

St. Anthony's School, Humbert Way, Castlebar

Code of Behaviour

Our ethos at St. Anthony's is that as our pupils have individual requirements they should be treated with positive support, dignity and respect in trying to meet their needs as regards behaviour management.

In devising our Code of Behaviour consideration has been given to the particular needs and circumstances of this school. This Code was originally reviewed in 2010, 2013 and has been reviewed during 2016 - 2017 by the Board of Management. The overall aim is to ensure that the individuality of each child is accommodated while acknowledging the right of each child to an appropriate education in a relatively safe and secure environment.

Every effort will be made by all members of staff to adopt a positive proactive approach to the issue of behaviour in the school. Our code offers a framework within which positive techniques of motivation and encouragement are utilised by all staff towards the children.

The school therefore places greater emphasis on encouraging and rewarding good behaviour than on sanctions in the belief that this will, in the longer term, produce the best results.

The school recognises the variety of differences that exist between the children and the need to accommodate these differences in so far as this is practical.

It is agreed that a high standard of behaviour requires a strong sense of commitment and community within the school, and a high level of co-operation and consistency between and among staff, pupils and parents/guardians.

All efforts are made to match the curriculum to the abilities, aptitudes and interests of each pupil. IEP's are in place for all pupils and these are developed alongside input from teachers, pupils (if applicable), parents and other external personnel, if available, for this process.

The overall responsibility for discipline within the school rests with the Principal. Each teacher has responsibility for discipline within his/her classroom while a common responsibility is shared by all staff for good order within the school premises.

The Aims of the Code of Behaviour are:

1. To provide a school atmosphere where good learning and teaching can take place. This implies good "Law and Order" in the school.
2. To promote and reinforce good behaviour and to develop self-discipline in the children.

The objectives of the Code of Behaviour are:

1. To develop in the children a sense of respect for
 - Self and other children
 - Parents, teachers and other adults
 - Property in the school, home and community
2. To teach the children the good behaviours our community values
 - Politeness
 - Courtesy
 - Good social development
 - Self-confidence
 - Responsibility
3. To eliminate those behaviours which are unacceptable and which cause unhappiness and distress to others
 - Bullying
 - Bad language
 - Bad manners
 - Dishonesty
 - Theft
 - Aggressive Verbal or Physical threats to others
4. To develop a supportive school atmosphere where children learn in happiness and where teachers are enabled to educate with ease.
5. To develop close communication, co-operation and harmony between the school and the home. This co-operation between parents and teachers is viewed as most beneficial and crucial to school discipline.

SCHOOL RULES:

Safety: For the safety of all pupils and others it is important that pupils

1. walk while in the school building
2. remain seated when in class and while eating lunch
3. show respect for fellow pupils
4. be aware of others playing when in the yard areas
5. bring a note of explanation following absences
6. never leave school grounds without the permission of the Principal or Deputy Principal

Caring for Myself: Pupils are encouraged to take pride in themselves and should be able to

1. respect themselves and their property, always keeping school bags, books and copies in good order
2. be aware of personal cleanliness
3. always do their best in school by listening carefully, working as hard as they can and by completing homework

Caring for Others: Pupils are encouraged to respect other pupils and all staff by

1. being mannerly and polite
2. taking turns
3. behaving well in class so that all pupils can learn
4. being truthful and honest at all times
5. respecting school and class property and the property of others

While on school outings pupils are expected to follow school rules.

Bullying: "St. Anthony's is a bully-free zone!"

Pupils are encouraged to report any act which may be considered "bullying". All pupils are reminded regularly to never bully others and to never allow others to bully them. Pupils are told to always tell their parents or their teacher. Bullying is always unacceptable. The specific Anti-Bullying Policy deals with this in detail.

In order to promote a calm and enriching learning environment the staff at St. Anthony's seek to promote positive behaviour and use proactive approaches instead of focussing on sanctions and reacting to misbehaviour. The following pages outline the positive strategies which are used to promote positive behaviour in a proactive way in St. Anthony's School.

STRATEGIES TO AFFIRM DESIRABLE BEHAVIOUR:

All children deserve encouragement to attain their own best. Children will be encouraged, praised and listened to at all times 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.

Individual Pupils:

1. A quiet word or gesture to show approval
2. Certificates or Merit Awards
3. Comments and/or "smiley" faces on children's work
4. Stickers, stamps or badges in books
5. A mention to parent, written or verbal communication
6. Reward time on computer or special activity
7. Lunch time TV or music
8. Work displayed in class or for school
9. Homework Pass
10. Regular "Special Contribution" Assemblies Award
11. A visit to another member of Staff or to the Principal for commendation
12. A word of praise in front of a group or class
13. Delegating some special responsibility or privilege to child

Class/Group:

1. Extra free time (lunch)
2. Extra PE or games
3. Class treat/party/Class outing
4. Reduced homework on agreed nights
5. Positive comment to Principal about class
6. Outdoor activities e.g. time in playground
7. Work exhibited for school
8. Videos (age appropriate and in accordance with school policy)
9. Class prizes
10. Reward Assemblies

UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR IN PUPILS:

Three levels of misbehaviour are recognised: **Minor, Serious and Gross.**

All everyday instances of a minor nature are dealt with by the class teacher. In cases of repeated serious misbehaviour or single instances of gross misbehaviour, parents will be involved at an early stage and invited to meet the teacher and/or the Principal to discuss their child's behaviour.

Some examples of **misdemeanours** or **minor misbehaviour** include:

- Being unkind to any member of the school community
- Speaking out of turn, interrupting others and being inattentive
- Preventing others from learning
- Being unwilling or unable to abide by accepted conventions

Some examples of **serious misbehaviour** include:

- Defacing or destroying other pupils' belongings or school property
- Directing abusive language at any members of the school community
- Acting aggressively or with violence towards members of the school community
- Refusing to co-operate with instructions and advice
- Behaviour that is hurtful (including bullying, harassment, discrimination and victimisation)
- Behaviour that interferes with teaching and learning
- Threats or physical hurt to another person
- Theft

Examples of **gross misbehaviour**:

- Repeated incidents of serious misbehaviour as outlined above
- Assault on a teacher or pupil
- Serious theft
- Serious damage to property

Sanctions

As part of the whole school approach we in St. Anthony's have an agreed response to inappropriate behaviour which allows for consistency among staff as well as ensuring that there is a planned approach to helping students to change their own behaviour.

There are three levels at which intervention may take place and at each level parental and family support is sought.

1. **Support for all:** most students behave appropriately with the help of consistent and clear rules and routines in class and in school. Occasional, minor misbehaviour should be attended to routinely and effectively through the skill of the classroom teacher.
2. **Additional support for some students:** some students need more active intervention to help them manage their behaviour. Without additional help they may be at risk of failing behaviourally, socially and educationally. Additional inputs or interventions might include referral to another teacher or adult who can work with the student for a time, setting targets for behaviour and

monitoring them with the student in a supportive way and/or behaviour contracts.

3. **Specialised support for a small minority of students:** a small minority of students may show particularly challenging behaviour. They may have difficulty in learning new behaviour and may not respond to low level interventions. These students will need a sustained and systematic response involving all the important adults in their lives, in school and at home. Sources of support may come from NEPS, HSE services, NCSE/SESS, or Western Care Services.

The use of Sanctions:

While we aim to prevent challenging situations from occurring in the first place we need to be realistic and plan for times when behaviour may occur that requires the use of sanctions which are explained in detail below.

The objective of a sanction is to help the student to learn.

The purpose of a sanction is to bring about a change in behaviour by:

1. Helping students learn that their behaviour is unacceptable
2. Helping them to recognise the effect of their actions and behaviour on others
3. 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
4. Helping them to learn to take responsibility for their behaviour.

A sanction may also:

1. Reinforce the boundaries set out in the Code of Behaviour
2. Signal to the other students and staff that their wellbeing is being protected

In instances of more serious breaches of school standards, sanctions may be needed to:

1. Prevent serious disruption of teaching and learning
2. Keep the student, or other students or adults, safe.

A sanction is a form of positive intervention and should be used in a respectful way that helps students to understand the consequences of their behaviour and to take responsibility for changing that behaviour. In particular a sanction should:

- Defuse and not escalate a situation
- Preserve the dignity of all parties
- Be applied in a fair and consistent way
- Be timely

St. Anthony's School proposes to apply good practice in the use of sanctions by ensuring that:

1. Sanctions are part of a plan to change behaviour
2. Sanctions are used consistently
3. Students and parents know what sanctions are used in the school
4. Sanctions are proportionate
5. Sanctions are appropriate
6. Sanctions are understood clearly by students with special educational needs and disabilities so that they know and understand the reason why their behaviour is unacceptable and the purpose of the sanction.

It is important to remember that school and classroom practices that support good learning behaviour are valid for all students, including those with identified special educational needs.

The use of sanctions or consequences should be characterised by certain features;

- It must be clear why the sanction is being applied
- The consequence must relate as closely as possible to the behaviour
- It must be made clear what changes in behaviour are required to avoid future sanctions
- Group punishment should be avoided as it breeds resentment
- There should be a clear distinction between minor and major offences
- It should be the behaviour rather than the person that is the focus

As our school believes in a proactive approach we will try to prevent minor misbehaviours from occurring or if they do occur we aim to prevent them escalating into serious misbehaviour as outlined below:

Strategies used by all school staff to prevent escalation of misdemeanours into misbehaviour include:

- Non-verbal signs e.g. a "look" or a frown
- Change in tone (not level) of voice
- Moving physically beside pupil
- Stop speaking and wait for attention
- Overlooking or ignoring the undesirable behaviour
- Moving pupil to another seat or reorganising groups
- Speaking quietly to pupil and remind him/her of the rule being broken and encouraging them to keep school rules

Sanctions used to show disapproval of unacceptable behaviour at school:

The following steps will be taken if misbehaviour happens. They are listed in order of severity with one being for a minor misbehaviour and ten being for serious or gross misbehaviour. The list is by no means exhaustive. Teachers may put in place alternative measures bearing in mind the features by which sanctions should be characterised. The aim of any sanction is to prevent the behaviour occurring again and if necessary to help the pupils devise strategies for this;

1. Reasoning with pupil
2. Verbal reprimand including advice on how to improve
3. Temporary separation from peers within class and/or temporary removal to another class or reception area
4. Prescribing extra work/ writing out the story of what happened
5. Loss of privileges
6. Detention during break under supervision
7. Communication with parents/guardians
8. Referral to Principal
9. Principal communicating with parents/Psychologist/other relevant agencies involved with consent of parents
10. Exclusion (Suspension or Expulsion) from school (in accordance with Rule 130 of the Rules for National Schools as amended by circular and Education Welfare Act 2000) and following the NEWB Guidelines on Developing a Code of Behaviour specifically Chapter 11 - Suspension and Chapter 12 - Expulsion

Teachers shall keep a written record of all instances of serious misbehaviour as well as a record of improvements in the behaviour of disruptive pupils.

A pupil will be referred to the Principal for serious breaches of discipline and for repeated incidents of minor misbehaviour. When a referral is made to the Principal the teacher will have a record of incidences and the efforts made to try to improve or change the disruptive behaviour.

However for serious misbehaviour a referral to the Principal can be immediate.

For gross misbehaviour or repeated incidents of misbehaviour suspension will be considered.

Aggressive, threatening or violent behaviour towards a teacher, SNA or other staff member or other pupils will be regarded as serious/gross misbehaviour, depending on circumstances and the reasonable health and safety interests of all concerned.

Suspension

For the purpose of this Code of Behaviour, suspension is defined as:

"requiring the pupil to absent himself/herself from the school for a specified, limited period of school days."

During the period of a suspension, the pupil retains their place in the school.

A decision to suspend a pupil requires that:

- The parents and pupil are informed of the complaint and
- The parents and pupil are given an opportunity to respond.

Before serious sanctions such as suspension or expulsion are used the normal channels of communication between school and parents and other involved support agencies/personnel will be utilised. Communication may be verbal or written depending on the circumstances.

Where there are repeated incidents of serious/gross misbehaviour the Chairperson of the Board of management will be informed and parents will be requested in writing to attend at the school to meet the Chairperson and Principal. If parents/guardians do not give an undertaking that the pupil will behave in an acceptable manner in the future the pupil may have to be suspended for a temporary 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 and any relevant medical information.

Suspension will be in accordance with the terms of Rule 130(5) of the Rules for National Schools and the Education Welfare Act 2000.

In the case of gross misbehaviour, where it is necessary to ensure that order and discipline are maintained and to secure the safety of the pupils, the Board 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 or a maximum of five school days in exceptional circumstances where this is needed in order to achieve a particular objective such as when a meeting of the Board cannot be convened in a timely fashion.

Suspension procedures: (as per DES/NEWB Guidelines Ch. 10/11/12)

- The school is required by law to follow fair procedures based on the principles of natural and constitutional justice.

- Suspension should be a proportionate response to the behaviour that is causing concern.
- The authority to suspend for a period of up to three school days (or with the approval of the Chairperson a period of five school days where this is needed in order to achieve a particular objective such as when a meeting of the Board cannot be convened in a timely fashion) is vested in the Principal, or in the absence of the Principal the Acting Principal subject to the right of the parents/guardians to appeal the suspension to the Board of Management.
- The power to suspend for longer periods or to expel rests with the Board of Management.
- Parents/guardians should be invited to discuss serious incidents of misbehaviour, and their co-operation enlisted.
- Suspension is a serious sanction and may be considered for serious or gross misbehaviours as listed in this Code of Behaviour previously but are not limited thereto.
- Where possible, prior to suspension, a full review of the case should be undertaken by the Principal, or if the Principal is involved in the case, by a senior member of school staff such as Deputy Principal.
- Parents must be informed and may be invited to come to the school for a meeting to respond to the misbehaviour/incident if there is any dispute as to the facts. In the interim parents may be instructed to keep the pupil at home until they attend with him/her to discuss the matter.
- However, in the event of a single incident of gross misbehaviour or where there is a threat to the safety and welfare of the pupil or others a pupil may be suspended immediately.
- In cases where the suspension is to take effect immediately, such as in the interests of health and safety or good order and discipline, parents/guardians will be informed by telephone/text with written follow up if required.
- A written statement of the terms of the suspension should be given to parents/guardians and a copy retained.
- A pupil should not be suspended for more than three school days except in exceptional circumstances where a period of up to five school days is needed in order to achieve a particular objective such as the convening of a Board meeting.

- Pending the implementation of the suspension the pupil may be withdrawn from the class and parents/guardians will be obliged to collect their child when contacted by the school if requested by the Principal.
- Parents/guardians will be informed of their right to appeal the suspension to the Board of Management in the first instance.
- If a pupil is suspended for more than 6 days in any school year the Board/Principal will inform the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO)
- If the total number of days for which a pupil has been suspended in one school year reaches twenty days parents will be informed of their right to appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education in accordance with Section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

Removal of Suspension (Reinstatement)

- Following or during a period of suspension, the parent/s may apply to have the pupil reinstated to the school.
- Parents/guardians will be requested to attend with the pupil upon their return to school.
- The parent/s must give a satisfactory undertaking that a suspended pupil will behave in accordance with the school code.
- The Principal must be satisfied that the pupil's reinstatement will not constitute a risk to the pupil's own safety or that of the other pupils or staff.
- A written or verbal apology may be required from the pupil for their misbehaviour.
- The Principal will facilitate the preparation of a behaviour plan for the pupil if required and will re-admit the pupil formally to the class.

Grounds for removing a suspension:

A suspension may be removed if the Board decides to remove the suspension for any reason or if the Secretary General of the Department of Education directs that it be removed following an appeal under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

Expulsion

Expulsion is defined as *"the permanent exclusion of a pupil from the school and the loss of their place in the school."*

Expulsion may be considered in an extreme case in accordance with Rule 130(6) and the Education Welfare Act 2000.

Expulsion should be a proportionate response to the pupil's behaviour and should only be used in extreme cases of unacceptable behaviour.

Before expelling a pupil the Board shall notify the local EWO in writing in accordance with the Education Welfare Act.

Examples of serious grounds for expulsion include:

- Where the pupil's behaviour is a persistent cause of significant disruption to the learning of others or to the teaching process
- Where the pupil's continued presence in the school constitutes a real and significant threat to safety
- Where the pupil is responsible for serious damage to property
- Where the behaviour is persistent, other interventions have been tried and where the school believe that they have exhausted all possibilities for changing the pupil's behaviour.

A decision to expel a pupil is a severe sanction and the school, in accordance with the principles of natural justice, will investigate extreme indiscipline cases thoroughly in advance of any meeting that could result in a decision to expel.

The Board should follow due process and fair procedures and expulsion should only be considered after:

- All other sanctions have been invoked
- A detailed investigation is carried out by the Principal or Acting Principal.
- A recommendation to expel is brought to the Board by the Principal
- Consideration by the Board of the Principal's recommendation and the holding of a fair and impartial hearing with the parents
- Board deliberations and actions following the hearing, including informing the EWO of its opinion or decision in writing should the Board be of the opinion that the pupil should be expelled.
- A pupil cannot be expelled before the passage of 20 school days from the date the NEWB receives this written notification.
- Consultations arranged by the EWO within the 20 school days after notification of intention to expel
- Confirmation of the decision to expel where the 20 school day period following notification to the EWO has elapsed.
- Parents/guardians will be informed of their right to appeal the expulsion to the Secretary General of the Department of Education under Section 29 of the Education Act.

- If the Board does not expel a pupil it may recommend an alternative sanction in consultation with the Principal.

In exceptional circumstances the Board of Management may decide that a pupil should be expelled for a first offence. The kinds of behaviour that may result in a proposal to expel on the basis of a single breach of the Code could include:

- A serious threat of violence against another pupil or member of staff.
- Possession of and/or brandishing of an offensive weapon
- Actual violence or physical assault against any member of the school community or against any visitor thereto.
- Using and/or Supplying illegal drugs or other dangerous and illegal substances to other pupils in the school or whilst on school trips/activities.
- Serious damage to school property or the property of members of the school community
- Sexual assault.

In the interest of ensuring a fair and impartial system for the imposition of expulsion the Board of Management will take account of the following factors in determining expulsion:

- The nature and seriousness of the behaviour
- The context of the behaviour
- The impact of the behaviour
- The Duty of Care the Board has to ensure the health and safety of all in the school and the provision of a safe learning environment for all
- The interventions tried to date
- Whether expulsion is a proportionate response
- The possible impact of the expulsion

Every effort will be made to have an emotionally disturbed child referred for Psychological/Psychiatric assessment without delay. Help will also be sought from support services within the wider community e.g. Community Care services provided by the HSE or Western Care.

Reinstatement following a Section 29 Appeal being upheld:

The Board of Management will give serious consideration to any recommendations made by a Section 29 Appeal Hearing Committee in particular though not exclusively where this relates to Health and Safety concerns.

GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF PHYSICAL CONTAINMENT/RESTRAINT:

(As per INTO Guidelines on Managing Challenging Behaviour in Schools: January 2005)

Aggressive and violent behaviour is not a regular occurrence in St. Anthony's but it can and may happen from time to time. When such incidents occur they are serious and can cause a great deal of stress for all involved. When staff are faced with a potentially violent situation the following steps may prove useful in de-escalating the potentially dangerous situation:

- There is a call system where a teacher or other staff member in class can call for assistance if faced with a potentially dangerous situation.
- Where possible the child should be isolated. This may involve the child being exited from the classroom, perhaps with a Special Needs Assistant, or with the assistance of another teacher. An alternative is that the rest of the class is removed from a potentially violent situation.
- The child should be spoken to calmly, assertively and respectfully.
- The teacher/SNA should stay at a safe distance. Only one adult should talk to the child with the other adult nearby as a support.
- It should be made clear that you are listening to the child. In this way it may be possible to find out how the situation has developed, or how it may be resolved.
- The child should be asked to consider possible positive outcomes and behaviours.
- The child should be given space and time to cool off and to respond to requests.

It is important that any violent incident is recorded. It may also be analysed using the Antecedent - Behaviour - Consequences approach. The most serious form of misbehaviour is assault, whether it is an assault on a teacher, staff member or another pupil. The guidance issued by the DES Circular 40/97 'Assaults on Teachers' should be followed in the case of an assault on staff members.

The Department have also issued recent Circulars 61/2017 and 62/2017 which detail the responsibilities and duties of the Board of Management which are stated as to "ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare at work of his or her employees" and "ensuring that all appropriate safeguards have been put in place to protect persons at risk and to prevent, in so far as is practicable, the occurrence of assault".

Physical Control/Intervention/Restraint

There are no specific guidelines available from the NEWB for the use of physical intervention, control or restraint in schools so we take our advice from the INTO

Guidelines on Managing Challenging Behaviour in Schools 2005 and the UK Department of Education Circular on Pastoral Care which lay down clear guidelines in this area.

The question of whether a child should be physically restrained or contained if they pose a danger to themselves or to others is clearly defined in the ***UK Department of Education Circular 1999/9 Pastoral Care: Guidance on the Use of Reasonable Force to Restrain or Control Pupils***: "Article 4 of the 1998 Order authorises teachers to use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances to prevent a pupil from:

- Committing a criminal offence;
- Injuring themselves or others;
- Causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any person (including the pupil himself); or
- Engaging in any behaviour prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school or among any of its pupils whether during a teaching session or otherwise."

It must be emphasised that the vast majority of pupil misbehaviour can be managed without any use of containment / restraint.

Situations in which reasonable physical intervention may be appropriate include:

- When the child is behaving in such a way that they are presenting a risk to themselves or to others.
- When action is necessary in self-defence e.g. when the pupil attacks another pupil or adult.
- When there is an immediate or imminent risk of injury to another child or an adult. e.g. when pupils are fighting or there is rough play or misuse of dangerous materials or objects.
- When there is immediate risk of significant damage to property-when a pupil is about to vandalise property.
- Where behaviour jeopardises good order and discipline.
- A pupil persistently refuses to leave an area e.g. the classroom or a playground
- Behaviour which seriously disrupts a lesson

Examples of such interventions might include holding back a child who runs out in to traffic or intervening between two children fighting.

The following principles must be borne in mind when considering any use of physical restraint:

- Physical intervention carries the possibility of being interpreted as an assault;
- Physical intervention may carry the risk of injury to the child or to the adult involved;

- Any consideration of the use of restraint or containment should only occur, as a last resort, where no other intervention is feasible or effective; and
- The intention of any physical intervention must be clear.

In short, teachers and staff in St. Anthony's School should only intervene physically to restrain or contain a child:

- Where there is a clear danger to the child or others;
- Where all other interventions have failed or are not feasible;
- With the clear intention of removing the child from danger; and
- With the minimum force required to ensure the child's safety.

In St. Anthony's Special School, the use of physical restraint may be part of the school's policy on challenging behaviour if individual pupil circumstances warrant it. In such cases, staff are trained in the use of physical restraint as part of an overall behaviour intervention strategy e.g. Crisis Prevention Intervention or Studio 3 Training. Where such a need exists in the school, staff will normally be required to undertake training in the use of restraint. However, it is important to keep in mind that restraint is used as a last resort and only according to the guidelines detailed above. Any potential policy on restraint in an individual pupil behaviour management plan will be risk assessed, discussed with parents and relevant support agencies involved with the pupil and written up by a delegated member of staff before such a plan is implemented.

Reasonable Accommodation:

In some individual circumstances special schools and mainstream schools have reached agreement with parents to adopt a shortened school day for certain children as a reasonable accommodation mechanism for enhancing positive behaviour management or adaption to the school environment and routine.

The rationale is that the educational needs of such children ARE different from other children and in some circumstances certain children with special needs are unable to tolerate periods of instruction as would usually be expected in any school.

A "reasonable accommodation" can be where a child may not attend school for the normal full school day and where it is clearly not designed as a "sanction" for the child but a way of tailoring and accommodating the school day to meet their particular or complex needs.

DES circular 11/1995 makes no provision or allowance for a shortened school day and Rules 55 and 56 of the Rules for National Schools 1965 cover the minimum daily period for instruction in national schools but have caveats such as Rule 55 which states that

"It shall be permissible with the prior sanction of the Minister to adopt a modified timetable for schools or classes for handicapped children" (Rule 55 (5)(b)) or Rule 56 which states that "in schools or classes for handicapped children the Minister may sanction modifications of the provisions of sections (1) and (2) of this rule (referring to a minimum period of 4 hours secular instruction) so such an accommodation may therefore be problematic from a bureaucratic view but not from the Special Needs Child's point of view or taking their particular individual needs into account - which is where we must operate from - so the concept is not beyond the bounds of reasonableness either.

In light of the real difficulties experienced by our school in catering for what is a very small number of certain children with specific and complex needs who struggle to cope with the regular or expected length of school day it seems realistic and reasonable for the school to adopt a flexible approach to the length of the school day with the agreement of parents and with the explicit knowledge that it is a temporary measure meant to be regularly reviewed and not a long-term solution.

The use of a shortened school day in this instance is not designed as a "suspension" or "exclusion" but as a reasonable way of accommodating a child's particular and complex needs to ensure their successful participation in school rather than becoming stressed, frustrated or distressed and as a result engaging in extremely challenging and dangerous behaviours which mean that they are not able to access or participate in the education programs or school activities anyway and their behaviour is impacting adversely on the teaching and learning of other pupils and the effective operation of the school.

Use of "reasonable accommodation" as set out here may then be a proactive step in the prevention of suspension or expulsion being invoked as sanctions for unacceptable behaviours as described in this Code of Behaviour. It may also be used to reinstate a pupil to the school following a period of suspension in a positive and successful way as they readjust to the normal school environment and routine.

CONCLUSION:

All children who attend St. Anthony's School 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. If required individual behaviour plans will be put in place for a pupil in consultation with parents and the class teacher, other staff or professionals involved, and the Principal and the school will work closely with home to ensure that optimal support is given.

Cognitive development and capability will be taken into account at all times. Professional advice from psychological assessments will be invaluable.

The children may be taught strategies to assist them to adhere to the rules and thus provide peer support for each other. This will be done in a supportive and safe way, acknowledging and respecting the difference in all individuals.

All children who come to St. Anthony's School are entitled to an education free from frequent disruptions in a safe secure environment. The Board of Management have a duty to ensure that the school is a safe and healthy workplace for teachers and other staff as stated clearly in Circulars 61/2017 and 62/2017, and that the school is a safe and healthy learning environment for all pupils. The promotion of positive behaviour in the school and in the classroom is necessary if these outcomes are to be achieved.

In the belief that the most effective schools tend to be those with the best relationships with parents/guardians, every effort will be made by the Principal and staff to ensure that

1. parents are kept well informed,
2. that the school provide a welcoming atmosphere towards parents,
3. and that parents are not only told when their children are in trouble but when they behaved particularly well.

It is expected that parents will in turn communicate any information about their child which can affect their behaviour to the school. In short, the goal is to ensure open, honest and transparent communication based on promoting and rewarding good behaviour which in itself can reduce the occurrence of challenging behaviours.

Monitoring and Review:

The Principal will be responsible for monitoring the effective implementation of this policy. It will be reviewed on a regular basis but not less often than every three years.

The Code of Discipline was accepted by all staff, parents and Board of Management as being a positive proactive approach towards discipline in school based on a partnership between school and home. The Code of Discipline has been effective from January 2011 after ratification by the Board of Management at a meeting on 13th December 2010. It was reviewed in June 2013, 2016, 2018 and reviewed by the Board of Management over 2020 with an addendum added due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This reviewed policy and addendum was approved and ratified by the Board of Management at meeting on 12/08/2020.

Signed:

Chairperson

Date:

Addendum to St. Anthony's School Code of Behaviour with regard to COVID-19 risks:***Rationale:***

We aim to maintain a happy, healthy, and safe learning environment in which children are encouraged to have respect for themselves, each other and for school staff. To assist us in this, we have a robust code of behaviour, primarily focused on promoting positive behaviour.

St. Anthony's Special School is proud to have a very respectful and considerate school community. It is important that provision be made to discourage behaviours that are now, in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, considered inappropriate or potentially dangerous to the health and safety of others.

Updated August 2020:

All members of the school community, staff, pupils, and visitors are expected to:

- Follow HSE Public Health guidance instructions on hygiene, such as hand washing and sanitising
- Use elbow or a tissue to cover mouth & nose when sneezing or coughing
- Dispose of tissues properly
- Avoid touching mouth, nose and eyes with hands
- Inform the Principal if experiencing any symptoms of coronavirus

Additional Pupils' Responsibilities:

- Follow altered procedures and instructions for safe arrival and departure from school
- Follow instructions around bubbles, pods both in class and during breaks
- Stay in seat as much as possible (raising hand to seek attention)
- Only share equipment by direction of staff
- Keep their work area neat and tidy
- Not share drinking bottles, food, etc
- Use toilets one-at-a-time, ensuring hands are washed properly (20seconds, with soap) and dried before returning to their place

Additional Parents/Guardians' Responsibilities:

- Follow altered procedures for arrival and departure or collection of child from school
- Support the school by reinforcing guidance and teaching children hand hygiene, personal distancing, and respiratory etiquette
- Stay outside of the school building except where they have made an appointment by phone or email to meet staff
- Keep pupils who are unwell at home, informing the school by email/phone of the type of illness being experienced, until a full recovery is made. It is very important not to send a child who is unwell to school as this places everyone else at potential risk. We do not know if a cough or sneeze is COVID or a mere cold but we cannot risk the health and safety of the school community by having ill children attend school. All children presenting with COVID symptoms will be sent home and asked to remain at home until they have been checked by a doctor as per our Covid-19 response plan.
- Keep their mobile phone ON at all times while children are in school in case the school needs to contact parents urgently to collect child if unwell or if a case arises in the school. Inform school if mobile contact changes during year.
- Be available or arrange to have someone available to collect children if there is a need to send them home due to COVID-19 circumstances arising in the school or on the school bus transport.

Additional Staff Responsibilities:

- Adhere to and follow all guidelines issued by HSE, DES and school COVID-19 Response Plan protocols and procedures
- Encourage and practice personal social distancing in all school areas
- Keep the staff and pupil work areas, school materials, and equipment used clean, tidy and disinfected regularly.
- Ensure staff and pupils practice hand hygiene at all appropriate times (before eating/when entering any classroom/after toileting/after using shared equipment/etc)
- Teach pupils to co-operate and learn the new routines and hygiene practices and support their re-connection with school life in a positive, empathic way.
- Liaise with Lead Worker Representative on any issues of concern that need to be brought to management

It is the aim that all staff and parents will ensure that pupils are taught the procedures set out above and that pupils will be encouraged and supported at all times to follow such procedures in a calm, supportive and proactive way so that potential risks are minimised.

However, the following behaviours will be considered as misdemeanours under the code of behaviour (whether minor, serious, or gross will be determined contextually), due to their potential impact on the physical and psychological health, safety and wellbeing of other members of the school community:

- Deliberately ignoring guidance on:
 - personal space and distancing
 - hand hygiene
 - respiratory etiquette (e.g. failing to cover mouth/nose when coughing/sneezing, not properly disposing of used tissues, etc)
 - Staying in zones at playtime for pods/bubbles
- Coughing or spitting at or towards any other person
- Any deliberate action, which may endanger the safety and wellbeing of others through physical proximity or respiratory behaviour
- Any accidental action, persisted in after instruction or correction by staff, which may endanger the safety and wellbeing of others through physical proximity or respiratory behaviour

The consequences for such behaviours which put the health and safety of others at risk will be as already set out in the Code of Behaviour but parents should be aware that due to the increased health & safety risks associated with COVID-19 such behaviours listed above cannot and will not be tolerated and swift action will be taken to emphasise how serious such behaviours are and the consequences of engaging in such behaviours.

It is possible that parents of children who engage in behaviours as set out above will be contacted to collect their child from school if the behaviour is persistent despite all staff attempts to reduce the behaviour(s).

Parents and children will be required to read, accept and agree to the above specific measures to assist with maintaining the school to be a happy, healthy and safe learning environment for all pupils and school staff.

Signed: _____

Parent/Guardian

Signed: _____

Pupil (if applicable) Date: _____