

# **Cabinteely Community School**



## **Policy on Suspension and Expulsion (Reviewed 2012)**

Suspension is defined as “requiring the student to absent himself from the school for a specified, limited number of school days” (NEWB document, ‘Developing a Code of Behaviour’ 2008)

In Cabinteely Community School suspension is part of The Code of Discipline, an agreed behaviour management plan developed over many years and latterly in accordance with the guidelines in the NEWB document, “Developing a Code of Behaviour, Guidelines for Schools”.

In developing this policy the Board of Management has provided guidance for the Principal concerning any suspension longer than three days. The Board of Management has endorsed the policy on suspensions and the procedures in place, to ensure fair principles in determining the use of suspension as part of the Code of Discipline in the school.

The Board of Management has delegated to the Principal and Deputy Principal the authority to investigate complaints against a student and to suspend in appropriate cases. It has decided that certain named behaviours incur suspension as a sanction.

### **General: Grounds for Suspension.**

Suspension is a measured response to the behaviour of a student, which is causing concern. In the case of ongoing undermining behaviour on the part of a student it will be used after other interventions have had limited or no success.

In the case of a serious incident suspension may be deemed necessary to protect;

- the student him or herself;
- the body of students;
- the staff;
- any other person;
- the school premises.

Other than in a situation where the welfare of the student or of other people is endangered, suspension is a serious step forming an element of the Code of Discipline and following on from a system of responses developed within the school and based on NEWB guidelines.

### **1. Examples of ongoing breaches of discipline which might lead to suspension:**

- Behaviour which is considered to interfere with teaching and learning in the school, thereby preventing students from benefitting from their education.

- Repeated incidences of indiscipline in spite of warnings and counselling by staff.
- Refusal to adhere to the developed code of discipline to which all students are expected to conform, and which has the students' wellbeing and education as the primary objective.

## **2. Students may be suspended for serious breaches of discipline.**

Discipline is considered part of the Health and Safety procedures in the school. Serious breaches of discipline may be viewed as endangering:

- the welfare of the student himself
- the welfare of others

and may include:

- Damage to school property;
- Stealing from other students, the staff or the school;
- Behaviour inside or outside of school which is deemed detrimental to the good name and reputation of the school;
- Behaviour which is contrary to the ethos of the school;
- Particularly serious incidents which endanger the welfare of others, including interference with safety equipment;
- Smoking on the school premises;
- Behaviour in an examination which is likely to impact on the educational opportunities of other students;
- Behaviour which is deemed to undermine an individual's right to dignity at work;
- Behaviour which undermines the rights of students and staff to work in a safe and secure environment.

**Fair procedures** are an integral element of The Code of Discipline. Investigation will lead to a decision on which sanction to impose.

### **The Right to Be Heard.**

Students have the right to know that their alleged misbehaviour is being investigated. (will be investigated)

They have the right to know the details of the allegations and any other information that may be taken into account;

They have the right to know how the issue may be decided.

They have the right to respond to the allegations.

They have the right to ask questions of the investigating body

### **The Right to Impartiality.**

Students have the right to an impartial investigation and decision.

The decision to suspend (or expel) is based on a fair evaluation of information and evidence.

## **Procedures in respect of suspension.**

### **1. Persistent breaches of discipline**

Where there is ongoing disruptive behaviour and/or interference with the rights of other students to learn, minor sanctions will have been imposed on the student already. The student will have been warned that continuance of the inappropriate behaviour will lead to the imposition of a period of suspension.

Where there is ongoing disruptive behaviour parents may have been informed of their child's behaviour via one or all of the following:

- the blue pages of the journal;
- the communication pages of the journal
- by telephone and/or letter.

The school welcomes and encourages parents to respond to such communication, in an effort to avert the need to use suspension as a sanction.

### **2. Immediate Suspension**

Where an immediate suspension is deemed necessary a preliminary investigation will be conducted to establish the case for imposition of the suspension. A formal investigation will immediately follow. Parents are always informed of suspension by telephone and/or letter. If the student is to leave the school before closing, parents will be informed by telephone or letter.

### **3. Length of Suspension**

The usual period of suspension is three days except in exceptional circumstances where the Principal considers that a period of suspension longer than three days is needed in order to achieve a particular objective. The Board of Management will have provided guidance to the Principal concerning the kinds of circumstances under which suspensions of longer than three days might be approved.

Examples of such circumstances include:

- Matters of health and safety
- Behaviour which is contrary to the ethos of the school
- Behaviour which denies the rights of staff and students to work in a safe and secure environment
- Impeding the investigation
- Undermining the rights of an individual to dignity at work.

### **Expulsion**

The Board of Management of Cabinteely Community School has the authority to expel a student from the school.

This is an option which is never undertaken lightly. It will be used in the case of conduct which is considered to be a serious infringement of the rights of other students or staff.

Expulsion shall be imposed for

**Very serious breaches of school rules**

or

**in cases where the rights of a greater number of students are being denied because of the continual disruptive behaviour of an individual.**

**Very serious breaches of school rules include:**

- Acts of violence against other students or staff;
- Bringing any weapon into school or on a school trip and/or carrying a weapon in school or on a school trip or using any implement as a weapon;
- Interference with safety equipment or any other act which would endanger the safety of others.
- Major damage to school property

- The possession, use or distribution of illegal substances on the school premises, on school trips or while in school uniform;
- Bullying and harassment whether it is directed against students or staff;
- Continued behaviour which prevents staff from their right to work or which undermines the right of staff to dignity at work.

Such a penalty as expulsion can only be imposed by the Principal with the approval of the Board of Management. As with suspension **Fair Procedures** will inform the decision of the Board of Management. This ensures that where a preliminary assessment of the facts confirms serious misbehaviour that could warrant expulsion, the procedural steps as prescribed under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, will be followed.

The procedural steps will include:

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

In such cases the Principal must inform the parents of his/her intention to impose this penalty and of their right of appeal to the Board on behalf of their child.

Appropriate opportunity will be given to the parents to present their appeal to the members of the Board of Management before the recommendation of the Principal is considered. The school will inform the Educational Welfare Officer of its intentions in this regard.

Under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998, parents may appeal certain decisions made by the school's Board of Management, including the decision to expel, to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science.

## Communication to Parents/Guardians

### 1. General

Each parent/guardian of a student attending Cabinteely Community School is issued with a copy of the Parent and Students Handbook which describes the rules and regulations of the school, including the already developed and agreed consequences of misbehaviour and the sanctions pertaining.

Parents are requested to read the document and to sign a statement in their child's journal and at registration, to the effect that they have read and understood the document.

The Handbook is regularly reviewed and the information discussed by a panel consisting of parents, pupils and staff. The B.O.M. has the responsibility of ensuring that the information is available to all parents. A copy of the full policy document is available to parents on request.

Feb 2012.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_ [date].

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

(Chairperson of Board of Management) (Principal)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_