

CODE OF BEHAVIOUR FOR STUDENTS

Our school has a central role in supporting the social and moral development as well as the academic development of each child. We strive to create an atmosphere where every student is afforded an opportunity to develop to his/her potential. To achieve this, students are expected to behave and this must be supported by parents/guardians. In seeking to define acceptable standards of behaviour it is acknowledged that *these are goals to be worked towards rather than expectations that are either fulfilled or not.*

Our students bring a wide variety of behaviours with them to school each day. Children need limits set for them in order to feel secure and develop the skills for co-operation. Parents/guardians can co-operate with the school by encouraging their children to understand the need for school rules, by visiting the school and by talking to the members of staff.

A code of behaviour has been established to ensure that the individuality of each child is accommodated while also acknowledging the right of each child to education in a relatively disruption free environment.

Rationale - Why devise it?

It is a requirement under DES Circular 20/90 on School Discipline and the Education Welfare Act 2000, Section 23 (1). It is part of our School Development Plan and NEWB Guidelines.

Relationship to the School Mission and Spirit

Enable Ireland Sandymount School is dedicated to providing the highest quality of learning, teaching, and care of pupils under our instruction. In partnership with the parents/guardians, families and/or residential personnel of our pupils; we seek to provide *individual, intellectual, emotional, social, physical and spiritual development.*

As reflected in our mission statement, we work towards standards of behaviour that are based on the basic principles of honesty, respect, consideration and responsibility. It follows that acceptable standards of behaviour are those that reflect these principles.

We believe that each child is entitled to an educational provision, regardless of individual levels of attainment and functioning. While enabling each pupil to develop his/her potential to the full, we also want our pupils to be happy in school and to enjoy their time here. We promote what children can do rather than what they can't.

Every child in our school has a right to learn in an atmosphere that is conducive to their physical, academic, spiritual, social and moral development in a safe orderly environment.

Aims of the Code

This Code of Behaviour Policy will help to foster harmonious relationships and co-operation between staff, parents/guardians and pupils. It aims:

- To create a positive learning environment that encourages and reinforces good behaviour.
- To promote self-esteem and positive relationships.
- To encourage consistency of response to both appropriate and inappropriate 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 enable teachers to teach without disruption.
- To ensure that the school's expectations and strategies are widely known and understood through the availability of policies and an ethos of open communication.
- To encourage the involvement of both home and school in the implementation of this policy.
- To provide guidance for pupils, teachers and parents/guardians on behavioural expectations.
- To provide for the effective and safe operation of the school.
- To allow the School to function in an orderly and harmonious way.
- To create an atmosphere of respect, tolerance and consideration for others.
- To ensure the safety and well-being of all members of the school community.
- To assist parents/guardians and pupils to understand the systems and procedures that form part of the Code of Behaviour and to seek their co-operation in the application of these procedures.

Implementation

A high standard of behavior requires a strong sense of community and a high level of cooperation among staff and between staff, students and parents/guardians. There will be an emphasis on promoting and reinforcing positive behaviour. Rules will be kept to a minimum, and will be applied in a fair and consistent manner, with due regard to the age of the pupils and to their individual differences. Where difficulties arise, parents/guardians will be contacted at an early stage.

Before/After School

Parents/guardians are reminded that the school does not accept responsibility for pupils before the official opening time of 9.00 am or after the official closing time of 2.40pm except where pupils are engaged in an extra-curricular activity organised by the school and approved by the Board of Management.

Responsibilities

The Board of Management will:

- Provide a comfortable, safe environment
- Support the Principal and staff in implementing the code
- Ratify the code
- Ensure staff will be provided training in the implementation of student behaviour plans and in crisis de-escalation techniques, where deemed necessary

The Principal will:

- Promote a positive climate in the school
- Ensure that the Code of Behaviour is implemented in a fair and consistent manner
- Arrange for review of the Code, as required



Classroom Staff will

- Support and implement the school's code of behaviour
- Create a safe working environment for each pupil
- Prepare school work and correct work done by pupils
- Recognise and provide for individual talents and differences among pupils
- Be courteous, consistent and fair to both fellow staff and students
- Refrain from using personal telephones during school hours outside of scheduled breaks. Personal telephone calls should not be conducted in the school corridors or classrooms during school hours, this also applies to text messaging and internet
- Keep opportunities for disruptive behaviour to a minimum
- Deal appropriately with minor problem behaviour
- Keep a record of instances of serious challenging behaviour or repeated instances of problem behaviour
- Provide support for colleagues
- Communicate with parents/guardians when necessary and provide reports on matters of mutual concern
- All staff will adhere to the positive Ethos of the school, in order to maintain a positive learning environment
- Verbal reprimands and/or punishment will be kept to a minimum
- Ensure consistency in implementing behaviour plans
- Ensure parents/guardians are informed of behaviour support strategies and learning goals to support their child; and provide training and support to parents/guardians where possible
- Judgment and common sense should be exercised by all staff to maintain the Health and Safety of everyone

Parents/Guardians' will

- Ensure that children attend regularly and punctually and provided written notice of their children's absences to the school.
- Be interested in, support and encourage their children's school work
- Be familiar with the code of behaviour and support its implementation
- Co-operate with the class staff in instances where their child's behaviour is causing difficulties for themselves and others
- Communicate with the school in relation to any problems which may affect child's progress/behaviour
- Become familiar with the behaviour support strategies and learning goals necessary to support their child and ensure success and generalisation outside of the school environment
- Be courteous towards pupils and staff
- Make an appointment to meet with a Teacher/ Principal/ Behaviour Support Staff through the School office
- Keep to scheduled appointment times
- Protect the confidentiality of students and staff
- Respect school property and encourage their children to do the same
- Supervise their children on school premises when collecting other pupils or visiting the school
- Label pupils' property

In the event of a grievance with a policy or procedure, the following process applies

- in the first instance, raise the issue with the relevant teacher
- if no resolution is found, consult with the Principal



- if there is still no satisfactory outcome, contact the Board of Management
- if the situation is not yet resolved a parent/guardian can contact the Department of Education regarding the issue at hand.

Whole-School Approach

All adults encountered by the children at school have an important responsibility to model high standards of behaviour, both in their dealings with the children and with each other, as their example has an important influence on our student cohort.

The school strives to create a positive climate with realistic expectations and:

- Promote, through example, honesty and courtesy
- Provide a caring environment
- Encourage relationships based on kindness, respect and understanding of the needs of others
- Ensure fair treatment for all regardless of age, gender, race, ability and disability
- Show appreciation of the efforts and contribution of all those in the school community

School Rules

- **Be Safe:** I keep my hands and feet to myself.
- **Be Ready:** I listen and follow direction.
- **Be Respectful:** I respect myself, others and my environment.
- **Be Responsible:** I am responsible for myself.
- **Be Kind:** I use kind thoughts, words and actions.

Provision of Behaviour Support

Some of our students at Enable Ireland Sandymount School may receive a behavior support service in connection with our Enable Ireland team. We are aware that we have a responsibility to ensure that students who receive this service are protected from exploitation, abuse, neglect, and unlawful and degrading treatment. All activities related to behaviour support will be supportive and respectful of the individual needs and goals of the student, as identified through an Individual Education Plan, and based on a current and comprehensive assessments.

In addition, all services provided to our students will be in accordance with the standards and guidelines outlined in the Department of Health Children First Child Protection Guidelines & more specifically Enable Ireland Sandymount School's Child Protection Policy

Enable Ireland Sandymount School's approach to Behaviour Support acknowledges that the student's behavioural difficulties may be linked to their triad of impairment, sensory sensitivities and cognitive abilities of the individual. The school acknowledges that the students may have multiple and complex diagnosis and the impact this may have on behaviour. All of these factors will be assessed and will inform the approach taken when providing support. The school is committed to working with parents/guardians to help reduce problematic behaviours; however the complex needs of individual students will always inform the ultimate approach adopted.



Functional Analysis Approach

The school ethos supports a functional analysis approach to the management of challenging behaviour. We believe that behaviour that may present a challenge to others is adaptive and functional for the student; that is to say that the behaviour exists in the student's repertoire because it has been learned and serves a function for the student (e.g. a student may engage in aggressive or destructive behaviour as a means of escaping a task that he/ she finds particularly demanding).

The approach of school staff in Enable Ireland Sandymount School is to decrease challenging behaviour by teaching and reinforcing appropriate replacement behaviours that serve the same function (e.g. teaching the student an appropriate means of asking for a break from a demanding task without resorting to challenging behaviour).

All staff capitalise on learning opportunities throughout the day and across all school settings to teach appropriate functional communication using whatever supports necessary (e.g. gestures, verbal & visual prompts; schedules of reinforcement, communication devices & Lámh etc.) in order to minimise instances of challenging behaviour for all students.

The positive school ethos extends to all members of the school community adopting a positive, calm approach to challenges that may be encountered from time to time. Every effort should be made to ensure that the classroom and school environment is enriched with frequent opportunities for students and staff to encounter social praise and acknowledgement for achievements and to experience a varied schedule of activities to be enjoyed across the school day.

Strategies/incentives

Reinforcement strategies may be developed by staff to increase appropriate behaviour and/or reinforce the teaching of new skills. These may include, but are not limited to: social praise and acknowledgement; merit awards for achievements; token/points economies for work completed throughout the day; access to preferred items/ activities intermittently throughout the day; access to break-times following an appropriate request or the completion of a particular task; group-based reinforcement contingencies for rule-following/ appropriate behaviour. Assistance may be recruited from the psychology department of Enable Ireland to develop additional reinforcement strategies as required.

Please see Appendix 1 and 2: Restorative practices and proactive strategies to promote expected behaviours

Reducing challenging behaviour

Challenging behaviour may be defined as:

"Behaviour...of such an intensity, frequency or duration as to threaten the quality of life and/or the physical safety of the individual or others and is likely to lead to responses that are restrictive, aversive or result in exclusion." (Royal College of Psychiatrists et al, 2007)

As previously stated, we aim to decrease inappropriate behaviour by increasing appropriate behaviour. This is achieved through the employment of positive and reinforcement strategies. Only when data indicates that these positive measures have been tried and exhausted; or have been unsuccessful in eliminating or sufficiently reducing problem behaviour, should a reductive consequence be considered.



Reductive consequences refer to specific consequences that are applied contingent upon the occurrence of an undesired behaviour with the purpose of decreasing the likelihood of it recurring in the future. These consequences may include: verbal reprimands, the loss of privileges/ access to preferred items/ activities, a report to a parent/guardian, school principal, the requirement of the completion of an additional task in order to regain access to reinforcement schedules, restitution of the environment following disruptive behaviour, removal of attention from the teacher/ non-exclusionary time-out/exclusionary time out.

Parents/guardians must be informed of the regular planned use of reductive consequences such as the above in response to their child's behavior. Most importantly reductive consequences should never be used in isolation to target a reduction in a particular behaviour and should only be employed as an element within a comprehensive behaviour plan including reinforcement and teaching strategies to replace the inappropriate behaviour with an alternative functionally equivalent one.

Consultation with external professionals (NEPS, SESS, Enable Ireland, and any other support service) may be sought by the staff at Enable Ireland Sandymount School if the reductive consequences outlined above do not serve to reduce the specific challenging behaviour to a level that minimises health & safety risk to the student themselves, other students and the staff at Enable Ireland Sandymount School.

Please see Appendix 3 and 4: A systematic approach to responding to behavior and 'Why are these behaviours happening?'

A Behavioural Support Plan

A behavioural support plan (BSP) may be used for some of our students if required. It may form a component of a student's IEP that attempts to reduce behaviours that impede instruction with positive intervention strategies. The BSP may include the following elements:

1. A clear definition of the behaviour impeding instruction.
2. A reference to the key results of a Functional Behaviour Assessment (FA) if used. A functional assessment may be conducted to determine the purpose (function) the challenging behaviours serve for the student.
3. The intervention strategies to be used. These are selected based on the function(s) of the behaviours. Such strategies and supports are reinforcement based and may also include curriculum and instructional modifications, and changes in the classroom environment. These strategies may take a number of forms including skills teaching, generalisation planning, parent/guardian supports, reactive strategies, environmental adaptations, and direct interventions.
4. The behavioural objective(s) that state the agreed upon change in the form or rate of the inappropriate behaviour for the student along with a measurable criterion.

Steps in scripting/compiling a Behaviour Support Plan

The process by which behaviour is identified as requiring the further attention or analysis can take a number of forms. One potential identification of need takes the form of a referral from the students



parents/guardians regarding a behavioural issue of concern. Other examples are where the staff in the school witness a behavioural episode and report it to the School's Principal or class teacher.

The steps that will be followed in the identification of behaviours for further attention and in addition to the elements noted previously are as follows:

- Identification of behavioural issue requiring further analysis.
- Baseline of behavioural incidents will be taken.
- Observation of behaviour of student.
- Consult with parent/s of the student and ensure consent.
- Consult with staff working directly with the child/young person.
- Carry out functional assessment and/ or collect additional data.
- Consult behavioural literature and resources available from NEPS and DES.
- If necessary external multi-disciplinary support services will be consulted, particularly where students are receiving medication which may have an effect their behaviour.
- Receive the informed consent from the child/ young person's parent/guardian.*
- Training for staff implementing BSP and the signature of staff when the BSP has been explained.

Prohibited Practices

Prohibited practices by staff, which are criminal offences; may lead to legal action. Prohibited Practices include those that may not be unlawful, but are unethical.

Prohibited Practices include those that:

- Cause physical pain or serious discomfort
- Restrict access to basic needs or supports
- Are degrading or demeaning for the student
- Are aversive
- Are unethical

The safety, dignity & welfare of pupils are prioritised at all times. Aversive stimuli, which can include sounds, smells, tastes, visual images or physical sensations that cause pain/overall discomfort are never used.

Role of multidisciplinary team in BSP

All steps in the provision of behaviour support may require collaboration with a range of parties including (but not limited to):

- The student (where appropriate)
- The students' parents or guardians
- Significant others who are important to the child/young person (e.g. siblings, extended family members, friends/ where appropriate)
- Professionals who are involved with provision of care and/or support to our students (e.g. teacher, tutor, Occupational or Speech & Language therapist, neurologist, pediatrician, psychiatrist, Psychologist, and Behaviour)
- Practitioners from other disciplines who are involved in providing a service to the child/young person, or to others within their support system (e.g. mental health worker, Social worker or CAMHS teams for example.)



Medication & Behaviour support

Parents/guardians are asked to inform the school if their child is receiving any regular medication. Where prescribed medications are known to have a behavioural effect these possible effects will be factored in to all behaviour support measures.

Informed Consent

During the process of scripting a Behaviour Support Plan the proposed interventions are discussed with the parent/guardian and they are made aware of all potential outcomes or consequences of any proposed intervention. Consent will be sought in written form. The legal guardians will be presented with a consent request form and the behaviour support plan in question and their signature will be requested.

In the event of Parental/Guardian Consent not being granted

Behavioural interventions implemented in the school will only be done so with full parental/guardian support. In situations where parental/guardian support for the best practice intervention as selected is not forthcoming, a meeting will be held with the child/ young person's family to present and examine other suitable interventions available. The potential effectiveness, outcomes, and consequences of each intervention will be discussed with reference to the school's duty of care towards all its students and staff. After all outcomes and risks have been examined a decision will be proposed. If agreement can't be arrived at; the matter will be referred to the Board Of Management of Enable Ireland Sandymount School for consideration.

If the Board of Management and the family cannot arrive at an agreement then the matter will be referred to the Department of Education and Science for support and guidance. It may also be appropriate to involve the relevant external support services for the student in question.

Emergency Responses

Some students may present with extreme behaviours. Situations may arise where a parent/guardian cannot be contacted prior to a crisis situation. In this event, the staff will take the necessary steps to ensure the safety of the student, his/ hers teachers, and the other students in the school. An exceptional response may be required in situations where there is a clear and immediate risk of harm linked to behaviour(s). The risk may impact on the child/ young person or on others. In such circumstances immediate intervention may be considered necessary in order to manage the risk to the student and staff. This is referred to as an emergency response.

The incident must be recorded on a *behaviour incident report form* and will be completed by all staff involved in the incident. As such, it must be fully documented, the levels of injury reported and dealt with appropriately in accordance with *Health and Safety* requirements. A copy of all behaviour incident reports will be kept in the child/young person's file in school.

An exceptional behavioural response may require the use of emergency behavioural support in order to prevent serious self-injury or harm to another person. After any *emergency responses* the staff involved will be debriefed while the behaviour incident report form is completed and receive any supports that the school can provide. Their feedback on the incident will be requested and any changes that can be suggested. Key learning points are collated after such instances.



As soon as practicable after the *emergency response* has been managed, data should be collected and steps should be taken to have a *Behaviour Support Plan (BSP)* developed, if not one already; in accordance with the procedures outlined in this policy.

Enable Ireland Sandymount School will offer any support that it can to the child/ young person in question and the family of this individual.

CALMS

As noted, episodes of challenging behaviour may occur from time to time at varying levels of intensity. At all times the health and safety of all students and staff is our priority. The school may seek to use and adopt CALM® (Crisis and Aggression Limitation and Management), an evidenced based approach from the U.K. CALM has been developed as a set of procedures designed to avoid physical confrontation, to de-escalate a situation, and to manage crises in the safest way possible.

Staff may be requested to train in CALM procedures, and the school may apply for CALM accreditation if felt appropriate. The British Institute for Learning Disabilities (BILD) is the accreditation body.

CALM provides school staff with a repertoire of crisis management techniques; it is not intended to be used as a behaviour intervention program. Crisis management techniques may be prescribed as part of a comprehensive behaviour support plan for a student with a history of intense levels of challenging behaviour/ behaviour that may pose a risk to self/ others. In such cases informed parent/guardian consent must be obtained in writing for the use of the procedures. The school will document all instances where a CALM technique has been used. Consultation with external professionals (NEPS, SESS, and any other support service) may be sought when reporting suggests that incidents requiring crisis management are occurring at a high frequency.

Key points of crisis management:

1. Emergency procedures should only be used when there is a documented need to do so to protect the student, and/ or others in the environment
2. The protection of the health and safety of the person with whom intervention is taken should be paramount in the decision as to which emergency procedure is used
3. The use of emergency procedures should assess the factors leading up to its use and consideration of the measures, if any, that should be taken to reduce or eliminate the need to use the procedure in the future.

Duty of Care, Suspension and Expulsion

Before serious sanctions such as suspension are used, the normal channels of communication between school and parents/guardians will be utilised. Communication with parents/guardians may be verbal or by letter depending on the circumstances. Where there are repeated instances of serious challenging behaviour, the parents/guardians will be requested to attend at the school to meet the Principal & other key staff.

Should it be assessed that the Enable Ireland Sandymount School can't fulfil its *duty of care* toward a child/ young person due to the consequences of challenging behaviour, or the school assesses that it's *duty of care* towards other child/ young persons and the staff of the school is compromised due to episodes of extreme challenging behavior; the matter will be forwarded to the Board of



Management of the school for consideration. The Board of management reserves the right to suspend the child/ young person in question until the school has implemented the necessary supports or changes to safeguard its *Duty of care* for the individual child/young person or others if possible to do so. Suspensions will be notified in writing and the form of suspension will be determined by the incident(s)/behavior (s) in question.

The school follows the NEWB guidelines and protocols for suspensions and expulsions, in consultation with the IPPN. Procedures are also followed in accordance with the Rules for National Schools and the Education Welfare Act 2000.

In the case of extreme challenging behaviour, where it is necessary to secure the safety of the pupils and staff, the Board may authorise the Chairperson or Principal to sanction an immediate suspension for a period not exceeding three school days, pending a discussion of the matter with the parents/guardians.

Reintegration following Suspension

Following or during a period of suspension, the parents/guardians may apply to have the pupil reinstated to the school. The application will be considered with reference to any necessary support and resources required by the school (e.g. physical changes, consulting other experts where applicable etc). The Principal will facilitate a review of the existing behaviour plan for the pupil or a new one, if required and will re-admit the pupil formally to the class.

Expulsion

“A student is expelled from a school when a Board of Management makes decision to permanently exclude him/her from the College, having complied with the provisions of Section 24 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000”.

The Board of Management’s policy on and procedures for expulsion are in line with the NEWB Guidelines, similarly to our suspensions section. A student may be expelled where the student’s behaviour is a persistent cause of significant disruption to the learning of others or to the teaching process and the student’s continued presence constitutes a real and significant threat to safety.

Given the seriousness of expulsion as a sanction, the Board of Management will undertake a detailed review of a range of factors in deciding whether to expel a student.

Factors Considered Prior To Suspension and Expulsion

The nature and seriousness of the behaviour

- What is the precise description of the behaviour?
- How persistent has the unacceptable behaviour been and over what period of time?
- Has the problem behaviour escalated, in spite of the interventions tried?

The context of the behaviour

- What are the circumstances of the incidents of serious misbehaviour (e.g. in class, in a particular teacher’s class, around the school, in a group)?
- What factors may have triggered or provoked incidents of serious misbehaviour (e.g. bullying, cultural of other factors)?



- Are there any factors that may be associated with the behaviour (e.g. particular circumstances, special educational needs)?

The impact of the behaviour

- How are other students and staff affected by the student's behaviour?
- What is the impact of the behaviour on the teaching and learning of the class?

The interventions tried to date

- What interventions have been tried? Over what period?
- How have the interventions been recorded and monitored?
- What has been the result of these interventions?
- Have the parents/guardians been involved in finding a solution to the problem behaviour?
- Has the intervention of NEPS or other psychological assessment or -counselling been sought, where appropriate?
- Is the student or parents/guardians involved with any support service and has this agency or support service been asked for help in solving this problem?
- Has any other agency been asked for assistance (e.g. Child Guidance Clinic, Child and Adolescent Mental Health services)?
- Is the Board of Management satisfied that no other intervention can be tried or is likely to help the student to change their behaviour?

Whether expulsion is a proportionate response

- Is the student's behaviour sufficiently serious to warrant expulsion?
- Is the standard being applied to judging the behaviour the same as the standard applied to the behaviour of any other student?

Methods of Communicating with Parents/guardians

Communicating with parents/guardians is central to maintaining a positive approach to supporting our student's behavior. Parents/guardians and teachers will be encouraged to develop joint strategies 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. Structures and channels designed to maintain a high level of communication among staff and between staff, pupils and parents/guardians have been established and are reviewed regularly.

Parents/guardians should be 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.

The following communication methods are used at all levels within the school:

- Informal parent/guardian teacher meetings and formal parent/guardian teacher meetings
- Through children's homework journal.
- Letters/notes from school to home and from home to school
- School notice board
- Email
- Text



- Behaviour diary (where necessary)
- Phone calls
- Behaviour incident reports

Limitations

This document is not designed to list all the possible situations that may arise, nor state all the possible strategies to address challenging behaviour, but to serve as a general guide to the students, the teacher, and the Principal to be used to solve individual problems.

Roles and Responsibilities

All staff in Enable Ireland Sandymount School must adhere to the Code of Behaviour Policy. The Principal is responsible for ensuring that all staff are made aware of it and are involved in its formulation.

Policy Review

It is fully acknowledged by all parties that this code of behaviour policy will be reviewed annually to ensure that it is kept up to date and that it retains its relevance. Ongoing evaluation and new approaches to education, guidelines and Department of Education agreements may require this document to be modified.

Review and Ratification

This policy was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management.

Signed:



Sé Goulding, Chairperson of Board of Management



Jennifer Doyle, Principal

Date: 4 July 2025



Appendix 1

Restorative Practice (RP) Questions

RP Questions for Junior Classes

- What happened that you?
- What were you feeling when you?
- How do you think [STUDENT NAME] was feeling when you?
- What could you do the next time this happens?
- What can you do to make things right?

RP Questions for Senior Classes

- What happened?
- What were you thinking at the time?
- What have you thought about since?
- Who has been affected by what you have done? In what ways?
- What do you need to do to make things right?



Appendix 2

Proactive strategies to promote expected behaviours

Research indicates that putting proactive effective whole-class structures and supports in place can reduce the incidence of undesirable behaviours and facilitate the implementation of more individualised supports for the minority of pupils who may need them. Research highlights the importance of reflection on the following areas:

- Positive relationships
- The social environment of the classroom
- The learning environment
- Classroom organisation
- Teacher attitudes and behaviour
- A systematic and consistent approach to responding to behaviour
- Social and emotional teaching strategies

Ways of addressing these areas are discussed in the pages, which follow. They are adapted from the *'Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties: A Continuum of Support: Guidelines for Teachers'*. Pg. 81/82 of the document have a detailed assessment of these areas.

Positive relationships

Research clearly indicates that positive relationships between teachers, pupils and their families are **key factors** in effective teaching and classroom management. As adults build positive relationships with pupils their potential influence on pupils' behaviour grows significantly – that is, pupils notice responsive caring adults. They pay particular attention to what such a teacher says and does and they seek out ways to ensure even more positive attention from the teacher. In the context of supportive relationships, pupils develop positive self-concept, confidence and a sense of safety that help reduce the occurrence of behaviours that are challenging. As such, the time spent building a strong relationship is less than the time required to implement more elaborate time consuming strategies.

Some ways a teacher/SNA can do this are by:

1. Getting to know the pupil and their family
2. Establishing clear communication systems with parents/guardians and pupils e.g. positive notes home, home/school communication book, positive phone call etc.
3. Demonstrating to pupils that they matter
 - Greeting pupils upon arrival at the door
 - acknowledging birthdays and other special occasions;
 - looking for genuine opportunities to provide positive feedback;
 - celebrating achievements;
 - recognising and acknowledging their emotional responses and feelings;
 - actively listening to pupils
 - inviting them to help with daily tasks and responsibilities;
 - sharing your thoughts and feelings;
 - communicating your confidence in them to succeed



- apologising to pupil when warranted

The social environment of the classroom

Teachers can also provide a good role model for problem solving and dealing with conflict situations. Modelling appropriate social behaviour such as tone of voice and body language, especially in responding to challenging situations in the classroom, can help pupils to develop these skills themselves. Some ways a teacher can do this are by:

- providing opportunities for pupils to work alone, in pairs or in groups
- demonstrating and teaching co-operative learning and play skills
- teaching and role-playing friendship skills
- teaching playground games and positive playground behaviour
- regularly exploring and explicitly teaching the school and classroom expectations with pupils
- using approaches such as circle time to teach and practise skills such as; active listening, turn taking, expressing an opinion, giving a compliment, respecting differing opinions
- taking account of and celebrating cultural differences.

The learning environment

The learning environment has a fundamental influence on pupil behaviour. Pupils who are not stimulated or are overwhelmed by the learning activities provided in the classroom are more likely to engage in disruptive or withdrawn behaviour. Steps to providing a stimulating and supportive learning environment include the following:

- differentiating learning activities by process, content and outcome to ensure all pupils have an opportunity to experience a sense of success and achievement
- having flexible grouping arrangements
- accommodating a range of learning styles by providing a balance of activities within a lesson
- balancing individual, paired and group learning activities
- clearly stating learning and behaviour expectations
- planning fun activities as part of the school day/week
- anticipating needs or difficulties which may arise in lessons
- reflecting on pupil response to lessons and modifying and adapting teaching style, materials as appropriate
- having access for pupils to a range of learning resources, e.g. Ipads, reference books, manipulatives, etc.
- whole class distractions, 'active' transition strategies, frequent movement breaks (sensory, relaxation, poem, song, goNoodle, teacher read chapter of book etc)

See page 66/67 of 'Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties: A Continuum of Support: Guidelines for Teachers' for checklist

Classroom organisation

Good classroom organisation provides predictability for pupils and consistency of management. These are essential in promoting learning and socialisation and in minimising disruptive behaviour. Some ways a teacher can do this are by:



1. The physical environment
 - Creating a pleasant and welcoming environment - clean, well maintained, uncluttered
 - having an awareness of impact of lighting/ventilation/temperature control/noise volume
 - displaying work/visual aids in a manner appropriate to age group and changing displays regularly
 - thinking about how to use space and seating arrangements for working and ease of movement, while adhering to school protocols for Covid-19
 - ensuring easy access to materials, e.g. extra supplies, items/books clearly labelled and within easy reach
2. Making expectations about desired behaviour observable, explicitly teaching expectations regularly
3. Establishing routines

Misbehaviour is more likely to occur when pupils are unsure of what to do. The establishment of routines helps to clarify how, when, and where to do what is required of them. This avoids activities becoming chaotic and thus reduces the opportunity for and occurrence of misbehaviour. Classroom activities which require the establishment of routines or procedures include:

- greetings and farewells
 - entering and exiting the classroom
 - starting lessons
 - finishing lessons and preparing for transitions
 - getting materials
 - asking for assistance and getting teacher attention
 - extension tasks for early finishers
 - active listening
 - eating lunch
 - toileting
 - tidying up
 - expressing concerns and dealing with conflict
 - moving within the school
 - procedures for library, PE hall and school outings
4. Bring predictability to the school day: Have a visual whole class timetable. In planning a timetable, it is important to consider:
 - pupils' ages
 - time of day
 - length of activities
 - adaptability to circumstances and pupils' needs
 - structured breaks for recreation, relaxation, re-energising
 - balance between activities with regard to the demands placed on the pupils
 - Department of Education time allocation for each subject area



Teacher attitudes and behaviour

Even when teachers cannot change a pupil's situation, positive experiences in school can foster a pupil's resilience in coping with adverse circumstances.

We can control and change the school environment and this can have a significant effect on behaviour in school. We all have beliefs and values about our own and others' behaviour and our interpretation depends on our experiences and knowledge. It's helpful to have an awareness of how our beliefs, attitudes and emotional responses may affect the way we respond to behaviours of concern. Teachers should be aware that their responses to behaviour may serve to reinforce that behaviour.

The following considerations are important for staff in responding to behaviours of concern:

- understanding the relationship between pupil's social and emotional development and behaviours of concern. Be careful about making assumptions.
- being aware that an early and positive relationship with a teacher/SNA for even a brief period can make a big difference to a pupil's future
- considering what messages a pupil's behaviour *may* be communicating (e.g. refusal to start work could mean "I'm not able to do this", "I need a break right now" "It's too easy, I've done this before".
- being aware of the need to identify those behaviours/responses that 'push my buttons'
- being aware of the need to manage their own emotions when dealing with misbehaviour
- acknowledging that they can't and won't solve everything that may be wrong in a pupil's life, and need not become discouraged or disheartened in dealing with behaviours of concern
- being aware of when they need to seek support of colleagues and external professionals

Awareness of how their own actions and reactions impact on pupil behaviour is also helpful for staff. It is important for staff to:

- remember that behaviours are not personal, all behaviour is communication.
- be aware of their tone of voice and body language
- model the standards of behaviour they expect from their pupils (courtesy, respectful behaviour, calm interactions, kindness and consideration)
- develop strategies to manage their emotions when dealing with behaviours that are challenging and to convey a sense of calm and control (it may be helpful to take a deep breath, relax muscles, count to three etc.)



Appendix 3

A Systematic Approach to Responding to Behaviour

Research has shown that attention to any behaviour leads to an increase in that behaviour. It makes sense, therefore, that staff actively promote and encourage positive, appropriate, compliant classroom behaviour by acknowledging and praising it. Research suggests that staff engage in significantly more negative than positive interaction with students, and that they viewed negative attitudes and punishment as effective. This belief reinforces the adult's negative behaviour. However, in the longer term, negative interaction with an adult results in pupils having a negative attitude towards school, learning and school staff. It also impacts on their interaction with peers.

A systematic approach to responding to behaviour, includes the following:

1. Teacher attention and praise to encourage positive behaviour and motivation
 - As a rule of thumb it has been recommended that teachers should aim to give three positive statements to counteract one demand in relation to behaviour
 - Praise given in order to encourage and shape behaviour is most effective if it is:
 - specific
 - i. name the good behaviour and reflect it back to the pupil
 - ii. say why this is a positive behaviour i.e. it was helpful when
 - delivered in a genuine and sincere manner;
 - sensitive (some pupils prefer a quiet word or private gesture of approval).
2. Planned ignoring of minor non-disruptive and attention-seeking behaviour case dependent
 - Teachers need to consider the reasons for certain behaviours and how planned ignoring of those behaviours may help to reduce them. Behaviours to ignore may include:
 - fidgeting and restlessness that is not disrupting the work of others;
 - impulsive calling out;
 - attention-seeking which may be irritating, but isn't challenging.
 - It is very important when choosing to use planned ignoring to ensure that extra positive attention is given to expected behaviours. For example "catching being good" technique and praising specific behaviours of the target child.
3. A stepwise approach to responding to misbehaviour using the steps outlined in the Code of Behaviour

For a small minority of children many of the approaches mentioned above may not be effective. Some children exhibit behaviours that are extremely challenging such as: physical violence and aggression, bullying etc. Some children find it difficult to regulate their emotions and they need to be helped to stay calm and manage their anger in school. We need to help children understand the triggers to their angry outbursts and to help them identify alternative responses when feeling threatened or upset. This needs to be practised in a safe environment, when the child is calm and in control of their emotions. Anger involves a complex interaction of biological responses, feelings, thoughts and behaviour.



We can intervene at the following levels (Biological, Feelings, and Thoughts, Behaviour) to prevent angry outbursts from occurring:

Biological

Teach children about their biological responses and then help them use relaxation techniques to calm their body down. Examples include:

- Breathing in deeply through their nose for 7 seconds and out through their mouth for 11 seconds.
- Younger children can be taught to be a turtle and have a protective shell and therefore not respond to any provocation.
- In some situations it may be appropriate to issue a Pass Card. The child is given permission to use a pass card to exit when they feel their anger is being triggered and they need to calm down. This strategy will be tailored specifically to the particular child's needs and it will be carefully set up in advance in consultation with staff. This strategy will be included in the pupil's Behaviour Support Plan document and detailed therein.

Feelings

Help pupils to recognise and communicate their emotions effectively.

- Many teachers use material from the SPHE Walk Tall programme or other emotional toolkit resources (You Can Do It) to work with children on the subject of emotions.
- Children also need to be taught about assertiveness and learn through stories, drama and role play about how to make an assertive statement. For example, 'when you tease me about my mother, it hurts my feelings and makes me angry, please don't do that or I will tell the teacher'.
- Facilitate the child to communicate their mood to a teacher by using various strategies/tools e.g. Feeling Wheels, Feelings Thermometer, energy check-in, share cloud, share box.

Thoughts

Teach children how to recognise negative/'red light' thinking and how to replace this with positive self-talk or 'green light' thinking. Teach pupils how to reframe situations.

- Positive self-talk examples, include: 'I can do this'; 'I don't need to let this get to me'; 'stay cool'.
- Each person may respond differently to an event because of the way the person interprets what is happening. We need to work with children to help them understand this by getting them to reframe situations in various ways. For example, 'you are walking down the corridor and a boy in your class bumps into you, name three ways you could interpret this situation?'

Behaviour

Adapting the environment, avoiding triggers and examining the consequences of behaviour can bring about a change in behaviour



Despite intervening on all these levels before incidents arise some children will still have angry episodes in school. Observing early warning signs and using effective communication skills can prevent an escalation of difficult behaviour e.g.:

- Remind children to use specific techniques taught to them when they were calm, if they are in the headspace to hear this.
- Acknowledge the child's anger by saying 'I can see you are angry/ upset because. ...'
- Use clear messages that are phrased positively. Say what you mean, mean what you say and, ideally, say it once.
- If the child attempts to argue back with you acknowledge what they have said. 'I hear that you are.....' Children need to feel heard.

If your attempts to calm the situation and the child do not work be mindful that the higher the level of arousal the less rational the person is likely to be. In these situations remember:

- Don't try to reason, argue or threaten the child at this point as they cannot listen and may be past the point of being able to calm down. Trying to reason with them may only escalate the situation.
- Try to remove any audience to protect the dignity of the child. If it's not possible to move the child, it may be necessary to move the class for safety reasons.
- Stay calm and controlled. Do not take things personally. Children can find it frightening when they feel the adult is not in control of the situation.
- In some situations where the child's behaviour may be a danger to themselves or others send a responsible child for help.
- Remove the child from class to a quiet supervised room to allow the child to calm down.
- Ensure the child and other children and adults are safe.
- It can take a child up to 30 – 45 minutes to recover from a stress response. Ensure you give the child this time to calm down as trying to problem solve or mediate before this time can lead to another angry episode.
- When the child is calm, problem solve the incident with them using the KISS (Keep it short and simple) approach to the restorative questions
- Staff need time to debrief, reflect and problem solve together after a challenging situation in school so that they can learn from the situation and put appropriate protocols in place in the event the child exhibits the same behaviour again.
- Protocols should always be shared with parents/guardians and form part of the child's Behaviour Support Plan. If a child has ongoing anger issues outside agencies should be involved in supporting the child, their family and school staff. A multidisciplinary approach to working with the child is recommended.

Social and emotional teaching strategies

Pupils' capacity to engage with learning, to manage their behaviour, and to regulate their emotions are essential pre-requisite skills to enable them to benefit from the learning and socialisation opportunities provided within the school. The SPHE curriculum provides a comprehensive framework for developing pupils' awareness of self and others, along with skills for relating effectively in the local and community environment.



Social and Emotional Skills Development Programme such as The Zones of Regulation and The You Can Do It! (YCDI!) can be used to develop students' social and emotional capabilities by explicitly teaching them the five foundations of: Confidence, Persistence, Organisation, Getting Along and Resilience. These are skills they need to acquire in order to be successful in school, experience wellbeing, and have positive relationships including making contributions to others and the community.



Appendix 4

Why are these behaviours happening?

The most important thing teachers need to try to find out is why an undesirable behaviour is happening. It may dictate the logical consequence, help the pupil to repair any damaged relationships and get back on track. Teachers also need to consider personal circumstances of the pupil and possible impacts on behaviour.

‘Assessment document 2: The Behaviour Checklist’ on Pg 83-86 of the document ‘*Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties: A Continuum of Support: Guidelines for Teachers*’ has a detailed checklist for desirable behaviours across all areas of school life.

We perceive and interpret the behaviour of others in our own way. We have our own beliefs and values about our own and others’ behaviour. Our interpretation depends on our own experiences and knowledge. We need to try and get an objective picture of the behaviour and emotional responses of a pupil. A clearer picture is obtained if we ask what was actually observed, without any interpretation or judgement.

Gathering information through observations

Information from a wide range of sources is useful because it may reveal and clarify reasons for behaviour and correct misinterpretations of behaviour. This can be useful when planning the form of support that is most likely to be effective.

In order to gain as accurate as possible a picture of the behaviour, observation should be carried out:

- in a range of situations e.g. academic lesson, practical lesson, playground, in class activity, small group or individual task.
- ideally by someone who is not involved in teaching the lesson observed
- by someone who can remain objective

Recorded observation of a pupil’s behaviour and analysis of the findings can provide information which may indicate:

- the exact nature of the behaviour causing concern- what did you see and hear the pupil doing?
- frequency of behaviour - once a week, once a day, ten times a lesson?
- duration of behaviour - how long does the behaviour in question last?

As well as using any of the methods to gather information, more detailed observation can be completed to build up a picture of the nature of the difficulties occurring and the context to them. Pg. 89-95 of the above guidelines contain some ideas and formats for gathering different types of information.

- Frequency event recording
- Duration recording
- Behaviour checklist
- Interviews with pupils

Recording Behaviour within a context - ABC

Having noted the environment in which the behaviours are occurring, the activity the pupil is doing, the frequency and duration of a behaviour, it is important to consider possible reasons for the behaviour within the school context.



Using the ABC - (Antecedents-Behaviour-Consequence) approach during specific times and situations can sometimes give useful insights into what triggers behaviour and helps identify what the maintaining consequences are.

When observing a pupil, make notes on the following:

- A. What were the antecedents?
What happened before the behaviour occurred? (e.g. Who was the pupil sitting with?
What activity were they involved in? Where were they?)
- B. What was the behaviour?
What actually was observed happening?
Record each pupil's actions.
- C. What were the consequences or results of the behaviour?
How was the situation resolved? What consequences were employed?
How did those involved react?
How did other pupils observing the behaviour react?
How did the adult(s) involved react?
Was each person happy with the outcome?
Are the consequences reinforcing the behaviour?

When considering whether the consequences are reinforcing the behaviour, we need to consider whether the inappropriate behaviours are positively or negatively motivated.

Examples of positive - reinforcement - based behaviours are:

- attention or reaction from others; getting things (such as tangibles or activities);
- sensory stimulation or environmental change.

Examples of negative – reinforcement based behaviours are:

- avoidance (prevention of an aversive event such as criticism, task being boring or difficult);
- escape (such as a frightening event/termination of a aversive event);
- reduction of aversive event.

A possible format for this assessment can be found on Pg104/105 of *Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties: A Continuum of Support: Guidelines for Teachers*

