

# **Marymount Girls National School**

## **Code of Behaviour**

### **Introductory statement**

This policy was drafted at the beginning of the academic year 2009/2010 initially by a committee of staff members and then in consultation with the whole teaching staff, parents and the Board of Management. The policy will be implemented in full from January 2010 and will be reviewed periodically from that date.

### **Rationale**

- It is an area of concern identified by the school community
- The existing policy is due for review/amendment. As we are implementing *The Incredible Years* programme in the school it is important that the code of behaviour reflects the spirit of the programme
- To ensure an orderly climate for learning in the school
- It is a requirement under the Education Welfare Act, 2000, Section 23 (1)

### **School Vision Statement**

- As a school community we are committed to the holistic development of all pupils in our care. We strive to ensure that all children's experience of school will be positive, supportive and challenging and that it will enable them to reach their full potential so that in turn they may play a fulfilling role in their community and in society in general

### **Relationship to characteristic spirit of the school**

- In Marymount School we respect the individual differences and abilities of all our pupils
- We feel that a whole school approach is key to the development of an effective code of behaviour. Therefore we work to achieve co-operation between staff, parents and pupils. We feel that this approach delivers greater consistency in the children's social, emotional and behavioural education

### **Aims**

- To ensure an educational environment that is guided by our vision statement
- To allow the school to function in an orderly way where children can make progress in all aspects of their development
- To create an atmosphere of respect, tolerance and consideration for others
- To promote positive behaviour and self-discipline, recognising the differences between children and the need to accommodate these differences
- To ensure the safety and well being of all members of the school community
- To assist parents and pupils 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 throughout the school

## **Guidelines for behaviour in the school**

- At all times we, as teachers, aspire to model the behaviours we expect from our students. We feel that if children see, and are surrounded by, a positive atmosphere, then they will be more likely to adopt positive behavioural habits
- The clear, simple rule of “Kind Hands, Kind Feet, Kind Words” is expected of everyone at all times
- Children are expected to do their best in both school and homework
- Children are expected to attend school on a regular basis and to be punctual

## **Whole school approach to promoting positive behaviour**

### **Role of Staff**

- As a staff we model good behaviour and positive self talk to children at all times. We work together to devise reward/sanction programmes and we undergo any professional development necessary to ensure that there is a united front in dealing with behavioural matters. This behaviour policy is circulated to all teachers and all temporary or new staff are also made aware of the policy and its content. Through regular staff meetings and good communication, the policy is reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis
- All teachers have been trained in *The Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management Programme*
- All other staff in the school are appropriately informed of *The Incredible Years Programme* to ensure consistency across the school in behaviour management
- As part of *The Incredible Years Programme*, *Dina School* is delivered to a group of 6 children on a weekly basis for approximately 22 weeks each year. These children are carefully selected for their suitability and many members of staff collaborate in the selection process
- The *SPHE* curriculum also supports our code of behaviour. The *SPHE* plan is circulated each year to class teachers. This curriculum helps children to develop communication and problem-solving skills while fostering self-esteem
- Teachers use varied methodologies such as “Circle Time” to deliver the above curriculum
- Our Intercultural Activities encourage children to accommodate difference and develop citizenship
- For children with Special Educational Needs, who may present with behavioural difficulties arising from their needs, learning support and class teachers liaise regularly to develop behavioural targets for such children, in keeping with the approaches outlined in *The Incredible Years Programme*

### **Role of Board of Management**

- Members of the Board of Management were involved in drafting and redrafting this policy and the board will be involved in any future review of the policy
- The Board of Management supports the code of behaviour in the school on an ongoing basis
- The Board of Management supports the staff in implementing the code of behaviour by providing continuous professional development in behaviour management education and training
- The Board of Management gives authorisation for particular sanctions in the case of serious breaches of behaviour

## **Role of Parents**

- Positive relationships are built from the start with parents and they are encouraged to take an active role in the development of their child. Teachers work in collaboration with parents to develop any specific behaviour plans needed for their child
- There are clear channels through which parents can communicate any concerns they may have about their child
- On the enrolment day, parents are given a copy of the Code of Behaviour in the school and the expectations of pupils are discussed, along with the role of parents in helping pupils to meet these expectations. Parents are encouraged to share information about anything that might affect a pupil's behaviour in school, and are informed how to go about doing this
- The HSCL co-ordinator provides support to parents and acts as a link between parents, teachers and pupils
- Parents are notified early if there is a concern about a pupil's behaviour, so that ways of helping the pupil can be discussed and agreed
- The school has a Parents Association. Parents are encouraged to get involved in this association as a structure through which they can work together for the best possible education for their children. Information is often offered through the Parents Association, such as talks, workshops or courses on behavioural matters and aspects of child and adolescent development
- Parents are involved in reviewing and planning school policies, as part of school development planning

## **Role of Pupils**

- Children are involved in devising simple classroom rules
- Children in older classes are assigned to younger yards to help out with play and to encourage positive behaviour in younger children
- The children have opportunities to engage regularly with the principal with a focus on building trust and a good relationship

## **Positive strategies for managing behaviour**

In accordance with Incredible Years ideology, the school believes that the key to achieving good behaviour standards is to prevent opportunities for unsatisfactory behaviours occurring. Such proactive strategies are essential to the running of our school.

## **Positive Strategies in the Classroom**

- In the classroom, teachers use and implement a variety of proactive strategies with the view to minimising negative behaviours and increasing positive behaviours at all times
- Praise is used regularly and descriptive commenting draws the attention of the children to the behaviours expected
- Simple incentive systems such as Golden Time or other tangible rewards are employed to encourage positive behaviour
- Where minor misbehaviours occur, they are ignored for the most part, unless they are posing a direct threat to the safety or well-being of a child or the children around them. Instead, proximal praise and descriptive commenting is used to try to redirect the child away from the negative behaviour. Where misbehaviour continues each teacher has a clear hierarchy of consequences so that children are aware of the

sanctions for misbehaviour. These consequences are clear, simple, direct and consistent

- Each teacher comes up with a set of simple, direct and clear rules with their class. Rules are few in number and always use positive terminology. There is less emphasis on “don’ts”. Instead, the rules are phrased using positive “do” language
- Simple non verbal signals are employed by teachers to gain students’ attention
- *Give me 5 – hands on lap, feet on floor, eyes on teacher, voice off and ears open*- is used by all teachers as a means of developing good concentration habits among the children
- Teachers use interesting and stimulating ways to deal with “transition” periods in the classroom and employ simple organisational approaches to ensure order in the class
- Teachers timetable their subjects in such a way as to minimise disruptive behaviours eg: Art is timetabled to be delivered so that a lunch time does not disrupt the lesson
- Routines are established so that children know what to expect and can deal with minor changes if they occur

### **Positive Strategies in the Playground**

In the playground there are 4 simple rules.

1. Kind hands, feet, words
2. Stay in your own yard
3. No Lock-Outs ( don’t exclude someone from your game)
4. Line up calmly and quietly

These rules are clearly displayed in each playground. There are also clear, friendly signs illustrating pro-social behaviours in the yard.

Proactive strategies and supervision practices are in place to decrease yard problems.

- At every lunchtime there is one teacher supervising in each yard space. All playgrounds are marked with red lines designating the various play spaces
- Teachers regularly teach playground games in PE lessons to encourage the children to engage in meaningful and constructive play
- On wet days, children are encouraged to play with board games/cards etc
- Any children who are not well enough to play outside are supervised inside
- Children are toileted before play time but any emergency cases must ask the teacher on yard duty to go to the nearest toilet to the yard they are in. They must report back to the supervising teacher on returning to the yard
- When problems arise in the yard, the teacher on yard duty encourages the children to use problem solving techniques to solve the problem
- When the bell rings, the children line up calmly and are rewarded as appropriate using the green card system

### **Other Positive Strategies**

- When children are going about their daily school routine they are encouraged at all times to be polite and courteous to teachers and to fellow pupils
- Teachers use positive reinforcing statements to highlight behaviours expected. A culture of complimenting is fostered in the school where children receive attention and praise for specific expected behaviours such as “lovely walking feet”, “very patient in their line”, “these girls are using great ‘inside voices’” etc. Thus proximal praise is used as a proactive strategy to decrease any problem behaviours

## **Rewards and sanctions**

### **Rewards and acknowledgement of good behaviour**

- Good behaviour is acknowledged on a daily basis by all staff members through praise and complimenting
- Each teacher recognises and acknowledges good behaviour in their own class by developing systems of rewarding individuals/groups of children on a regular basis
- Children receive reward when line up time routine is adhered to in the yard (green card system)
- The Principal regularly acknowledges children for improvements in behaviour or exceptionally good behaviour
- Classes receive awards for good attendance on a monthly basis
- Environmentally responsible behaviour is rewarded and addressed via the Green Schools Programme

### **Strategies for dealing with unacceptable behaviour**

- As stated above, each teacher has their own definite and consistent hierarchy of discipline in their own class. This hierarchy follows a defined pattern where the child can predict what will happen if they behave in a certain way. "If.....then" sentences are used regularly to encourage children to become responsible for the consequences of their actions
- A sample hierarchy would be the following:
  - Verbal warning
  - Yellow card
  - Red card
  - Time-out
  - Referral to principal
  - Call/note to parent
  - Meeting with parent

### **Involving parents in management of problem behaviour**

- It is important at the start of the year to develop a positive relationship with as many parents as possible so that the first point of contact is not in relation to a problem and so that a level of trust is built between teacher and parent. If however, a child is presenting with persistent problem behaviour, every effort will be made by the class teacher to devise a simple behaviour plan for that child in collaboration with the child's parent. Particular behaviours will be pinpointed by the teacher and worked on consistently with the child. Reports of progress will be given frequently to the child's parent and they can be encouraged to develop similar behaviour plans at home

### **Managing aggressive or violent behaviour**

- Where a child displays aggressive or violent behaviour there is a definite consequence for this. In such cases the child will be encouraged to go to *Time Out* or to have a *Cool off* period before the incident is dealt with in line with the Incredible Years Programme
- If a child persistently displays such aggressive or violent behaviour, their parents will be contacted and a behaviour plan will be drawn up collaboratively to seek to

eliminate problem behaviours. If there is seen to be a need, the child may be referred to other support services.

### **Suspension / Expulsion**

Policies and procedures for the use of suspension, expulsion and appeals are as laid down in *Guidelines for developing a Code of Behaviour*, prepared by The National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB), Chapters 10, 11 and 12. These guidelines can be accessed at [www.newb.ie](http://www.newb.ie). Alternatively, a copy of these guidelines is available from the school on request.

### **Keeping records**

Each class teacher records any notable behavioural incidents, whether positive or negative. This is invaluable in getting an accurate picture of the child's strengths and difficulties and in determining the best course of action going forward.

### **Procedure for notification of a pupil's absence from school**

For Parents/Guardians of children between the ages of 6 and 16 there is a legal requirement to inform the school of the child's absence. Parents/guardians must tell the school why the child has not attended.

For all children, this can be done by writing a note in the child's school journal or sending a note in any paper form. If this poses any problems, contact must be made directly with the school by phone.

If a child misses more than 20 days the school is legally required to notify the NEWB (National Educational Welfare Board). The school will also inform the child's Parents/Guardians in writing, that this notification has been sent.

### **Reference to other policies**

This policy is consistent with all other relevant school policies, statements and procedures.

### **Appendix**

- For further information on *The Incredible Years Programme* go to [www.archways.ie](http://www.archways.ie). Further information is also available on request from the school.
- Visit [www.newb.ie](http://www.newb.ie) for further information on policy re: suspension/expulsion or absence procedures

### **Review and Monitoring**

This policy will be monitored and reviewed by the Board of Management on an annual basis and when the need arises. The Board of Management will ensure that adequate training and support is provided for all staff.

Reviewed 26 November 2014