



Code of Behaviour

Sligo School Project

Sligo School Project Code of Behaviour

Preamble

It is mandatory for recognised schools in Ireland to have in place a Code of Behaviour. The document ratified by the Board of Management of Sligo School Project has been prepared in accordance with the Guidelines for schools issued by the National Education Welfare Board.

In the first part of our code of behaviour we put into context the standards of relationships we aspire to in Sligo School Project. These standards of behaviour have due regard for the ethos of the school with its own unique identity, values and culture.

At the same time it is a requirement of the Guidelines that the code of behaviour addresses issues like suspension or expulsion of students. These issues are addressed in line with the recommendation of the Guidelines in the later sections of the document.

Part one

1. Point of reference

An essential point of reference for the expected standards of behaviour in Sligo School Project can be found in the formulation included in our 'Core Curriculum'. Aims of the ethical education programme in our school include:

To foster a sense of confidence and self worth.

To address emotions such as joy, enthusiasm, desire, grief, frustration, anger and disappointment with overall approval, acknowledgement for their reasons and the intent to understand them in their social origins.

To support the development of individual talents, and encourage initiative, independence in thought and action as much as solidarity and empathy.

To promote equality among the sexes and to cultivate attitudes of care and respect towards the rights of others.

To address the issues arising as a consequence from being in groups, large or small, voluntary or compulsory, like group think, peer pressure, mutual support and team spirit.

To promote a culture of conflict resolution in a respectful and open minded manner.

To promote an active and responsible role in caring for the environment.

To raise awareness of human rights, equality and justice in society.

The code of behaviour presented here is developed with these aims in mind to facilitate the education and development of each person attending Sligo School Project and to provide for the effective and safe operation of the school.

2. Relationships

The guidelines for developing a code of behaviour issued by the National Education Welfare Board state: "The quality of relationships between teachers and students is a powerful influence on behaviour in a school." We are eager to establish relationships between adults and children in the school that are based on mutual respect, fairness and open and honest communication. It is on this basis that we want the relationships in Sligo School Project to develop over the years of shared living practice in the school. Both adults and children in Sligo School Project are addressed by their first names.

Relationships based on mutual respect, fairness, open and honest communication are the best guarantee for a school climate that is in line with the aims of our 'Core Curriculum' as referred to in section 1. It is self-evident that in such a school climate bullying is unacceptable.

3. Labelling

The personal integrity of all members of the school community is to be respected and safeguarded at all times. Labelling can be experienced in many different ways e.g. children may be labelled with 'Special Educational Needs', families can be labelled on grounds of their ethnic background, etc. We are intent on insuring that labelling must not infringe on the personal integrity of the children or adults in Sligo School Project. It is the duty of the adults in Sligo School Project to be highly vigilant about this and to act as good role models. If labelling happens it should be sensitively addressed with those involved.

4. Communication

Open communication is one of the guiding principles of Sligo School Project. We actively encourage and facilitate open and frequent communication between teachers and parents. We encourage parents to contact the class teacher regarding any queries or concerns which they may have in relation to their child's school life. We remind parents that no query or concern is 'too small' and that it greatly benefits child, parent and teacher when frequent and open communication exists between home and school. It is always helpful for the teacher to be aware of anything which may affect the school life of the child and we encourage parents to let teachers know.. When there is good communication between home and school it really helps in addressing any behavioural problems which may occur.

We also encourage and facilitate open and frequent communication between adults and children in the school. The age of the children is taken into account. Children are encouraged to speak to the class teachers or principal regarding any concerns which they may have about their school life. It is very important that such concerns are taken seriously and dealt with fairly. Good relationships between children and adults are the key for the well-being of all members of the school community.

An essential aspect of the principle of open communication is that all issues of concern are dealt with in a fair and transparent manner which helps to prevent allegations or gossip spreading around the school.

5. Discipline problems and how to avoid them.

In Sligo School Project we do our best to avoid discipline problems. Rules are kept to a minimum and are applied in a fair and consistent manner, with due regard for the age of the child and to individual difference. Rules are made for the health, safety and welfare of all members of the school

community. Children in Sligo School Project don't wear a school uniform. Hence there are no discipline problems in relation to dress codes. Award systems such as stickers, stamps, positives and negatives, best group award etc. are not used as an incentive to entice children to behave in a certain way. We do not judge the behaviour of one child in relation to the behaviour of another.

As laid out also in the 'core curriculum' it is one of the central aims of Sligo School Project to foster a sense of confidence and self-worth in children. Each child who attends the school comes from a unique family with its own behavioural standards. Children in Sligo School Project are accepted with their respective backgrounds.

6. Standards

As a common standard all members of the school community are expected to respect each other. Children are expected to respect the school activities in which other children engage.

7. Addressing behavioural problems in the class/school grounds.

In cases of behaviour in a classroom or on the school grounds that is out of line with the expected standards the teacher will deal with the matter in a way that fits the age and emotional development of the child. Teachers will keep in mind that the immediate manner of addressing a problem situation may not solve the underlying problem that actually caused it. Teachers may:

- Reason with the child.
- Advise the child on how to change his/her behaviour.
- Temporarily remove a child from the room to another classroom.
- Temporarily separate the child from his/her peers within the classroom.

The teachers in Sligo School Project co-operate closely in relation to temporarily removing a child from the room to another classroom. Where a child is removed from a classroom s/he will be sent to another classroom for an agreed period of time. If the period is of a longer nature the teacher who sent the child will give her/him some work to do while in the other class. Where a teacher deems it appropriate s/he can also decide to restrict participation of a child in certain activities e. g. excursions or PE-sessions on a temporary basis. By doing so teachers will also ensure that a constant denial of access to a particular part of the curriculum for a child does not occur.

- Temporarily remove a child from the playground, hall or wherever the problem has occurred.

In cases where it is deemed appropriate there will be communication with parents about the behavioural issue in question.

Part two

8. When problems escalate

If problems escalate in a manner that

- the behaviour of a person has a seriously detrimental effect on the education of others
- the continued presence of a person in the school constitutes a threat to safety
- a person is responsible for serious damage of property

the person can be suspended from the school for a specified period of days.

A single incident may be ground for suspension.

9. Authority to suspend

In Sligo School Project the authority to suspend a child is delegated to the principal. S/he can use suspension as a means to address problems as referred to in section 8. The period of suspension should not exceed a period of three days, except in exceptional circumstances where the principal considers that such a period is needed in order to achieve a particular objective.

10. Immediate suspension

Where the principal upon a preliminary investigation of a matter comes to the conclusion that the continued presence of a student in the school at the time would represent a serious threat to the safety of students or staff, the principal can impose an immediate suspension of a duration of up to three days.

In the case of a child being suspended with immediate effect, the parents must be notified, and arrangements made with them to collect the child.

11. Suspension after investigation

Where an allegation is made against a child of behaving in a manner as referred to in section 8 and the principal does not see an immediate suspension warranted, the allegation needs to be investigated in a fair manner. In the course of such investigation the allegation shall be communicated to the child and her/his parents who will be given an opportunity to respond to the allegation. The principal can decide to involve other members of the school community in such investigation and to consult other members of the school community before deciding on imposing a suspension.

Parents of a child who is subject to a suspension will be notified of this decision and will be informed of the exact period of suspension.

12. Reporting to Board of Management

All suspensions are to be reported to the Board of Management by the principal at the next possible occasion.

13. 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 Skills directs that it be removed following an appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

14. Appeal

Where the total number of days for which a child has been suspended in the current school year reaches twenty days, the parents 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 are being formally notified of such a suspension, they will be told about this right to appeal.

15. Expulsion

The Board of Management reserves the right to expel the child from the school,

- a) when after continued efforts behavioural problems can not be solved and where
 - the behaviour of a child is a persistent cause of significant disruption to the learning of others or to the teaching process
 - the continued presence of a child in the school constitutes a real and significant threat to safety
 - the child is responsible for serious damage to property;
- b) in circumstances where the Board of Management forms the opinion that a child
 - poses a serious threat of violence against another member of the school community
 - is responsible for actual violence or physical assault of members of the school community
 - is responsible for supplying drugs intended to harm other students in the school.
 - is responsible for sexually assaulting members of the school community.

16. Procedure in respect to expulsion

Where an initial assessment of a situation leads to the conclusion that an expulsion could be warranted the following steps are to be initiated.

- a) A detailed investigation carried out under the direction of the Principal.
In the process of investigating the matter the parents and the child concerned will be informed about the situation investigated and will be given the opportunity to provide their view of the matter.
- b) A recommendation to the Board of Management by the Principal.
Where the principal concludes after the investigation that an expulsion may be warranted, s/he will make a recommendation to the Board of Management to this effect. The parents of the child concerned will be informed that the Board is to consider expulsion. Records of the investigation and reasons of the grounds on which the Board is asked to consider expulsion will be forwarded to the parents also.
A date for a hearing (see under c)) will be set and the parents will be invited to take part in it.

c) 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 should 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 should be properly conducted in accordance with Board procedures. At the hearing, the Principal and the parents put their case to the Board in each other's presence. Each party should be allowed to question the evidence of the other party directly. The parents can bring a person of their trust to accompany them to the hearing, if they so wish. In this case they have to inform the Chairperson of the Board at least three days before the date of the hearing who will accompany them. It lies at the discretion of the Board to invite further persons to report at the hearing.

After concluding the hearing the Board will ensure that the Principal and parents are not present for the Board's deliberations.

d) Board of Management deliberations and actions following the hearing.

Where the Board of Management, having considered all the facts of the case, is of the opinion that the child 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 parents of the child concerned will be informed of the decision of the Board and that the Board has informed the Education Welfare Officer of the decision.

e) Consultations arranged by the Educational Welfare Officer.

In accordance with the Education Welfare Act the Education Welfare Officer will initiate a consultation process. Pending these consultations about the student's continued education, the Board of Management may take steps to ensure that good order is maintained and that the safety of the members of the school community is secured (Education (Welfare) Act 2000, s24(5)). In cases where there is a likelihood that the continued presence of the child during this time will seriously disrupt the learning of others, or represent a threat to the safety of other students or staff the Board may consider suspending the child.

f) Confirmation of the decision to expel.

Where the mandatory twenty-day period following notification to the Educational Welfare Officer has elapsed, and where the Board of Management remains of the view that the child should be expelled, the Board of Management will formally confirm the decision to expel. The Board may decide to delegate this task to the Chairperson and the Principal.

The parents of the child concerned will be notified immediately that the expulsion will now proceed.

The parents of the child concerned will be informed about the right to appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

17. Attendance

In accordance with the Education Welfare Act 2000 parents must inform the school of the reason for a child's absence for part of a day or for a whole school day. This can be done by means of sending a note to the class teacher or by directly speaking to the class teacher or principal.

Declaration

My/Our name

My/Our address

As the parent/s or guardian/s of (name of child/children): _____,
who is/are enrolled at Sligo School Project with effect of (date) _____,
have read the Code of Behaviour of Sligo School Project.

I/We understand that my/our child/children is expected to adhere to this code of behaviour and that the relevant measures as described in the code in case of non-adherence will be initiated by the school.