

St. Vincent's Secondary School

Code of Behaviour

Introduction

St. Vincent's is a Catholic voluntary secondary school for boys now operating under the Trusteeship of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust. In keeping with the philosophy and vision of Edmund Rice, founder of the Christian Brothers, the school is a Christian community that has, as its aims, the spiritual formation, academic preparation and cultural development of its pupils.

The school is managed by a Board of Management, is funded by the Department of Education and Skills and operates within the regulations and guidelines set down by that Department and the Edmund Rice Schools Charter.

Mission Statement

The mission statement of St. Vincent's aims "to provide a quality Catholic education for all, in the tradition of Edmund Rice, which promotes leadership, fosters community and respects diversity". The provision of a learning environment that allows all students to achieve their full potential is implicit in this statement

St. Vincent's subscribes to a holistic vision of education as expressed in the five key elements outlined in the Edmund Rice Schools Trust (ERST) Charter.

The Five Key Elements of an Edmund Rice School are:-

Nurturing faith, Christian spirituality and Gospel-based values;
Promoting partnership in the school community;
Excelling in teaching and learning;
Creating a caring school community;
Inspiring transformational leadership

As a caring school community, one of the aims of our school is to foster a spirit of mutual respect between students, staff and community. Every student and member of staff has the right to enjoy and benefit from having a positive and co-operative school atmosphere. Good behaviour helps to create this atmosphere and is expected at all times. This involves respecting oneself, fellow students, staff and all school property.

The Code of Behaviour is the result of a co-operative effort by the school community of St. Vincent's; the students, parents, teachers and Board of Management. On the understanding that good order and discipline are necessary life skills and important foundations for learning. It is the aim of the code to affirm these and support the principles of respect and tolerance that have been and are the cornerstone of the characteristic spirit of St. Vincent's.

The Code of Behaviour is the set of programmes, practices and procedures that together form the school's plan for helping students in the school to behave and learn well.

The St. Vincent's Code of Behaviour centres on the word 'respect'. This means a respect for the entire school community: students should respect the staff, their fellow students and the school property. This is to make sure that the environment in the school is geared for learning and for ensuring that all students can achieve their full potential.

The Code Aims to:

- Enable students to develop their talents to the full by providing a balanced, challenging curriculum which fosters intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical growth.
- Foster an atmosphere which promotes self-esteem, honesty, justice and respect for others.
- Create a safe, healthy learning environment that nurtures self-discipline and encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Promote co-operation, respect and commitment within the School so that all are unified as partners in learning for life.

Students of St. Vincent's are expected to observe the Code of Behaviour at all times while wearing school uniform, while on school property, while travelling to or from school and while attending any school activity including school trips, sporting and cultural events.

The Terms of the Code of Behaviour

Attendance

Attendance at school enables students to achieve their academic potential, to develop a sense of belonging to the school community and to benefit from all school activities.

The Education Welfare Act (2000) requires that the school should be notified if a student is absent. This may be done by phoning the school office but in all cases a note should be written in the Student Journal explaining the absence and signed by a parent/ guardian when the student is returning to school following an absence.

Any student leaving the school early must sign out at the Office and have permission from the Deputy Principal or Principal, having first informed the Form Teacher.

No student may absent himself from class at any time. Students feeling ill should report to the school office, having first informed the Form Teacher. The Deputy Principal / Principal will then assess the situation and will authorise contact with a parent / guardian.

In accordance with section 21 of the Education Welfare Act (2000), the school is obliged to notify the National Educational Welfare Board when a student is absent for 20 days or more in any given academic year.

E-portal is used to record all attendance; this can be accessed by parents on being issued with the relevant password and username.

Students are not permitted to leave the school grounds during morning break.

PUNCTUALITY

Students are expected to be on time for school (8.45am in the morning and 1.35pm in the afternoon). Arriving on time is an expected habit both in the workplace and in personal relationships. Late-coming inconveniences both teachers and students.

All students must be in class on time. Students should move quickly but safely at the end of each class in order to be in time for the next. Students should only go to their lockers before morning classes, at lunch-break and at the end of the day. (Please refer to Locker Rules)

Students arriving late in the morning or in the afternoon must report to the Office and must have their journals stamped before going to class. Students arriving late will not be admitted to class without this late stamp.

Student lateness will be monitored by the Deputy Principal. Any student who is consistently late will receive an 8a.m. detention. Parents/guardians will be informed by a note given to the student in his journal the day before detention is due. Students who are persistently late despite serving detention will incur further appropriate sanctions.

Uniform

The school uniform helps promote a sense of belonging to the school community and is a visual symbol of St. Vincent's. Students wearing our uniform should be conscious that they represent the entire school community and as such, their behaviour should reflect our ethos and code.

Full uniform must be worn when travelling to or from school and during related school activities.

Personal jewellery and body-piercings are not allowed.

School Work and Home Work (Please refer to the School Homework Policy)

Students are expected to be prepared and participate fully in each class. They should have the textbooks and class materials that their teachers have indicated are necessary. Students should complete class-work and homework on time and be prepared and present for all tests and examinations.

Good work habits and cooperation with the teacher enable the student to contribute to the class and to be successful. They are important for success in endeavours after secondary school.

School Journal

The school provides each student with a Student Journal at the beginning of the year. Students are expected to keep it in their possession and treat it with care and respect. Students are required to use the journal to note homework including work for reading/revision. The Student Journal is also used as a means of communication between parents and the school.

Students should make their best effort to complete work and should seek advice/or help from teachers if in difficulty.

If a student doesn't have a journal on arrival to school he must present himself to the office, where the Principal/Deputy Principal will decide on the appropriate action before going to class.

If homework is not presented, a student is required to have a note of explanation from a parent / guardian.

Parents/guardians should ensure to bring the school journal to all parent-teacher meetings

Internet (Please refer to the School Internet Acceptable Use Policy)

Students are expected to use computers and computer networks solely for the purpose of education and academic research. Students must not tamper with or reconfigure any computer software without the permission of a teacher.

Students may not misuse electronic mail or have access to Internet sites that violate any aspect of this Code of Behaviour.

Any student using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for the purpose of insulting or defaming anybody associated with the school and/or bringing the school into disrepute in any fashion will have the case referred to the Board of Management.

Behaviour expected of students

Good behaviour in class and around the school creates a safe environment conducive to learning.

Students are expected to show concern for the personal safety of themselves and others at all times.

All members of the school community have a right to be treated with dignity and courtesy.

St Vincent's promotes an atmosphere of respect, safety and achievement. At all times students must be courteous and respectful to all staff members and each other. Students should follow the instructions given by their teachers and other members of staff. Students must respond to instructions from teachers promptly and in a positive manner. This will help to promote a healthy and respectful working relationship between the teacher and the student.

Students should not engage in actions where others may be adversely affected. This includes play fighting, running through public areas or engaging in conduct potentially harmful to themselves or others.

Students are required to use the bins provided for litter and to treat all school property with care.

Behaviour during liturgies, formal events and presentations must be appropriate to the occasion.

The safety and learning of the all students must be prioritised. Aggressive behaviour in any form will not be tolerated.

The school has many regulations that govern a student's behaviour in specialist rooms and all of these must be adhered to at all times. This is to ensure the safety of all students. Examples of these areas include: the Science labs, Computer rooms, Homework Club room, Art room and P.E. gym.

For safety reasons, all classrooms must be vacated at break times.

For the same reason as above, cycling is also forbidden on school grounds. Bikes must be walked through the school grounds. As parking space is limited, students may not park motorcycles or cars on the school grounds.

For reasons of health and to maintain a positive impression of the school, chewing gum is forbidden on school premises.

Eating and drinking are strictly confined to the Student Seating Area, Homework Club Room and the Yard.

Smokings, consuming alcohol or psychoactive substances are strictly forbidden in the school, on school property and during school related activities.

To ensure a positive, respectful and safe learning environment, wilful damage to school property is strictly forbidden.

In the interest of their own safety, students may not leave their class or the yard without a teacher's permission.

In order to make sure that all students are properly supervised at morning break time, all students must remain in the main yard area. The area around the gym, primary school yard and the field are out of bounds.

The use of toilets is normally confined to break times. Any persistent medical problems should be notified to the student's Form Teacher.

All students must participate in P.E. class according to their ability. Inability to take part must be notified in writing to the P.E. teacher.

For the safety of students and staff, and to ensure that intentional and unintentional disruption by them is eliminated, the use of mobile phones or any electronic recording devices on school premises is forbidden. Improper use of any such equipment will lead to its confiscation and will only be returned on the signing of an agreement by a parent/guardian. Any parent or guardian wishing to contact a student, or vice-versa, can contact them through the office. Incidents where students use mobile phones to bully other students or send offensive messages or calls will be investigated under the Anti-Bullying policy.

Bullying: (Please refer to our Anti-Bullying policy)

Bullying is defined as repeated aggression conducted by an individual or a group against others – such aggressive behaviour may be verbal, psychological or physical. The term bullying encompasses harassment, i.e. any form of unwanted conduct in relation to any of the nine grounds named in equality legislation, (gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion, membership of the travelling community) that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading or offensive environment for the victim. Bullying includes sexual harassment, i.e. any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading or offensive environment for the victim.

Conduct which is injurious to the mental and physical well being of others is not conducive to good school morale or to a secure learning environment.

Students should not engage in any activity that could be interpreted by others as harassment, intimidation or bullying.

All allegations of bullying will be investigated according to the procedures outlined in the Anti-Bullying policy and appropriate response will be taken.

The Discipline System in Action

The procedures for dealing with incidents of unacceptable behaviour are referred to as our 'ladder of referral'. The basic principle is that the higher up the ladder an incident is

dealt with, the more seriously it is viewed. The staff member involved in reporting an incident will be informed of the outcomes.

The class teacher has primary responsibility for discipline in his/her classroom and deals with minor infringements of the Code as they arise.

If a student does not follow the code, the teacher has a number of options available which include:

- A verbal reprimand – including advice on how to improve
- A reprimand and behaviour recorded in Student Journal
- Moving position within the classroom
- A note home to a parent/guardian in the in the Student Journal
- Direct communication with a parent/guardian by phone or arranged meeting
- Detention before school, at break-times or after school
- Confiscation of a disruptive item
- Referral to the Form Teacher
- Loss of Privileges e.g. participation in school trips, outings or school events.
- Internal suspension.

Parents/Guardians will be informed in advance of sanctions, detentions and suspensions as they apply.

For a serious or persistent issue, the student will receive a suspension relative to the seriousness of the offence.

In the case of persistent disruptive behaviour, the student can be moved to another teacher's class, to his Form Teacher, the Deputy Principal or the Principal.

The Form Teacher will monitor the Student Journals, and students having regular disciplinary entries will be placed on detention. The Parent/guardian will be notified.

If the student fails to sit a detention without advance notice to the school office, the result may be a suspension of up to three days dependent on the previous record of the student.

Bad language to or verbal abuse of a staff member will result in an immediate suspension.

Immediate suspension may be imposed for dangerous behaviour or abuse of school property.

The Principal will inform the Board of Management of all suspensions in accordance with the school's policy on suspensions.

In some serious cases suspension and even expulsion, in accordance with the school's policy on expulsions, could result from a single act on the part of the student.

Disciplinary action taken in regard to a student's behaviour will be placed on his record and may be taken into consideration when a future incident is being dealt with.

These options are designed to ensure that the positive learning environment the school wishes to maintain is not interrupted and the interests of other students who work to the best of their ability are protected.

Role of the Parent or Guardian:

As members of the school community Parents/Guardians play a vital role in shaping a positive attitude among students which produces good behaviour in school and encourages students to meet the standards of courtesy, discipline and study that the school expects. This positive attitude will mean that each student has a much greater chance to maximise his potential. E-portal is available to Parents to keep themselves informed as to the progress their son is making.

St. Vincent's invites the active involvement and co-operation of the parents/guardians by seeking their agreement in

Supporting the school in meeting needs of the students

Providing all necessary information to the school

Respecting the 'in loco parentis' role of the teacher

Attending such meetings as requested by the school: Parent-teacher; meetings with Form Teachers, Deputy Principal/Principal relevant to the Code of Behaviour

Familiarising themselves with rules, policies and to ensure pupil co-operation

Accepting the school's Code of Behaviour.

Monitoring the student's progress and behaviour, regularly checking his Student Journal, attending to all communication from school – bulletins, reports, letters –relevant to the Code of Behaviour, return of forms etc.

The E-Portal system makes it possible for parents to check up to date information on their son's progress.

The Parents/Guardian shall be entitled to request such meetings as may be necessary for the personal or academic welfare of their student. Parent/Guardian may contact the school to request a meeting with a subject teacher, Guidance Counsellor, Home School Liaison, Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator, Form Teacher, Deputy Principal or Principal. All requests, indicating the purpose, should be made initially by phone to the Secretary or by letter to the person.

The Principal/Deputy Principal may delegate authority to the Form Teacher for such a meeting.

Parents/Guardians shall have open to them the opportunity to present a complaint To the principal and failing a resolution to the Board of Management. Complaints must be in writing, signed, dated with address and contact number.

All parents/guardians are invited to join our Parents' Association and are encouraged to participate actively. Parents have two nominees on the school's Board of Management.

Rewards

Through its annual Awards the school recognises achievement, participation and contribution to the school climate across a wide range of areas – attendance, behaviour, academic and sporting. The school issues merit certificates on a twice yearly basis commending good performance.

Through the School Completion Programme, improvements in attendance, behaviour and achievements are rewarded.

The following are a list of awards which are presented to the students

Student of the Year - Bro. Hutton Trophy & miniature Genesis

LCA Student of the Year - Frank O Leary Cup

6L Class student of the Year

6LCA Class student of the Year

Art Folder of the Year - Cavanaugh Cup

Art Picture of the Year O Tooled Calendar Cup

Hurler of the Year - Genesis Trophy

Gaelic Player of the Year -Genesis Trophy

Soccer Player of the Year - River mounts Cup

Sports Star of the Year - Genesis Trophy

Basketball Player of the Year

Athlete of the Year

Junior Gaelic Player

Junior Soccer Player

Junior Hurler of the Year

Junior Basketball Player

Junior Sports Star of the Year

Junior Athletics Star of the Year

Students Council Certificates

School Supports

St. Vincent's has a well defined Pastoral Care system. Each class group has a Form Teacher. The role of the Form Teacher is mainly to support and encourage the students in their care. They also monitor student behaviour and liaise with other teachers and parents. Having reviewed a student's behaviour the Form Teacher will determine what supports or sanctions are warranted in any given situation.

St. Vincent's has a Home School Community Liaison teacher. This teacher plays a very important role in supporting Parents and is available to meet with them to discuss any issues they feel they need support in dealing with.

Care Team meetings occur on a weekly basis. The Care Team comprises of the Guidance Counsellors, International Students Teacher, SCP Coordinator, Home School Community Liaison Teacher, Deputy Principal and Principal. These meetings allow the school to coordinate all available student supports. Other teachers may be invited to attend from time to time

Policy on Suspensions

The Board of Management has formally delegated to the Principal the authority to suspend a student. In implementing a decision to suspend, the Principal will adhere to the procedures for suspension as set down in the Code of Behaviour of the school.

In the event of the absence of the Principal on approved leave or on School business, the authority to suspend is delegated to the Acting Principal. All suspensions will be notified to the Board of Management.

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

- Repeated deliberate breaches of the Code of Behaviour
- The student's behaviour has had a seriously detrimental effect on the education of other students
- The student's continued presence in the school at this time constitutes a threat to safety
- The student is responsible for serious damage to property

A single incident of serious misconduct may be grounds for suspension.

In general, a suspension will be no longer than three days. If a suspension longer than three days is proposed by the Principal, the matter will be referred to the Board of Management for consideration and approval. In circumstances where a Board of Management meeting cannot be convened in the time frame necessary, the Principal with the approval of the Chairperson may impose a suspension of up to 5 days.

The decision of the Principal to suspend a student may be appealed to the Board of Management.

Where the total number of days for which the student has been suspended in the current year reaches 20 days, the parents, or a student 18 years or over, may appeal the suspension under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998

The Board of Management will review the use of suspension annually to ensure that its use is consistent with school policies, that patterns of use are examined to identify factors that may be influencing behaviour in the school and to ensure that use of suspension is appropriate and effective.

In compliance with section 21 (4) of the Education Welfare Act, if a student is suspended from school for a period not less than six days, the principal shall forthwith so inform, by notice in writing, the educational welfare officer.

Policy on Expulsions

The Board of Management has the authority to expel a student.

Expulsion should be a proportionate response to the student's behaviour and will only be taken in extreme cases of unacceptable behaviour.

A proposal to expel a student requires serious grounds such as that:

- the student's behaviour is a persistent cause of significant disruption to the learning of others or to the teaching process.
- the student's continued presence in the school constitutes a real and significant threat to safety.
- the student is responsible for serious damage to property.

While the Board expects that a decision to exclude a student would arise when all other pastoral and disciplinary strategies outlined in this document have been exhausted, it does not preclude the possibility that, in very exceptional and serious circumstances, exclusion may be considered for a first offence.

Procedures in respect of expulsion:

Where a preliminary assessment of the facts confirms serious misbehaviour that could warrant expulsion, the following procedural steps will be taken:

1. A detailed investigation is carried out under the direction of the Principal

The Principal will inform the student and their parents in writing about the details of the alleged misbehaviour, how it will be investigated and that it could result in expulsion.

A meeting will be arranged with the Principal to give the parents and student every opportunity to respond to the complaint of serious misbehaviour before a decision is made and a sanction is imposed.

If the parents/guardians and students fail to attend the 1st meeting, the Principal will write by registered post explaining the gravity of the issue, the importance of attending a rescheduled meeting, and failing that, the duty of the School Management to make a decision to respond to the inappropriate behaviour.

2. A recommendation to the Board of Management by the Principal

Where the Principal forms a view, based on the investigation of the alleged misbehaviour, that expulsion may be warranted, the Principal makes a recommendation to the Board of Management to consider expulsion. The Principal will:

- inform the parents and student that the Board of Management is being asked to consider expulsion
- ensure that parents/guardians have records of the allegations against the student, the investigation, and written notice of the grounds on which the Board of Management is being asked to consider expulsion
- provide the Board of Management with the same comprehensive records as are given to parents
- notify the parents of the date of the hearing by the Board of Management and invite them to that hearing
- advise the parents that they can make a written and oral submission to the Board of Management
- Ensure that parents have enough notice to allow them prepare for the hearing.

3. Consideration by the Board of Management of the Principal's recommendation and the holding of a hearing

The Board will review the initial investigation and ensure that the investigation was properly conducted in line with fair procedures.

The Board will review all documentation and the circumstances of the case. No party who has had any involvement with the case will be part of the Board's deliberations.

At the arranged hearing, the Principal and the parents, or a student aged 18 years or over, will put their case to the Board in each other's presence. Each party will be allowed to question the evidence of the other party directly.

After both sides have been heard, the Principal and parents will withdraw and the Board will deliberate in private.

4. Board of Management deliberations and actions following the hearing

It is the responsibility of the Board of Management to decide whether or not the allegation is substantiated and, if so, whether or not expulsion is the appropriate sanction.

Where the Board, having considered all the facts of the case, decides that the student should be expelled, the Board will notify the Educational Welfare Officer in writing of its decision, and the reasons for this decision. The student cannot be expelled before the passage of twenty school days from the date on which the Educational Welfare Officer receives the written notification.

The Board will inform the parents in writing about its conclusions and the next steps in the process. Parents will be informed that the Educational Welfare Officer will be notified of the decision; notwithstanding this the suspension will continue.

5. Consultations arranged by the Educational Welfare Officer

Within twenty days of receipt of the notification from the Board of Management of its decision that a student be expelled, the Educational Welfare Officer must:

- Consult with the Principal, parents and student
- Convene a meeting of those parties who agree to attend.

The purpose of the meeting is to ensure that arrangements are made for the student to remain in education. Pending these consultations about the future education of the student, the Board may consider it appropriate to suspend the student if there is likelihood that the continued presence of the student during this time will seriously disrupt the learning of others or represent a threat to the safety of other students or staff.

6. Confirmation of the decision to expel

Where the twenty-day period following notification to the Educational Welfare Officer has elapsed and where the Board of Management remains of the view that the student should be expelled, the Chairperson and the Principal will be delegated to formally confirm the decision to expel. Parents will be notified that the expulsion will now proceed. Parents will be informed about the right to appeal and will be supplied with a form on which to lodge an appeal. A formal record will be kept of the decision to expel the student.

Appeals:

A parent, or a student 18 years or over, may appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998 a decision to expel to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills. An appeal may also be brought by the National Educational Welfare Board on behalf of the student.

Review:

The Board of Management will review the use of expulsion in the school annually to ensure that its use is consistent with school policies, that patterns of use are examined to identify factors that may be influencing behaviour in the school and to ensure that expulsion is used appropriately.

This Code of Behaviour was reviewed and amended by the Board of Management at the Meeting of dd/mm/yy.

The Code of Behaviour will be formally reviewed in 2013/2014.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

