



Scoil Uí Mhuirí
Post Primary School

Code of Behaviour

Under Review

Scoil Uí Mhuirí Code of Behaviour

Introduction

Scoil Uí Mhuirí is a vibrant, dynamic Post Primary school under the auspices of Co Louth Vocational Education Committee. It is situated in the heart of the growing community of Dunleer, Co Louth. The present modern building was opened in 2006, replacing a building which had served the community of Dunleer and its environs since 1954 when 55 pupils were enrolled. Today there is a student cohort of over 500 and a teaching staff of approximately 40.

Mission Statement

In Scoil Uí Mhuirí we are a learning community committed to the development of the whole person within a context which values each of its members.

Aim

Our aim in Scoil Uí Mhuirí, in line with our Mission Statement, is to foster academic, social, moral, personal, positive mental health and physical development in students so that they can take their place in society as well developed, well educated, responsible citizens with pride in their community. The development of the whole person is based on personal responsibility, inter-dependence, respect for people, respect for community and respect for property. Our school seeks to instil good manners, honesty and integrity. It also seeks to teach our students to value discipline and to strive for excellence in both academic and non-academic areas.

We do this in partnership with parents/guardians whose role in supporting the school in their children's education is fully acknowledged. We place a strong emphasis on partnership with parents/guardians to ensure the best possible progress through education for each student. Education is viewed as a joint effort between students, parents and school. Great emphasis is placed on mutual cooperation. Such cooperation between teacher and parent and teacher and student can only be achieved in a context of mutual respect which is the cornerstone of life in Scoil Uí Mhuirí and of its Code of Behaviour.

Code of Behaviour

The Code of Behaviour of Scoil Uí Mhuirí has been devised to encourage positive behaviour and to create the best environment conducive to teaching, learning and personal development.

There are *three strands* to the Code of Behaviour:

- (a) The School Charter
- (b) The Parent/School Contract

(c) The Discipline Procedures

- (a) **The School Charter** recognises that all members of the school community have Rights and Responsibilities. The Charter is made up of eight Core Statements of expected behaviour. These statements are, in effect, the School Rules. They are printed prominently in the Student Journal and are taught and discussed with each class at the beginning of each school year and again throughout the school year.

The School Charter provides a framework within which students who behave responsibly may be rewarded and those who renege on their responsibilities may be sanctioned to remind them of the standards of behaviour expected.

- (b) **The Parent/School Contract** is an acknowledgement by parents and students that they have read and fully understood the terms of the School Charter and have agreed to abide by the rules. The contract also recognises that certain specified serious forms of misconduct may result in a student being excluded from Scoil Uí Mhuirí. There are two copies of the contract in the Student Journal, both of which must be signed by the student and parents/guardians. One copy is removed from the Journal and retained in the student's file. The other remains in the Journal.
- (c) **The Discipline Procedures:** Disciplinary procedures are organised within the context of a pastoral care system, which seeks to ensure that the maximum opportunities are afforded to students to remedy any behaviours which are detrimental to themselves or to others. In general, the vast majority of students respond to an early warning from teachers, to a reprimand or to a light punishment exercise.

A small number of students, however, demand further action and the Disciplinary Procedures are intended as a means of dealing fairly and effectively with this group. The system involves the student being referred by a class teacher through a process which may at some stage involve Class Tutor, Year Head, Deputy Principal, Principal **and** Parents. At each stage in the referral process the emphasis is on helping the student understand the negative consequences of the behaviour and on trying to work out a programme of action which will help the student to achieve his/her academic and social potential.

The School Charter

Students in Scoil Uí Mhuirí are encouraged to make a positive impact on the school community through positive behaviour. At Scoil Uí Mhuirí we place a strong emphasis on recognising and commending appropriate behaviour. Good attendance, cooperation and positive contributions to school life may be rewarded in a number of ways including:

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- Being singled out for praise either privately or in a class group
- Being awarded a Merit in the Student Journal
- Being praised and congratulated over the school's PA system
- Being praised and congratulated in the school's Newsletters
- Being chosen to represent the school at an event
- Being elected to school committees such as the Student Council
- Being nominated for the Student of the Month Award
- Being awarded the Student of the Month prize, sponsored by the local Credit Union

Excellent academic results, cultural and sporting achievements and contributions to school life are also recognised and rewarded at the Annual School Prizegiving.

In Scoil Uí Mhuirí, discipline is considered to be training which enables students to make appropriate choices in a supportive climate. There is a set of clearly defined school and classroom rules which recognises good behaviour and which applies sanctions where necessary.

The purpose of the Scoil Uí Mhuirí School Charter is to make our school a happy and safe place for all members of our school community. The rules listed in the School Charter are there to protect our rights. To ensure that our rights are respected, it is necessary that we keep the rules.

As part of this Charter, Parents/Guardians are asked to sign the Parent/Student/School Contract, which is included in the School Journal. This must be signed during the first week of the new school year and confirms that the rules of the school have been read, understood and accepted. One copy will remain in the Journal and the other will be placed in the student's file.

In addition to the rules listed in the School Charter, students are expected to respect and abide by the rules drawn up for classrooms and for specific areas such as the library, sports areas, laboratories, kitchens, engineering and technology rooms, art rooms, music rooms and computer rooms. These rules will be displayed and explained clearly by the class teachers.

It is understood and accepted that authority within the classroom rests with the teacher in charge of the classroom and with the supervising teachers during breaktimes. In the exercise of that authority school management will ensure that the code of behaviour is interpreted and administered in a fair and just manner.

Scoil Uí Mhuirí School Charter

The School Charter lists the rules we are expected to obey. These rules apply to students while they are within the school boundaries and within the environs of the school. They apply to all school related activities, both within and outside of the school.

1. Students must at all times show respect for themselves, each other, members staff and all visitors

This means that:

- You have respect and consideration for teachers, other members of staff, other students and visitors to the school
- You are helpful and mannerly at all times □ You do not use inappropriate language
- You obey all teachers' instructions
- You do not disturb class
- You do not bully others by name calling or fighting or other aggressive behaviour. (ref. Anti-Bullying Policy)

Bullying is repeated aggression, verbal, psychological or physical, racial, sexual or relational, conducted by an individual or group against others. Bullying is a serious offence and will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Anti-Bullying Policy.

2. Attendance and Punctuality

- (1) Students should attend every school day during the academic year
- (2) Students should be on time for assembly and for all classes during the day

This means that:

- You come to school every school day unless it is unavoidable
- You arrive on time for all classes
- You only visit lockers during designated times. These are before 8.50am Assembly, at morning break and during lunch break. Otherwise you must have your diary signed by your teacher giving you permission to be out of class
- You have a note in your Journal if you have been absent from school, arrive late or if you must leave early
- You sign in and sign out in the book in the office if you are late arriving or leave early

3. Staying within the School Boundaries

- (1) Students must not leave the School during the school day without permission
This includes lunch-break for Junior students
- (2) Students must stay out of areas designated “out of bounds”

This means that:

- You must remain inside the school grounds unless you have permission to leave
- You must sign out in the relevant book in the school office before leaving early
- You are in class when you are supposed to be
- You go to lockers only at the times when you are allowed. Otherwise you must have the permission of your teacher written in your diary
- Junior students remain inside the school grounds at lunch-break unless given permission to leave
- You do not go into areas which you are told are “out of bounds”

4. Classwork, Homework and Study

- (1) Students should come to school properly prepared for all classes
- (2) Students should participate fully in each class
- (3) Homework, both written and study, should be noted in the Journal by the end of each class
- (4) Homework should be completed carefully and on time
- (5) Normal class rules apply to After School Study and other after school activities

This means that:

- You bring in all books, copies, pens and other equipment necessary for your classes
- You do your best to work both in class and at your homework
- You listen to your teachers and do not disturb or distract others
- You note all homework in your Journal and do it each evening
- You consult your timetable each evening and make sure you are prepared for the following day’s classes
- You keep your Journal in good condition and use it properly

5. Code of Dress & Hygiene

- (1) Students must dress according to the school’s dress code
- (2) Personal Hygiene must be of a high standard
- (3) Excessive jewellery is forbidden. Students may wear simple studs or sleepers (max 2 per ear). All other forms of facial jewellery are forbidden

- (4) Items of jewellery deemed to be offensive, inappropriate or a danger to health and safety are forbidden. This includes items such as long chains, large rings and jewellery or emblems displaying illegal or dangerous substances
- (5) Junior students are not permitted to wear make-up at school. Senior students are permitted to wear a discreet amount of make-up, as advised by the teachers

This means that:

- You come to school in full uniform
- You keep your uniform in good condition
- You pay attention to your own personal hygiene
- You do not wear excessive jewellery
- You do not wear jewellery which could cause offence or be a danger to yourself or others
- Junior students do not wear make-up at school or on school related activities □
Senior students may wear a moderate amount, advised by the teachers

6. Environment

Students must respect the school environment at all times. Chewing gum is forbidden in our school.

This means that:

- You must play your part in keeping our school safe and clean
- You do not deface or damage school property
- You put litter into the bins provided
- You keep your locker and your place in classes clean and tidy

7. Substance Use

Illegal drugs, unprescribed medication, medication unauthorised by parents, alcohol and tobacco are forbidden in our school, on school grounds and in its immediate environs.

This means that in the school or in the vicinity of the school:

- You must never be in possession of illegal drugs, unprescribed medication or medication unauthorised by parents for your own use or for supply to others. (*Ref. Substance Use policy*)
- You must never be in possession of alcohol for your own use or for supply to others
- You must never be in possession of tobacco or cigarettes for your own use or for supply to others. (*Ref. Anti-smoking policy*)
- You will cooperate with the school management in all efforts to ensure the safety of the school community

8. Personal Property

- (1) All personal property belonging to a student should be marked with the student's name
- (2) Valuables/money should not be left in bags or coats
- (3) Personal property is taken to school at owner's risk. Items such as MP 3 players may not be used during class time. Such items, including ear phones, should not be visible and will be confiscated in these cases
- (4) Students should never interfere with another student's property, including school bags
- (5) Students will cooperate with the school management in all efforts to recover missing property

Mobile Phones and other Electronic Communication Devices:

The following is the School Policy regarding mobile phones and other electronic communication devices:

- Students are permitted to use mobile phones under direction of staff.
- Otherwise phones are to be turned off in class on corridors and on the campus generally between classes.
- Students using phones without permission will be requested to turn off phones
- Where the student fails to comply or who persistently uses phone without permission, Parents/Guardians will be required to collect the phone or student and phone as students will not be permitted to class.
- Persistent offenders will not have permission to take phones to school.
- Should the need arise, a student may use the school phone with the permission of a member of staff to contact Parents/Guardians.
- Parents/Guardians may also make contact with their children through the school office.

The school takes no responsibility for missing devices

Roles and Responsibilities

Parents/Guardians

It is recognised and acknowledged that parents/guardians are the primary educators of their child. As a partner in the education provided by Scoil Uí Mhuirí, parents/guardians should ensure that:

- their child attends school regularly and on time
- the school is informed of reasons for absences, late arrivals or early departures by providing a note in the School Journal
- they sign the School Journal when requested
- their child cooperates fully with the school's dress code
- their child is supplied with all the necessary books, equipment and materials for participation in all lessons

- they themselves and their child are familiar with the Code of Behaviour and other relevant policies of the school and they understand and accept these.
- they sign the School Charter accepting the Code of Behaviour
- they maintain contact with the school and are supportive of the authority of the staff of the school
- they encourage their child to be supportive of and cooperative with the teaching and learning activities provided by the staff of the school
- they make themselves available to support the school authorities when necessary

Class Teacher

Each teacher not only instructs students in the course content of the particular subject but works to ensure that each student is enabled to derive the maximum benefit from the class, develop a good pattern of study and homework and reach the highest standards possible. The teacher has primary responsibility for discipline within his/her own classroom and he/she may give extra work, may detain or may otherwise deal with inadequate work or disruptive behaviour in his/her classroom.

In general the teacher should handle all the day-to-day problems that arise in the classroom. Each teacher must apply the code of behaviour in a fair and just manner. Punishment to be effective must be known and understood by all the class. Such punishment should normally take the form of extra work or loss of privileges.

Students must never be put to stand outside the door of the classroom unsupervised.

The class teacher should:

- Create a classroom environment which is conducive to learning
- Ensure all students are aware and understand the rules of the classroom
- Ensure all students are aware of their responsibilities to have the required books and materials necessary for participation in class work
- Establish classroom routines which ensure good discipline
- Prepare classes and encourage students in such a way that students are academically challenged at appropriate levels by taking into account different learning styles, emotional development, rates of learning and levels of confidence
- Ensure that at all times the learning experience contributes to the development and growth of a positive self concept
- Promotes and encourages respect for self and for others

Class Tutor

The Class Tutor is assigned to a particular tutor class and has a special role in the life of that class for the entire year. He/she aims to create a well motivated, happy class group where each member is valued and where high standards in all aspects of the student's life are encouraged. In the relationship of trust and respect that develops between the Class Tutor and the tutor class, there are opportunities to discuss and deal

with concerns of a general or an individual nature. The role of the Class Tutor is primarily pastoral in nature. He/she will:

- Develop a good relationship with his/her Form Class
- Work with Form Class to raise standards in terms of academic achievement and general behaviour
- Monitor, encourage, advise, guide and set targets to encourage success.
- Support Class Teacher if requested
- Give instruction on the correct use of the School Journal
- Monitor the School Journal on a monthly basis or more often if necessary
- Sign off on the examination reports home for their class groups

Year Head

The Year Head has a vital function of leading, co-ordinating and inspiring the students of a particular year group and liaising with the class teachers involved as well as with the Principal and Deputy Principal. The responsibilities of the Year Head include the following:

- Encourage all students to achieve their potential
- Acknowledge improvement and success within the Year Group
- Monitor attendance, punctuality, school uniform and general progress
- Take morning assemblies and registration
- Follow up on students not making progress
- Deal with more serious or persistent breaches of discipline
- Support Class Tutors in relation to raising standards

Role of Deputy Principal

The Deputy Principal assists the Principal in the day-to-day running of the school and in its internal organisation, management and discipline. In the absence of the Principal, he takes responsibility for the day-to-day running of the school and adopts the responsibilities of the Principal.

Role of Principal

The Principal is responsible for the day-to-day running of the school and for its internal organisation, management and discipline. Through her leadership she aims to create the ethos conducive to high standards of teaching and learning so that, in line with the school's Mission Statement, every member of the school community can develop to his or her potential within a context which values each of its members. In consultation with all the partners, she works for the overall good of the school community.

Disciplinary Procedures

Introduction

Disciplinary procedures are organised within the context of a pastoral care system which seeks to ensure that the maximum opportunities are afforded to students to remedy any behaviours which are detrimental to themselves or to other students. In general, the vast majority of students respond to an early warning from teachers, to a reprimand or indeed a light punishment exercise. A small number of students, however, demand further action and the Disciplinary Procedures outlined below are intended as a means of dealing fairly and effectively with this group. The system involves students being referred by the Class Teacher through a process which may at different stages involve the Class Tutor, Year Head, Deputy Principal, Principal and Parents. At each stage of the process the emphasis will be on helping the student to understand the negative consequences of his/her behaviour and on trying to work out a programme of action which will help the student to achieve his/her academic and social potential.

Disciplinary Process

1. Breach of Code of Behaviour– First Occasion

Students talking in class, poor or no homework, being cheeky, throwing litter, abuse of property (minor), causing a disturbance, being late for class, visiting lockers or toilets without permission and other such offences.

Teacher Response:

- Teacher will reason with student and may issue a warning or caution

2. Breach of Code of Behaviour – Second Occasion

A further occurrence similar to those outlined at Step 1 above.

Teacher Response:

- Teacher administers a suitable punishment in line with the sanctions, from items 1-5, described in the Summary of Sanctions section below
- Parents may be informed by the Class Teacher using the Standard Note or with a note written in the Student Journal with a copy of the note retained by the Class Teacher. Notes to Parents will be as clear and explicit as possible regarding the type of misconduct being reported. All yellow copies of notes should be put into the Year Head's pigeon hole in staffroom
- Parents may also be informed by a phone call

3. Breach of Code of Behaviour – Third Occasion

Teacher Response:

- The Class Teacher will apply a further sanction from Summary of Sanctions list from items 1-7

- The Class Teacher may at this point or indeed at any stage in the Discipline Process consult with the Class Tutor who will approach the problem from a pastoral perspective
- Parents may be informed as at Step 2 above

4. Breach of Code of Behaviour - Fourth Occasion

Teacher Response:

- The Class Teacher administers a suitable sanction from Summary of Sanctions list items 1-7
- Parents are informed as at step 2 above
- Student may be referred to the Year Head. The Year Head will take action if three notes have been forwarded detailing breach of rules by the same student

Year Head Response:

- Year Head may administer a further sanction from the list of sanctions (items 1-13 in Summary of Sanctions) and give the Student one further opportunity to reform
- Alternatively the Year Head may decide to contact parents to discuss whatever action is to be taken
- The Year Head may decide to invite parents to the school to discuss pupil's progress and level of cooperation and compliance with the School Charter

5. Breach of Code of Behaviour– Fifth Occasion

Teacher Response:

- Teacher refers student to Year Head

Year Head Response:

- Year Head administers a suitable sanction from Summary of Sanctions list items 1-11
- Parents will be required to attend a meeting in school to seek to resolve the current issue

6. Breach of Code of Behaviour – Sixth Occasion

Teacher Response:

- Teacher refers student to Year Head

Year Head Response:

- Year Head refers Student to Deputy Principal or Principal

Deputy Principal / Principals Response:

When a student is referred to the Deputy Principal/ Principal after all of the previously outlined procedures has been exhausted, the following procedures will ensue:

- Principal/Deputy Principal will meet with the student and explain the seriousness of the situation. The student may be suspended
- Parents will be required to attend a meeting of a Discipline Committee – comprising Principal, Deputy Principal, Year Head and one other teacher, as appropriate
- A Contract of Future Conduct will be negotiated and entered into, signed by all parties
- If the student defaults on this contract, the student will be suspended to home until parents meet the Discipline Committee again
- If the student's behaviour does not improve, and having exhausted all possible avenues to resolve the problems, the case may be taken to the Board of Management
- Should the Board of Management recommend permanent exclusion, procedures will follow sections 28/29 of the Education Act 1998
- The Principal reserves the right to deal with any referral as she deems appropriate, taking all factors into consideration

It is school policy to keep records of student behaviour throughout his school career.

Summary of Sanctions

1. Verbal reprimand
2. Separation from peers
3. Corrective written work e.g. transcription of appropriate passages, completion of penalty sheets, writing of apology, re-doing shoddy exercises
4. Work chores during recreation time
5. Extra school related work to be done during recreation time
6. Phone call or note home to parents alerting them to difficulties
7. Being put 'On Report'. This will be reserved for the Year Head.
8. Withdrawal of privilege
9. Payment of compensation, token or in full, for unjust damage or injury
10. Internal suspension – staying under the supervision of a teacher for a specific period
11. Letter to parents, with formal warning, requiring them to take action
12. Being sent home to bring parents in to discuss behaviour
13. Parent sitting in class with student
14. Suspension from school
15. Refusal of character reference
16. Expulsion from school

Note:

In some cases where more serious breaches of the Code of Behaviour might occur, students may be referred directly on a first offence to the Year Head, Deputy Principal or Principal. These may include, for example, abusive behaviour towards a teacher or student, bullying, theft, causing malicious damage to property or bringing the School into disrepute.

Policy on Suspension

The School Authorities reserve the right to suspend a student from school: □
When the student's behaviour is a persistent cause of significant disruption to the learning of others and to the teaching process in the classroom or in any learning environment

- When there is a real and immediate threat to the safety of others or to the student by continuing in the school at this time
- Serious and/or persistent damage to property
- When all other efforts have failed to bring about an improvement in the student's behaviour
- Immediate suspension may be imposed for instances of serious misbehaviour

Procedures for Suspension

- The student will be informed of the decision to suspend and will be given an opportunity to respond
- Where a suspension is to be imposed, the Principal/Deputy Principal will contact the student's parents/guardians to inform them of the decision to suspend, reasons for this decision and any conditions attached to the student's return to school
- For instances of gross misbehaviour, an immediate suspension may be imposed and arrangements made with the parents/guardians for the immediate removal of the student from school. The Principal/Deputy Principal will arrange to meet with the parents/guardians to explain the reasons for the suspension and any conditions attached to the student's return to school
- All suspensions will be confirmed in writing. The letter will confirm the period of the suspension, the reasons for the suspension, the arrangements for return to school and any commitments to be entered into by the student and the parents as part of these arrangements

Appeal against Suspension

- Parents/Guardians and a student who is over the age of eighteen have a right of appeal to the VEC against a decision to suspend a student. The appeal shall be made in writing as soon as possible
- Where a student is suspended for a period that would bring the total suspension of the student to 20 days in a school year, the parents, or a student aged 18 or over, may appeal the suspension under section 29 of the Education Act 1998. This appeal must be made in the first instance to the VEC
- The School Authorities reserve the right to insist that a student remain at home pending the hearing of an appeal.

Grounds for Removal/Reduction of a Suspension

A suspension may be removed or reduced in the following circumstances:

1. Where the Principal agrees that another sanction be applied after discussion with the parents
2. Where new circumstances come to light
3. When the period of time for which the suspension was given has elapsed
4. Successful appeal to the VEC
5. Successful appeal under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998

Education Welfare Act 2000

In implementing the policy on suspension, the school will comply with the requirements of the Education Welfare Act 2000 in relation to notifying the Education Welfare Officer where cumulative suspensions are for twenty days or more.

Policy on Permanent Exclusion from School

Grounds for Permanent Exclusion

- Where the behaviour of the student is persistently having a seriously detrimental effect on the education of other students
- Where the student's continuing presence in the school poses a real threat to the safety of the student or of others
- Substance misuse, possession of illegal substances, possession of such substances with the intention to supply, illegal use of prescription drugs (ref. Substance Abuse Policy)
- Serious damage to school property or to the property of the school community
- Serious breaches of the School Policies
- Misconduct of a nature so serious that the good name of the school is brought into disrepute

Procedures for Permanent Exclusion

- Normally, permanent exclusion will only be considered as a last resort when all other options under the Code of Discipline and all support services that the school can reasonably access have been exhausted
- When permanent exclusion is proposed, the parents/guardians and the student will be informed that the VEC has been asked to consider expulsion and the reasons for this decision. This intention will also be communicated in writing
- The decision to permanently exclude rests with the VEC, following a recommendation by the Board of Management
- Where a decision to permanently exclude a student is reached, the VEC shall inform the parents/guardians in writing of the decision and of the right to appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998

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- The Board shall follow all procedures relating to the exclusion of a student that are laid down in the Education Welfare Act 2000

The principles of fair procedures and natural justice will be applied at all stages of the Disciplinary Process.

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