having been followed and of all the school's resources having been exhausted, extremely challenging behaviour persists, then suspension will be considered.

The parents/guardians will be requested in writing to attend the school for a meeting and any suspension will be considered and implemented in accordance with the procedures detailed further at Appendix A.

- **Expulsion**

Expulsion may be considered in a particularly extreme case where no alternative seems possible.

Any expulsion will be considered and implemented in accordance with the procedures detailed at Appendix B.

A pupil may be suspended pending a decision whether to expel.

- **Appeals**

Under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998 parents/guardians are entitled to appeal against some decisions of the BOM, including (1) permanent exclusion from a school and (2) suspension for a period which would bring the cumulative period of suspension to 20 school days or longer in any one school year. Appeals must generally be made within 42 calendar days from the date the decision of the school was notified to the parent.

G. Child protection

Allegations, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse / neglect must be reported to the Designated Liaison Officer – Margaret Lordan, Principal. In her absence the Deputy Principal or the next senior teacher is the designated person. The school follows the National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children – “Children First” in all matters relating to child protection. A copy of this document is available from the Principal's Office. Please also refer to the school's Child Protection Policy.

H. Pupil absences

In accordance with the School Welfare Act 2000, there is a legal requirement on schools to notify the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) when pupils are absent for more than 20 days in any school year. Explanations for absence are required by the Dept. of Education & Skills. Where pupils miss one or more days the explanations for absence must be given in writing. Parents/guardians may write a note in the home/school communication notebook explaining the absence which can then be copied and kept on the pupil's file.

I. Concerns/complaints

Any member of the school community who has a concern or complaint about any aspect of this Code should contact the Principal in confidence.

J. Modification

The BOM of this school reserves the right to modify the details of the Code of Behaviour at short notice in response to events or circumstances that were not foreseeable when the Code was being first drafted or subsequently reviewed. Written notification of such modification will be posted to families prior to its becoming operational or as soon as reasonably practicable.

Ratified by the Board of Management on

Signed by Chairman: _____

Appendix A: Procedure for Suspension

The procedure that will be followed in cases of immediate and non-immediate suspension is that as detailed in the NEWB's *"Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools"*, as published in 2008.

In summary, and without prejudice to the full procedure, this provides as follows:

1. Parents/guardians will be informed of the complaint, how it will be investigated and that it could result in suspension.
2. Communication to parents/guardians regarding the possibility of suspension will be in writing and copies of all correspondence will be retained.
3. Parents/guardians will be given the opportunity to respond to the complaint at a meeting with the Principal/Deputy Principal/Class teacher.
4. If it is not possible to resolve the problem through dialogue with the parents/guardians at the meeting, a suspension may be imposed.
5. A written statement of the term and the date of the suspension will be given to parents/guardians.
6. The factors that will influence the term of any suspension are detailed further in the NEWB's *"Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools"* and summarised below.
7. The BOM has delegated the power to suspend for a maximum of 3 days to the Principal. With the approval of the Chairperson of the BOM, a suspension of 4 or 5 days may be imposed by the Principal. A suspension in excess of 5 days and for not more than 10 days can only be imposed by the BOM. Additionally, any suspension that would bring the total number of days for which the pupil has been suspended in the current school year to 20 days or more must be formally reviewed by the BOM.
8. In exceptional circumstances the BOM may authorise a further period of suspension in order to enable the matter to be reviewed.
9. When a period of suspension ends the Principal will re-admit pupil to the school.

Summary of Factors Relevant to Term of Suspension (As per National Educational Welfare Board Guidelines 2008):

In considering a term of suspension, the following factors will be relevant:

- 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; and
- The possible **impact** of suspension.

Appendix B: Procedure for Expulsion

Expulsion will only be considered as an absolutely last resort if it is clear that the resources available to the school are not adequate to meet the challenge posed to the welfare of the pupil, other pupils or staff having regard to the provisions of the National Guidance for Protection and Welfare of Children, Children First 2011.

The procedure that will be followed in all cases of expulsion is that as detailed in the NEWB's "Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools", as published in 2008.

In summary, and without prejudice to the full procedure, this provides as follows in cases where a preliminary assessment of the facts confirms the circumstances could warrant expulsion:

- 1. A detailed investigation will be carried out under the direction of the Principal.**
- 2. Following same, a recommendation will be made to the BOM by the Principal.**
- 3. The BOM will consider the recommendation and hold a hearing involving the parents, if it decides that expulsion may be warranted.**
- 4. The BOM will deliberate and form an opinion. It must then take certain actions following the hearing including informing parents/guardians and the Educational Welfare Officer (if it is decided the pupil should be expelled)**
- 5. Consultations will then be arranged by the Educational Welfare Officer– 20 days must be allowed for this stage.**
- 6. Following same, a decision to expel may be confirmed.**

It is a matter for the BOM to decide which of the tasks involved in these procedural steps require 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 hearing.

Summary of Factors to be Considered in Cases of Expulsion (As per National Educational Welfare Board Guidelines 2008):

- 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; and
- The possible **impact** of expulsion.