

# River Valley Community National School



## **Positive Behaviour Code**

## 1. Rationale

Under section 23 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, the Board of Management of each school must prepare and make available a code of behaviour for its students. The Act requires that the school code of behaviour is prepared in accordance with Guidelines issued by the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB).

The code of behaviour is the set of programmes, practices and procedures that together form the school's plan for helping students in the school to behave well and learn well. A code of behaviour is necessary to enhance the learning environment where children can make progress in all aspects of their development.

The code of behaviour helps the school community to promote the school ethos, relationships, policies, procedures and practices that encourage good behaviour and prevent unacceptable behaviour. The code of behaviour helps teachers, other members of staff, students and parents to work together for a happy, effective and safe school.

The code expresses the vision, mission and values of the school. It translates the expectations of staff, parents and students into practical arrangements that will help to ensure continuity of instruction to all students. It helps to foster an orderly, harmonious school where high standards of behaviour are expected and supported.

The code of behaviour enables school authorities to strike an appropriate balance between their duty to maintain an effective learning environment for all and their responsibility to students whose behaviour presents a challenge to the teaching and learning process. The code of behaviour is a key tool in enabling the school authorities to support the learning of every student in the school.

Maintaining a harmonious environment can present a challenge to schools, given competing needs, time pressures and varying capacities or readiness to learn. A code of behaviour that has the support of the school community can go a long way to helping schools to meet this challenge successfully.

## 2. Education and Welfare Act (2000)

The Education (Welfare) Act 2000 sets out certain matters that must be included in a code of behaviour. Section 23(2) of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 says:

*The board of management of a recognised school shall, after consultation with the principal of, the teachers teaching at, the parents of students registered at, and the educational welfare officer assigned functions in relation to, that school, prepare, in accordance with subsection (2), a code*

*of behaviour in respect of the students registered at the school (hereafter in this section referred to as a “code of behaviour”).*

*A code of behaviour shall specify—*

*(a) the standards of behaviour that shall be observed by each student attending the school;*

*(b) the measures that may be taken when a student fails or refuses to observe those standards;*

*(c) the procedures to be followed before a student may be suspended or expelled from the school concerned;*

*(d) the grounds for removing a suspension imposed in relation to a student; and*

*(e) the procedures to be followed relating to notification of a child’s absence from school.*

*(3) A code of behaviour shall be prepared in accordance with such guidelines as may, following consultation by the Board with national associations of parents, recognised school management organisations and trade unions and staff associations representing teachers, be issued by the Board.*

*(4) The principal of a recognised school shall, before registering a child as a student at that school in accordance with section 20, provide the parents of such child with a copy of the code of behaviour in respect of the school and may, as a condition of so registering such*

*child, require his or her parents to confirm in writing that the code of behaviour so provided is acceptable to them and that they shall make all reasonable efforts to ensure compliance with such code by the child.*

*(5) The principal of a recognised school shall, on a request being made by a student registered at the school or a parent of such a student, provide the student or parent, as the case may be, with a copy of the code of behaviour in respect of the school concerned.*

In order to comply with these requirements, and in order to have the best chance of achieving its objectives, the code of behaviour should address:

- the standards of behaviour expected in the school
- the plan for promoting good behaviour
- the ways in which the school responds to unacceptable behaviour
- the plan for implementing the code of behaviour
- school procedures for the use of suspension and expulsion.

### 3. Vision

River Valley Community National School is a multi-denominational school which welcomes pupils from all backgrounds. Our school aims to provide a happy, secure and friendly learning environment, where children, parents, teachers, special needs assistants, ancillary staff and Board of Management work in partnership. We hope to foster this ideal in cooperation with our parents/guardians. Each individual is valued, encouraged and respected for their uniqueness and facilitated to reach their full potential in a positive atmosphere. It is hoped that this policy reflects our ethos of respect for diversity, inclusion and partnership with parents and our community.

We ask our parents/guardians to sign a code of behaviour on enrolment as a commitment to helping their child to adhere to the school rules and the overall development of a harmonious school environment. We have adopted a positive code of behaviour with emphasis on encouragement to meet high expectations so that good behaviour can prevail in our school.

Parents/guardians can support the school by encouraging their children to understand the importance of meeting the school's expectations and to always strive to be the best that they can be.

The Board of Management of the school has ultimate responsibility for behaviour in the school. Within the school, the overall day-to-day responsibility for behaviour rests with the principal. Each teacher has the responsibility for the maintenance of good behaviour and good order within his/her classroom while sharing a common responsibility for good behaviour within the school premises.

#### 4. Aims

The aims of the code of behaviour are:

- To create a positive learning environment that encourages and reinforces good behaviour.
- To promote self-esteem and positive relationships.
- To promote a reflective school community.
- To encourage consistency of response to both positive and negative behaviour.
- To foster a sense of responsibility and self-discipline in pupils and to support good behaviour patterns based on consideration and respect for the rights of others.
- To facilitate the education and development of every child.
- To foster caring attitudes to one another and to the environment.
- To ensure that the school's expectations and strategies are widely known and understood through the school website, availability of policies and an ethos of open communication.
- To encourage the involvement of both home and school in the implementation of this policy.

#### 5. Whole School Approach in Promoting Positive Behaviour

In River Valley Community National School, we recognise that a positive school ethos is based on the quality of relationships and the ways in which pupils, staff and parents/guardians treat

each other. This positive ethos permeates all the activities of the school and helps in forming a strong sense of social cohesion within the school. The Board of Management, principal, teachers, other school staff, parents and students have responsibilities at different levels for positive behaviour in the school. A whole-school approach requires the school to provide opportunities and support for these groups to enable them to understand and live up to these responsibilities and expectations.

**i. Staff**

Teachers and other staff members play important roles in the formation, in the review, updating and administration of the code. They bring to this work their professional expertise in understanding the links between behaviour and learning; their experience of what works to help students to behave well; and their knowledge of the school and of the school community. It is expected that staff model high standards of behaviour at all times.

**ii. Board of Management**

The Board of Management should:

- a. ensure that the school has a policy on, and procedures for, the use of suspension and expulsion that are in line with these Guidelines and with any additional requirements set down by the Patron
- b. ensure that all students and parents are advised about, and aware of, the school's policy for suspension and expulsion
- c. ensure that fair procedures are used for suspension and expulsion and that all staff are aware of those procedures
- d. take special care to ensure that the fair procedures are accessible to people with disabilities or those from different language or cultural backgrounds
- e. ensure that the Board of Management and the Principal are equipped for their roles in relation to the use of suspension and expulsion.

**iii. Parents**

Parental understanding and support for the implementation of the code of behaviour should be strengthened through activities such as:

- a) an introductory meeting for parents of new students, dealing specifically with the code, school standards,
- b) expectations for students and the role of parents in helping students to meet the standards
- c) encouraging parents to share information about anything that might affect a student's behaviour in school and making sure they know how to do so
- d) early warning systems to alert parents to concerns about a student's behaviour, so that ways of helping the student can be discussed and agreed
- e) clear channels through which parents can communicate any concerns they may have about a student and explore ways of helping the student
- f) information offered through the Parent Association, such as talks or workshops on behavioural matters and aspects of child and adolescent development
- g) parental involvement in reviewing and planning school policies, as part of school development planning.

iv. **Pupils**

Pupils have a responsibility to uphold the code of positive behaviour through their daily interactions with each other and members of the school community. Students will also have a role in the review of the code of good behaviour.

## 6. School Expectations

There will be high expectations of both students and staff in River Valley CNS.

Central to our school vision is the creation of a safe and happy educational environment where we respect and feel respected, we value and feel valued, we work together in partnership and strive each day to be the best that we can be.

Expectations serve to self-motivate and foster commitment. We will all be expected to:

1. Respect one another with our words and actions

2. Show kindness to others
3. Listen to one another
4. Do our best
5. Celebrate one another's success
6. Work as a team
7. Embrace our school motto "We are partners in learning"





## 7. Affirming and Recognising Positive Behaviour

Staff at River Valley CNS places a greater emphasis on affirming positive behaviour than on sanctions with the aim of helping children achieve their personal best, thus preparing them for further education, life and work. Our positive reinforcement strategies seek to provide encouragement to all children of all abilities and talents. Children will be encouraged, praised and listened to by adults in the school. Praise is earned by the maintenance of good standards as well as by particularly noteworthy personal achievements. Rates of praise for behaviour should be as high as for work. Reward systems vary from class to class and may change as the teacher deems appropriate throughout the year.

The celebration of success is important and the following can be used to reinforce positive behaviours:

- A quiet word or gesture to show approval
- A comment in a pupil's exercise book
- A visit to another member of Staff or to the Principal for commendation and name in the golden book
- A word of praise in front of a group or class a sticker on work
- A Superhero' WOW note
- A positive comment on seesaw
- Delegating some special responsibility or privilege
- A letter to parents acknowledging improvement from the principal
- **Fun on Friday!!**

Fun on Friday is a whole school initiative which aims to recognise and reward students who work hard to meet our school expectations each week.

## 8. Conduct

It is recognised that the best way to deal with negative behaviours is to prevent it. River Valley CNS has adapted a ***restorative and preventative approach to negative behaviours***.

Prevention is the best cure however there should be procedure for dealing with these when they occur.

Type	Examples	Prevent by	Steps to take
<b>Minor</b>	e.g shouting out, running in the building, talking out of turn, littering, unkind words and gestures, misusing school equipment	Expectations Busy breaks Positive reinforcement Proximal praise Special responsibilities	a. Record b. Use a private restorative conversation c. Create plan with child to improve d. Consequence relevant to the behaviour eg. reduction in Golden time
<b>Serious</b>	Unacceptable language and gestures, possession of dangerous objects, physical fighting, stealing, spitting, grabbing others	Stay Safe program Teaching explicit getting along strategies, classroom expectations, positive reinforcement of good behaviours	a. Record the incident b. Separate from peers c. Restorative conversation with injured party d. Phonecall to inform parents e. Design individual behaviour promise f. Link in with principal if needed
<b>Gross</b>	Deliberate acts of violence, bullying behaviour, health and safety risks to staff or students, wilful damage of school property, overt sexualised behaviour, leaving school premises without permission	Supports from outside agencies Expectations Explicit lessons on the school values	a. Record incident b. Inform principal c. Principal (or designated person) complete a restorative meeting and assigns the natural consequence to the actions d. Suspension (on a case by case basis) e. Expulsion in the case of highly dangerous and continued gross misdemeanours

## 9. Recording Behaviour

At River Valley CNS, we maintain strict record keeping measures to ensure the safety and appropriate management of behaviour in our school. The following are measures we have in

place to ensure that this happens.

**Incidents on yard** - Each teacher on yard duty has the responsibility to record any incidents relating to the inappropriate behaviour of pupil(s) in their personal yard book. They must also inform the relevant class teacher(s) of the incident as soon as possible, who will then make contact with the child's parents/guardians if necessary. The teacher on yard is responsible for recording any incident that they witness or that is reported to them during yard times on Aladdin and must attach the record to any pupil involved or affected by the incident.

**Incidents during class time** - teachers will record incidents which they deem to be inappropriate on Aladdin and make contact with relevant parent(s)/guardian(s) if necessary.

The principal is responsible for ensuring they monitor the documented reports on Aladdin at all times.

## 10. Procedures to Deal with Negative Behaviours

Procedures should be used to bring about a change in behaviour by:

- helping students to learn that their behaviour is inappropriate in context
- helping them to recognise the effect of their actions and behaviour on others
- helping students (in ways appropriate to their age and development) to understand that they have choices about their own behaviour and that all choices have consequences
- helping them to learn to take responsibility for their behaviour.

Strategies should:

- defuse and not escalate a situation
- preserve the dignity of all the parties
- be applied in a fair, consistent and transparent way
- be timely

Staff use agreed procedures and teachers know the level of procedure they are authorised to apply.

## 11. Responding to Conflict – Restorative Practice

River Valley CNS embraces restorative practices in a learning community where

relationships and good communications are valued. This restorative approach manages conflict, harm and tensions by building, repairing and/or restoring relationships. Restorative Practices (RP) is an approach to managing behaviour and resolving conflict in a way that is respectful and fair to everyone, making sure that everyone is heard.

Restorative dialogues have a list of two questions. One is for addressing challenging behaviour and the other for addressing someone who was harmed by the actions. Where two parties have mutually hurt one another, both lists of questions may be drawn from interchangeably.

Basic questions for responding to challenging behaviour:	Basic questions for helping someone that has been hurt by another's actions:
<p>What happened?            What were you thinking at the time?            What have you thought about since?            Who has been affected by what you did?            In what way?            What do you think you need to happen next?            What could you do differently next time?</p>	<p>What happened?            What were your thoughts at the time?            What have your thoughts been since?            How has this affected you and others?            What has been the hardest thing for you?            What do you think needs to happen next?</p>



## 12. Suspension and Expulsion

### Reasons for suspension

The Board of Management of a recognised school has the authority to suspend a student.

Where this authority is delegated to the Principal the delegation should be done formally and in writing.

Suspension should be a proportionate response to the behaviour that is causing concern.

Normally, other interventions will have been tried before suspension, and school staff will have reviewed the reasons why these have not worked.

The decision to suspend a student requires serious grounds such as that:

- the student's behaviour has had a seriously detrimental effect on the education of other students
- the student's continued presence in the school at this time constitutes a threat to safety
- the student is responsible for serious damage to property.
- a single incident of serious misconduct may be grounds for suspension.

The authority to suspend lies with the following persons:

- Principal (up to 3 days)
- Principal and Chairperson of BOM (up to 5 days)
- BOM (up to 10 days)

### Types of Suspension (Relevant to the school's context)

<b>Immediate suspension</b>	In some circumstances, the principal may suspend a child immediately if their continued presence in the school poses a safety risk to children and adults. Fair procedure as per the NEWB guidelines apply.
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<b>Informal/ unacknowledged suspension</b>	Exclusion of a child for <b>part</b> of the school day, or asking parents to keep children at home as a sanction, counts as a suspension. Suspension guidelines must be followed.
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### Procedure for Suspension

Parents are given **written** notification of period of suspension, reasons for suspension, arrangements for returning to school (including commitments by student and/or parents), provision of appeal to the Board of Management and notification of right to appeal if suspension exceeds 20 school days.

Where the total number of days for which the student has been suspended in the current school year reaches twenty days, the parents have the right to Appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills (Education Act 1998, section 29). Where there are repeated instances of serious misbehaviour, the Chairperson of the Board of Management will be informed and the parents will be requested in writing to attend at the school to meet the Chairperson and the Principal. If the parents do not give an undertaking that the pupil will behave in an acceptable manner in the future, the pupil may be suspended for a period. Prior to suspension, where possible, the Principal may review the case

in consultation with teachers and other members of the school community involved with due regard

to

- records of previous misbehaviours (their pattern and context)
- sanctions and other interventions used and their outcomes
- any relevant medical information.

Suspension will be in accordance with the Rules for National Schools and the Education Welfare Act.

### Removal of 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 Science directs that it be removed following an appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

### Reintegration following suspension

The school should have a plan to:

- Enable the child to catch up on work
- Support the resilience of the returning child
- Rebuild broken relationships with other students and teachers

### Expulsion

In the case of expulsion, the authority to expel will rest solely with the BOM/ Single Manager.

### Grounds for expulsion

- behaviour is a persistent cause of significant disruption to the learning of others or to the teaching process
- the continued presence of the pupil constitutes a real and significant threat to the safety of the staff, pupils, child themselves or others
- where the pupil is responsible for serious damage of property

The difference between behaviours that warrant suspension and expulsion are

- the degree of seriousness and persistence of behaviour
- where an expulsion is considered a series of interventions will have been attempted by the school
- all possibilities within the power of the school of changing the child's behaviour will have been exhausted (with the exception of cases warranting automatic expulsion)

## Automatic Expulsion

Automatic and immediate expulsion may be accepted on cases of:

- sexual assault
- possessing illegal drugs/ selling illegal drugs to other pupils
- actual violence or physical assault
- serious threat of violence against another pupil or member of staff

The following procedures in respect for expulsion will generally be followed.

- a detailed investigation will be carried out under the direction of the principal
- a recommendation by the principal to expel the child will be given to the BOM
- the BOM will consider the principal's recommendation and will hold a hearing
- the BOM will decide whether or not expulsion is appropriate
- the EWO (Educational Welfare officer) will be informed and there will be a 20 day cooling off period after which a confirmation or otherwise of the decision to expel will be decided
- Decision to appeal the decision may be made by the student or parents to the Secretary General of the DES under section 29 (1998)

### **13. Children with Special Needs**

All children are required to comply with the code of behaviour. However, the school recognises that children with special needs may require assistance in understanding certain rules. Specialised behaviour plans will be put in place in consultation with parents/guardians and the class teacher, SEN teacher, principal and Inclusion Support Assistant where relevant. The school will work closely with parents/guardians to ensure that optimal support is given. Cognitive development will be taken into account at all times. Professional advice from psychological assessments will be analysed and sought if appropriate. Peer support may be used in certain circumstances. This is when the children in the class or school are taught strategies to assist a pupil with special needs adhere to the rules.

This will be done in a supportive and safe way, acknowledging and respecting the difference in all individuals.



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

Communicating with parents/guardians is central to maintaining a positive approach to dealing with children. Parents/guardians and teachers should develop a joint strategy to address specific difficulties, in addition to sharing a broader philosophy which can be implemented at home and in school.

A high level of co-operation and open communication is seen as an important factor encouraging positive behaviour in the school. Parents/guardians are encouraged to talk in confidence to teachers about any significant developments in a child's life (in the past or present), which may affect the child's behaviour.

This communication should be in keeping with the school's communications policy.

#### **15. Implementation, Review, Ratification & Communication**

The Board of Management of River Valley Community National School supports the code of behaviour. This code of behaviour will be reviewed formally biannually or sooner if deemed necessary by the Principal and/or the Board of Management. As with all our policies, parents have access to this policy on our school website and on request to the school office.

*Ratified by the BOM of River Valley CNS*

