

# Gaelscoil Dara

## Code of Conduct

When this policy was being compiled, parents in the school were invited to make submissions.

Every member of the teaching staff was involved in formulating the policy.

This policy will be made available to all parents.

This policy will be reviewed regularly.

### **Introduction:**

This policy is written using *Developing a Code of Conduct: Guidelines for Schools* (TUSLA) and the legislation dealing with the *Education Act, 1998* and the *Education (Welfare) Act, 2000*.

In devising this Code of Discipline consideration has been given firstly to the general aims of Primary Education as stated in the "Primary School Curriculum". These are:-

- 1) To enable the child to live a full life as a child, and to realise his or her potential as a unique individual.
- 2) To enable the child to develop as a social being through living and co-operating with others and so contribute to the good of society.
- 3) To prepare the child for further education and lifelong learning.

Secondly, consideration has been given to the specific aims of Gaelscoil Dara:

- (a) That parents may be confident of their decision to choose Gaelscoil Dara for their children.
- (b) To provide each child with the same educational advantages, through the medium of *An Ghaeilge*, as would be provided in any other school.

- (c) To give the child insight into his/her culture and heritage as a citizen of this island.
- (d) To ensure a literacy and fluency in *An Ghaeilge* so that the child will respect, and love the language, that he/she will appreciate its importance as an Irish person and that he/she will speak it at every opportunity.
- (e) That the child will be equally fluent in both English and *Gaeilge* on leaving primary school, and that this bilingualism will help in the acquisition of further languages at secondary school level.
- (f) To ensure that the child will develop a positive and responsible attitude towards the environment and towards society in general.

In the preparation of a Code of Discipline, the following relevant factors must be taken into account:

- All children are complex human beings with physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual needs and potentialities;
- Because each child is an individual, he deserves to be valued for himself/herself and to be provided with the kind and variety of opportunities towards stimulation and fulfilment which will enable him/her to develop his/her natural powers at his/her own rate to fullest capacity.
- It is generally accepted that if a child is to receive “fair play”, then he/she has a right to education in an environment as free as possible from behaviour that would disrupt the learning process.
- The teacher will make all efforts to interact kindly with the children and to avoid sarcasm. The teachers of Gaelscoil Dara recognise that it is very important that they meet with parents and develop positive relations with them.
- This would enable the teacher to have an insight into the child’s background. We would be made aware of problems that might directly or indirectly affect the child’s behaviour in school. All such information would be, of course,

highly confidential. In special cases the school may advise an independent assessment of a child.

- Parents will be regularly advised on the aims, policies, rules and activities of the school through the medium of “Scéala Dara” by email, by informing the parents directly, by informing the students or through meetings with the parents. It will be explained to them how they can assist the staff e.g. homework, essential equipment, lunch etc. and they will be informed as to the aims and approaches.
- That the parents will feel welcome to meet with the teachers by making an appointment.
- That we all, (staff, pupils and parents) are as a small community working towards the same goals and fulfilment of the same aims. We should cooperate in creating a positive school spirit and support all school activities which lend themselves to the creation of such a spirit - social occasions, drama, fund-raising events etc.
- To ensure that cases of unsatisfactory behaviour are reduced as much as possible teachers will make every effort to ensure that lively and stimulating methods, with work matched to pupils’ abilities, are pursued in the class. Positive expectations by teachers can make pupils more responsible in their work and conduct. Where teachers insist, firmly and fairly, on honest effort and commitment from pupils and on high standards of behaviour, there is a greater likelihood they will obtain them.
- The children will be reminded of the school rules and their purposes on a regular basis. There will be emphasis placed on the rights of the pupils as well as on the rights of teachers in the classroom.
- The children’s own opinions will be sought where appropriate. Staff will consider themselves responsible at all times for the behaviour within sight and sound of them and will respond promptly to any instances of unacceptable behaviour. School assembly will be held regularly to this end.

- Each teacher will keep a written record of instances of misbehaviour. This record will indicate the nature of the misconduct, the advice and/or warnings given and the results of such advice. Parents will be fully informed from the outset of frequent instances of unacceptable behaviour on the part of their children. This will be done through the homework diary, parental meetings, phone calls or a word at the door. It wouldn't be appropriate or practical to mention every misdemeanour to parents, but if the teacher feels the behaviour is deteriorating, the parent will be informed to support the teacher's efforts to improve the behaviour.
- In most cases teachers will resolve their own discipline problems but occasionally will seek the advice or support of another teacher and/or the principal in certain cases.
- The children in the school generally have a good reputation in relation to behaviour and they are given feedback regularly for e.g. after school tour or match

It is our aim that the good behaviour would emanate from the children without direction from the teacher as they go through the school i.e. developing the kind of self discipline that they will need as adults.

It is recognised that behaviour styles are developed in the main by the age of four, before the child comes to school. It is important that parent's foster good behaviour in their children, from a very young age and happily the majority achieve this.

### **Punctuality**

Absences have to be recorded and reported according to TUSLA guidelines. See the school policy on punctuality for more information.

### **Special Needs**

In certain circumstances a particular timetable is formulated for individual children in consultation with the parents, the OT and the psychologist working with them. In these cases, generally the services of a special needs assistant are provided to the child to help them adhere to the timetable and improve

their behaviour. Over the years the efficacy of this approach has been seen with children in the school.

It is the aim of every parent and of us that every child be treated equally as much as possible and that no child would feel different in any way from other children. That said it is important to explain the Code of Conduct to children with special needs in a way that can be easily understood by them.

### **What do we want in terms of behaviour?**

- Display good manners at all times. Greetings such as: *A Mhúinteoir Treasa/Brian; Dia dhuit/ go raibh maith agat/ gabh mo leithscéal* etc.
- *An Ghaeilge* should be spoken at all times in the vicinity of the school, on school tours and at external school events. Support is expected from parents/guardians in this respect.
- That the school/playground/hygiene rules as set out below, and the agreed class rules are adhered to.
- The manner in which the children listen to the teachers and each other not interrupting other people if a conversation is taking place, standing attentively, no shaking of the head, shoulders etc.
- Homework should be done neatly and thoroughly. Homework should be taken down carefully, checked and signed every night by a parent/guardian. If there is a problem, a note can be sent in in the *Dialann Scoláire* explaining the situation.
- Proper posture when sitting on a chair(not to swing on the chair)
- That the children are attentive when school announcements are being made.
- Toys, collections of playing cards (*Match Attax, Pokémon* etc) or other items that could interfere with class work should be left at home.
- The classroom and the corridor should be kept clean and neat at all times – books, baskets, crayons, coats etc. Care should be given to all painted walls, doors and furniture – no marks should be left through carelessness.
- Respect should be shown for other people's dignity and for their property.

- We ask that parents/guardians supervise their children outside school hours in the vicinity of the school, as the school cannot be responsible for them at these times. Be aware that classes are in progress until 2.30 and please ensure that they aren't interrupted in any way from noise outside.
- It's expected that children will always be on time for school and prepared for their school day.

As professionals teachers have to make decisions daily in relation to behaviour and sanctions. Often discretion is needed to get the best result for the child and for the class. This is decided by the teacher, in conjunction with their colleagues or with the Principal if necessary.

It is also the responsibility of parents to inform the school if there are certain circumstances at home that could affect the child's behaviour at school in order to pre-empt incidents

### **Strategies to foster Good Behaviour**

There are a number of strategies used in the school to promote good behaviour. Included are:

- The children are involved with the teacher in creating the class rules at the start of the school year.
- Verbal praise – from the class teacher and the whole school community
- Stamps – *Gaeilge* and Behaviour
- The *Bosca Dearfach* / Positive Box (homework passes as prizes)
- *Dojo* (singular, group or class)
- *Corn na Gaeilge* (Irish Cup)
- Behaviour Charts
- *Am Ciorclach/Circle Time* in the senior classes
- *Am Órga* /Golden Time
- *Misneach/ Walk tall*
- *Bí Sábháilte/Stay Safe*
- Outings

And of course good behaviour is the centre of the Religion programme, and in SPHE.

These strategies change from time to time to keep the children's interest and for them to be more effective.

Four teachers on the staff have completed the *Incredible Years* course to date. The focus is placed on classes that most need this help and it is intended to expand on this program in the future.

### **Investigation of misbehaviour**

It should be mentioned from the outset that the frequency of misbehaviour is the most important factor to take into account here.

If a small offence is occurring regularly and on numerous occasions, it becomes a more serious offence and the teacher has to deal with it in a different way.

**Misdemeanour:** A few examples;

- Lack of attention in class
- Speaking out of turn
- Walking around at an inappropriate time
- Talking to other children when they should be working etc.
- Behaviour that disrupts class work or the work of the child

**Serious misbehaviour:** A few examples;

- Back answering
- Using bad language
- Telling lies regularly
- Threatening, violent behaviour
- Hitting or kicking someone deliberately
- Bullying (see anti-bullying policy)
- Deliberate damage to property

### **Complaints/ Causes of Concern**

Feedback will always be welcomed from parents and children. See the school policy on complaint procedures to find the proper process.

An effort is always made to resolve an issue as soon as possible. An appointment should be made with the class teacher initially to discuss any problems and to avoid misunderstandings.

### **School Rules**

- Be polite and respectful at all times
- Be attentive at all times

- Always walk when in the school building. Stand quietly in the line, and remain seated on wet days at break times.
- Always raise your hand to obtain permission to speak (except when the teacher permits general conversation for the purpose of group work).
- *Riail na Gaeilge - An Ghaeilge* is the spoken language in the school with the exception of English class.
- Show respect for school furniture and equipment at all times.
- Abide by the playground rules or the bathroom rules.
- Follow the safety directions and rules on school trips and external school activities.

### **Playground Rules**

- Visit the toilet before going out to play.
- It is not permitted to remain in the classroom without the teacher's consent or provision of a note by a parent/guardian.
- Walk in and out quietly and politely at all times.
- Balls are not permitted on the playground at first break.
- Show respect for the rights of other children and for school property.
- Always play safely and behave in a responsible manner.
- Rough play eg. pushing or pulling another child etc. is not permitted in the playground.
- Remain inside the school boundaries.



- If any child has a query or problem or should an accident occur, speak to the teacher on yard duty first.
- The first bell indicates that all play must stop.
- The second bell indicates that there must be complete silence in all class lines.

### **Hygiene/Toilet Rules**

- Do not ask to go to the toilet during formal instruction. Do so between subject changes or at break time.
- Only one person is allowed in the toilet at a time.
- Always observe basic hygiene - wash hands etc.
- Permission from a teacher on duty is required in order to enter the school to go to the toilet when in the school yard during break time.

### **Disciplinary Sanctions**

- Reason with the child and encourage good behaviour.
- Verbal warning.
- Make a note of the misbehaviour in the behaviour copy.
- A sanction may occur, at the discretion of the teacher, based on the age and class group of the child (e.g. 5 minutes reflection time in *Naíonáin Bheaga* increasing to 15 – 20 minutes in the senior classes).
  - Separate the child temporarily from their class group in the class.
  - Reflection time at lunchtime.
  - Writing lines to be signed by the parent/guardian.
  - Extra homework to be signed by the parent/guardian.
  - Revoking of privileges e.g. *Am Órga*, class privilege etc.
- The child will be sent to the principal/ vice principal. (S)he will have to write a short account of their unsatisfactory behaviour and have it signed by a parent at home.
- Detention after school.

- Organise a meeting with the parent including the principal/ vice-principal and the class teacher.
- Suspend a child, sanctioned by the Board of Management. (See appendix 1)
- Expel a child, sanctioned by the Board of Management. (See appendix 2)

The policy is written in Irish and even though an English translation will be made available, if there are any discrepancies between the English and the Irish version, the Irish version takes precedence.

## **Appendix 1:**

### **Suspension**

The Board of Management has the authority to suspend a child. The authority to give a child one day's suspension has been delegated in writing to the Principal (or the Vice Principal if the Principal is absent) by the Board of Management. The Chairperson of the Board must be informed if this happens and the Board must be informed at the next meeting that this has happened.

A suspension may be the response for troublesome behaviour.

For example:

- That the student's behaviour had a negative impact on the education of the other students.
- That there is a threat to safety if the child stays at school at the present time.
- That the student is responsible for serious damage to property.
- To cause intentional physical injury to someone else with a punch or a kick.

One serious event of misbehaviour could be reason enough to place someone on suspension.

(See Pg. 74 *Developing a Code of Conduct: Guidelines for Schools*)

Immediate suspension in exceptional cases. The Principal may decide that immediate suspension may be suitable in the case that a student's continued attendance at that time may seriously threaten the safety of the students or the staff or any other person.

- The child and parents must be informed of the complaint
- The parents and student must be given the chance to respond.

In the case of suspensions in Gaelscoil Dara, the procedures set out under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, (see *Developing a Code of Conduct: Guidelines for Schools*) shall be adhered to.

## **Appendix 2:**

### **Expulsion**

The Board of Management has the sole authority in Gaelscoil Dara to expel a student from school.

### **The grounds for expulsion**

Expulsion is an incredibly serious sanction and one that the Board of Management must take in the cases of serious behaviour.

Significant measures will have been put in place to handle the misbehaviour to prevent the expulsion of the student, including, as is appropriate:

- Meeting with the parents and with the student to make an effort to find ways to change the un-acceptable behaviour
- Making sure the student understands the possible results of the behaviour, if it continues
- Making sure that an effort has been made to consider every other option
- Seeking help from support services (National Educational Psychological Service, Health Service Executive, National Behavioural Support Service, Mental Health Services for Children and Youths, National Council for Special Education).

A suggestion to expel a student on serious grounds demands, for example:

- That the behaviour of the student would have a detrimental, steadfast effect on the education of other students.
- That there is a serious threat to the safety of the students or the other people while the child is at school.
- That the student is responsible for serious damage to property.

The grounds for expulsion would be similar to the grounds for suspension. As well as factors such as the seriousness and persistence of the behaviour, the main difference between them is that in the case of expulsion, the school authorities have attempted a range of interventions, and that they are of the opinion that they have exhausted all possibilities to change the student's behaviour.

## **Procedures in the case of expulsion**

In the case of expulsion in Gaelscoil Dara, the guidelines set out under the *Education (Welfare) Act 2000, Developing a Code of Conduct: Guidelines for Schools* shall be followed.

In the case that an assessment of the facts determines that a student may warrant expulsion due to their misbehaviour, the following steps should be taken:

1. A detailed investigation under the direction of the Principal.
2. A recommendation by the Principal to the Board of Management.
3. Consideration of the Principal's recommendation by the Board of Management, and the holding of a hearing.
4. The Board of Management deliberations and actions following the hearing.
5. Consultations arranged by the Educational Welfare Officer.
6. Confirmation of the decision to expel.

It is assumed in these procedures that the Board of Management is the deciding body in relation to expulsions.

It is a matter for each Board of Management to decide which of the tasks involved in these procedural steps requires separate meetings and which tasks can be accomplished together in a single meeting, consistent with giving parents due notice of meetings and a fair and reasonable time to prepare for a Board hearing.

## **Appeal**

A parent, or a student aged over eighteen years, may appeal a decision to expel to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science (Education Act 1998 section 29). An appeal may also be brought by the National Educational Welfare Board on behalf of a student. If the student is attending a school established or maintained by a VEC, the appeal must be made in the first instance to the VEC. Where an appeal to the VEC has been concluded, parents, or a student aged over eighteen years, may go on to appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science

## **The Appeal Process**

The appeals process under section 29 of the Education Act 1998 begins with the provision of mediation by a mediator nominated by the Appeals Committee (Department of Education and Science). For further details about the Appeals process, including requirements for documentation, and the steps in the process, refer to current DES guidance.