

## East Cork Community Special School

### Appropriate Behaviour Policy

#### 1. Introduction

East Cork Community Special School (East Cork CSS) provides an appropriate education for students aged from 4 to 18 years old who have a diagnosis of Autism and complex or severe learning needs. The school is under the patronage of Cork Education and Training Board.

This Appropriate Behaviour Policy is drawn up to ensure compliance with legal requirements and good practice as set out in “Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools” (NEWB 2008).

The school will provide parent(s)/guardian(s) with a copy of the Code of Behaviour before enrolment of their child into the school. Parents/Guardians will be asked to confirm in writing that the code is acceptable to them.

#### 2. School Ethos and Characteristic Spirit

East Cork Community Special School is a state, multid denominational, co-educational school underpinned by the core values of:

- Excellence in Education
- Care
- Equality
- Respect
- Community



### **3. Rationale**

This policy was developed to ensure:

- A positive, non-confrontational and autism friendly learning environment for our students.
- That every effort is made to create an environment where our students and the school community are safe in the school.
- That best practice in relation to promoting positive behaviour is maintained throughout the school.
- That the school functions in an orderly and harmonious way.

### **4. A Partnership Approach**

This policy has been developed in line with the ethos of East Cork CSS. The objective of our policy is to create a respectful and caring environment, in which every individual is given the best possible opportunity to grow and develop in a safe and a positive environment.

### **5. Aims of the Appropriate Behaviour Policy**

- To promote a positive and safe learning and working environment for all students, staff and visitors.
- To ensure the safety and wellbeing of all members of the school community.
- To support the delivery of teaching and learning.
- To work in partnership to create a positive atmosphere and culture in the school where each student and staff member feels valued.
- To encourage high expectations of all students in learning and in behaviour.
- To respect and to safeguard the rights and the dignity of every member of the school community.
- To allow the school to function in an orderly way where students can make progress in all aspects of their development.
- To create an atmosphere of respect, tolerance and consideration of others.
- To assist staff, parents/guardians and students in understanding the systems and procedures that form part of this Appropriate Behaviour Policy and to seek the cooperation of all in the application of these procedures.

### **6. School Context**

East Cork Community Special School is a special school which enrolls pupils with autism and complex or severe learning needs. The management of pupil behaviour will take account of this fact and decisions will be made in this context.

## **7. Roles and Responsibilities**

All school staff have an important responsibility to model high standards of behaviour, both in their dealings with students and with each other.

### The Board of Management

- Is responsible for ensuring that an Appropriate Behaviour Policy is prepared and implemented in the school.
- Has a duty of care to provide a safe environment for students and staff in the school.
- Supports the Principal and staff in implementing the policy.

### The Principal

- Has overall responsibility for the implementation of the Appropriate Behaviour Policy.
- Creates and promotes a positive culture within the school.
- Ensure that the Code of Behaviour is implemented in a fair and consistent manner.
- Arranges for the review of the Code of Behaviour as required.

### Teachers

- Promote a positive climate in the classroom and in the school community.
- Create a positive learning environment that encourages and supports good behaviour.
- Implement the Appropriate Behaviour Policy in a fair, consistent, appropriate and reasonable manner.

### Students

- Are responsible for doing their best to adhere to the Appropriate Behaviour Policy.
- Are encouraged to assist staff in the maintenance of a positive and a safe environment for learning.
- Do their best to understand and practice school rules.
- Do their best to cooperate with staff.
- Do their best to treat other students and staff with respect.

### Parents/Guardians

- Support their child in the understanding and the implementation of the Appropriate Behaviour Policy.
- Communicate with the school in relation to any issues which may affect their child's behaviour or general well-being.
- Treat all members of the school community with respect.
- Work collaboratively with the staff on the implementation of any behaviour support plans

designed for their child.

## **8. Communication with Parents/Guardians**

Communication with parents/guardians is central to maintaining a positive approach to issues concerning their child's wellbeing and education. A high level of cooperation and open communication is seen as an important factor encouraging positive behaviour in the school. Parents/guardians are encouraged to talk in confidence to the Principal and/or teachers about any significant developments in their child's life which may affect the child's behaviour. The methods of parent/guardian-teacher communication used include:

- Text messages from the school to the parent(s)/guardian(s).
- Phone calls from school to parent(s)/guardian(s) and from parent(s)/guardian(s) to school.
- Notes from school to parent(s)/guardian(s) and from parent(s)/guardian(s) to school.
- Letters and emails from school to parent(s)/guardian(s) and from parent(s)/guardian(s) to school.
- Communication via the school website.
- Communications via approved school software platforms that may be used by the school.

## **9. School Rules**

Together we work towards standards of behaviour that are based on four general principles:

- Everyone has a right to be safe and to feel safe.
- All students have a right to learn.
- All teachers have a right to teach.
- School property must not be wilfully damaged.

### **General School Rules**

- We listen to each other.
- We listen to staff.
- We walk in school.
- We are kind to each other.
- We are gentle with each other.
- We do what our teacher asks us to do.
- We look after ourselves and our belongings in school.
- We take care with the belongings of others.
- We take care of our classroom.
- We are honest.
- We do our best.

### **Playground Rules**

- We stay in our playground.
- We are kind to each other.
- We take turns.
- We play nicely with our friends.
- We speak kindly to each other.
- We do what our teacher asks us to do.
- We wait until our teacher and/or SNA collects us from the playground.

### **Transport Rules**

- We stay in our seats until it is time to get off the bus.
- We wear our seatbelts.
- We are kind to each other.
- We are gentle with each other.
- We do what our teacher, SNA, escort or driver asks us to do.

## **10. School Incentives**

Good behaviour is acknowledged, encouraged and rewarded. There is a whole school approach to affirming and promoting good behaviour. A system of incentives and awards will be used to encourage students to follow the school rules.

Examples of some incentives that are regularly used include:

- Verbal praise and encouragement of positive behaviour.
- Displays of student work.
- Reward systems such as tokens, score boards, visual charts or choosing a preferred activity.
- Giving the student the responsibility of important jobs in the classroom or in the school.
- A positive comment sent home in a student's communication journal.
- Giving the student extra time on preferred activity.
- The use of positive stickers.
- In addition, each class teacher will develop and maintain class rules appropriate to the age and needs of the students. The class teacher and SNAs will work collaboratively in the implementation of these class rules.

## **11. Unacceptable Behaviour**

While we endeavour to achieve the highest level of good behaviour amongst our students, we recognise that when implementing the policy, consideration must always be given to the level of understanding of the individual student.

Instances of a minor misbehaviour are dealt with by the appropriate staff member. Parents/Guardians will be involved at an early stage in the management of their child's behaviour. Where minor misbehaviour is persistent, a Behaviour Support Plan with appropriate interventions and strategies will be employed. These measures will be reviewed, monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis for individual students.

**Possible sanctions:**

- Use of facial expression.
- Use of firm tone.
- Use of quiet time – removal from the group under adult supervision.
- Removal of others from the vicinity of the child.
- Removal to an appropriate area for safety and/or self-soothing reasons.
- Asking the Principal to speak to the child.
- Use of distracting activity.
- Note in the student journal.
- Use of appropriate resources to assist the student to regulate their behaviour.

Continuous instances of unacceptable behaviour may lead to an escalation to more serious sanctions described below.

**12. Individual Instances of challenging behaviour**

In the event of an episode of extreme challenging behaviour where the Principal and class team deem that there is a safety concern for staff and students and in the interest of the safety of all, the parent(s)/guardian(s) will be contacted to collect the student from school at the time of the incident.

**13. Gross Misbehaviour**

Gross misbehaviour refers to repeated examples of serious misconduct or an individual example of very serious misconduct. Examples include:

- Any behaviour that poses a risk to the welfare of another student or staff member.
- Threatening, aggressive or violent behaviour towards staff or other students.
- Causing physical hurt to others by pushing, kicking, biting, spitting, punching or any form of assault.
- Continuous disruption of the learning environment.
- Damage to school property that disrupts normal school activities.
- Inappropriate sexualized behaviour.

**14. Possible Sanctions for Gross Misbehaviour**

In the case of gross misbehaviour, all sanctions up to and including suspension and expulsion will be considered depending on the specific circumstances involved in the misbehaviour. In consultation with the student's Multi-Disciplinary Team and parent(s)/guardian(s) an Individual Behaviour Management

Plan will be put in place where a student is suspended due to exhibiting persistent serious misbehaviour or due to an instance of gross misbehaviour.

### **15. Procedures for dealing with a Suspension**

Before a serious sanction such as suspension is used, the normal channels of communication between school and parent(s)/guardian(s) will be utilised. Suspension will be in accordance with the Rules for National Schools and the Education Welfare Act 2000.

Suspension may be considered for gross misbehaviour or repeated instances of serious misbehaviour involving a health or safety risk.

- The parent(s)/guardian(s) will be informed by phone and/or in writing about the issue or incident and that it could result in suspension. Suspension will be part of an overall Student Behaviour Plan to address the student's misbehaviour.
- A meeting with the parent(s)/guardian(s) will be arranged to provide an opportunity to the parent(s)/guardian(s) to explore the evidence of misbehaviour and to respond.
- In the case of an immediate suspension, parent(s)/guardian(s) will be notified of the details of the incident and arrangements will be made for the student to be immediately collected from school.
- An immediate suspension will be invoked where there is an immediate risk to the health and/or safety of the pupil or other pupils or staff.

### **16. Period of Suspension**

A student will not be suspended for more than three days, except in exceptional circumstances where the Principal considers that a period of suspension longer than 3 days is required to achieve a particular objective such as putting an Individual Pupil Behaviour Plan in place, revising an existing one, or accessing the necessary resources to cater for the student's needs. The Education Welfare Officer will be informed if the period of the suspension exceeds 6 days.

The Principal may suspend a student for a period up to and including 3 days. Approval of the Single Manager/Board of Management is required for any suspension in excess of 3 days.

### **17. Appeal of Suspension**

The decision of the Principal to suspend a student may be appealed to the Board of Management.

Where the total number of days for which a student has been suspended in the current school year reaches 20 days, the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the student, or the student aged 18 years or over, may appeal the suspension under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998. At the time when parent(s)/guardian(s) are being notified of a suspension that will take the total for the academic year above 20 days, they will also be informed of their right to appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education.

## **18. Procedures in respect of expulsion**

Expulsion may be considered in an extreme case, in accordance with the Rules for National Schools and the Education Welfare Act 2000. The Single Manager/Board of Management has the authority to expel a student. A proposal to expel a student requires serious grounds and will only be considered under exceptional circumstances after every effort has been made to support and assist students and to address the severe challenging behaviours. The NEWB (2008) guidelines and procedures on expulsion will be followed.

The following procedures will apply:

1. The parent(s)/guardian(s) and the student are informed about the details of the alleged misbehaviour and that it could result in expulsion.
2. At a meeting, the parent(s)/guardian(s) and the student are given an opportunity to respond to the complaint of gross misbehaviour before a decision is made and before a sanction is imposed. This may be an opportunity for parent(s)/guardian(s) to make a case for lessening the sanction, and for the school to explore with parents how best to address the student's behaviour.
3. If a student and the parent(s)/guardians fail to attend the meeting, the Principal will write to them, advising of the gravity of the matter, the importance of attending a re-scheduled meeting, and failing that, the duty of the school authorities will be to make a decision to respond to the inappropriate behaviour.
4. At a further meeting, parent(s)/guardians and the student are informed that the Principal is proceeding to notify the Single Manager/Board of Management of her/his recommendation to the Single Manager/Board of Management for it to expel the student. This will also be conveyed in writing to the parent(s)/guardian(s).
5. The parent(s)/guardian(s) will be provided with records of the allegations against the student and the grounds on which the Principal is recommending expulsion to the Board of Management.
6. A meeting of the Single Manager/Board of Management will be convened to consider the recommendation from the Principal to the Single Manager/Board of Management to expel the student.
7. The Principal and parent(s)/guardians will be invited to attend a Single Manager/Board of Management hearing where both parties will be given the opportunity to present their respective cases for the Board to consider.
8. If the Single Manager/Board of Management decides to expel the student, the Board will write to the parent(s)/guardian(s), the Principal and the Education Welfare Officer to inform them of their intention to expel.

9. The student cannot be expelled before the passing of twenty school days from the date on which the EWO receives this written notification.

10. Within twenty school days of receipt of notification from the Single Manager/Board of Management of its intention to expel the student, the EWO will make all reasonable efforts to hold individual consultations with the Principal, the parent(s)/guardian(s) and the student and convene a meeting of those parties who agree to attend. The purpose of the consultations and the meeting is to ensure that arrangements are made for the student to continue in education. The Principal may consider it appropriate to suspend a student during this time, where there is the likelihood that the continued presence of the student during this time will seriously disrupt the learning of others or represent a threat to the safety of other students or staff.

11. When the twenty school day period following notification to the EWO has elapsed, and the Single Manager/Board of Management remains of the view that the student should be expelled, a meeting will be held to confirm the decision. The parent(s)/guardian(s) will be notified in writing that the expulsion will now proceed.

12. The parent(s)/guardian(s) and the student will be advised of their right to appeal this decision to the Secretary General of the Department of Education.

### **19. Conduct of the Single Manager/Board of Management expulsion hearing.**

The meeting for the purpose of an expulsion hearing will be properly conducted in accordance with Board Procedures:

- The Principal and the parent(s)/guardian(s), or a student aged 18 years or over, put the case to the Board in the presence of each other.
- Each party will be allowed to question the evidence of the other party directly.
- After both sides have been heard, the Single Manager/Board of Management will ensure that the Principal, the parent(s)/guardian(s) and the student are not present for the Board's deliberations. Both parties will leave the meeting at the same time.
- The Board will inform the parent(s)/guardian(s) and the Principal in writing of its decision and the next steps in the process.

### **20. Appeals Procedure**

Under Section 29 of the Education Act (1998) parents/guardians (or students who have reached the age of 18) are entitled to appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education against a decision of the Single Manager/Board of Management to permanently exclude a student from a school.

Appeals must be made within 42 days from the date the decision of the school was notified to the parents/guardians.

## **21. Record Keeping**

A standardised system of record keeping for the recording of misbehaviour will be implemented throughout the school. This will be in line with the school's Records Retention Schedule.

A standardised recording system will allow the school to track each student's behaviour and check whether efforts to change negative behaviours are working.

A written record of behaviour may be kept in relation to a student's behaviour in the classroom or when engaging in any other school activity

## **22. Notification of a Child's absence from School**

An Appropriate Behaviour Policy must describe the procedures to be followed by parents when they are notifying the school about a child's absence. The procedures to be followed by parents in relation to a child's absence are:

- Pupils are expected to attend school on all official school days.
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) must inform the school of their child's absence for any reason.
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) must inform the school on the first day of absence by phoning the school and on the child's return to school by means of a note explaining the absence.
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) can inform the school if they know in advance of the absence.
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) need to inform the school about the reasons for absence following a period of absence.
- Failure to notify the school about a student's absence will be followed up by phone call/text message/email from the teacher.
- Parents will be notified when their child's attendance is a cause of concern (15 days).
- TUSLA may be notified when a child has been absent for 20 days.

## **23. Ratification and review**

This policy will be reviewed periodically as required depending on the developing nature of the school.

Signed on behalf of Cork Education and Training Board:



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**Single Manager**