

Stapolin Educate Together National School



Positive Behaviour Policy

1. Introduction and Rationale

- 1.1 Stapolin Educate Together National School aims to provide a happy, secure, inclusive and friendly learning environment, where children, parents, teachers, special needs assistants, ancillary staff and the Board of Management work in partnership. Each individual is valued, encouraged, respected for their uniqueness and facilitated to reach their full potential in a positive atmosphere.
- 1.2 This will enable each child to live a full life, equipped with the skills necessary to be resilient, respectful, problem-solving citizens.
- 1.3 We believe that positive behaviour is based on positive relations between parents/guardians, the children and the school.
- 1.4 We understand that all behaviour is communication, so we frame distressed behaviour as an expression of need and an opportunity to teach children the social-emotional and communication skills necessary to manage themselves, resolve conflict, prevent bullying and develop pro-social behaviours.
- 1.5 The Board of Management of the school has ultimate responsibility for behaviour in the school. Within the school, the overall day to day responsibility for behaviour rests with the Principal. Each teacher has the responsibility for the maintenance and support of behaviour in her/his classroom while sharing a common responsibility for safe and respectful behaviour within the premises. Parent/guardians can support the school by encouraging their children to understand the school rules and by communicating any relevant concerns to the school.

2. Aims

- 2.1 To help promote a positive learning environment in which every pupil may benefit fully from school life
- 2.2 To promote self-esteem and positive relationships
- 2.3 To encourage consistency of response to both positive and distressed behaviour
- 2.4 To foster a sense of responsibility, self-management and problem solving in pupils
- 2.5 To facilitate the education and development of every child
- 2.6 To foster caring attitudes based on consideration and respect for the rights of others and to the environment
- 2.7 To ensure that the school's expectations and strategies are widely known and understood through the Information Booklet, availability of policies and school website.
- 2.8 To encourage the involvement of both home and school in the implementation of this policy

3. General Guidelines for Behaviour

- 3.1 As a staff we are committed to the realisation of these aims. We strive to create a positive learning environment for our pupils, in which there is a sense of good order and a reasonable approach to behaviour support. This is achieved by having guidelines to direct behaviour for the benefit of all.
- 3.2 All pupils are expected to behave in a safe, responsible and caring way to themselves and others, showing consideration, courtesy and regard for other pupils, adults and property. Respect should be shown at all times. The other pupils and staff should be treated with concern and dignity. The property of the individual and the school should be treated with care and respect at all times.
- 3.3 With all this in mind we have drawn up three **School Rules** which are the basis of the behaviour expected in our school. These rules are clear and easy for the children to understand. Considerable time is devoted, at the beginning of each school year to explaining and discussing these rules formally, and throughout the school year on an informal basis. The staff of Stapolin ETNS strive to model these behaviours and skills on a constant basis so that children see them in action. These rules are further reinforced through a variety of support programmes – Stay Safe, Walk Tall, RSE (Relationships and Sexuality Education).

4. Our School Rules - Ready, Respectful, Safe.

The three rules, Ready, Respectful, Safe are the basis for all behaviour in our school. They promote our school ethos and values.

4.1 Ready

We are ready for school and ready to learn. We arrive at school on time. We look at and listen to the person talking to us. We follow instructions. We start our work when asked. We line up promptly. We come to school with the correct equipment.

4.2 Respectful

We greet everyone politely when we arrive each morning. We thank the adults that we work with at the end of the day. We help pick up after ourselves and others. We do things for other people. We work hard. We notice when another person helps us. We win gracefully. We are mannerly and we use polite words. We share with others. We show consideration for others. We play together. We always tell the truth.

4.3 Safe

We move calmly around our school. We use play equipment properly. We have kind hands, kind feet and kind words. We tell an adult when something is wrong. We use technology responsibly. We treat others as we wish to be treated. We treat all members of our school community-pupils, staff, parents, visitors- in a thoughtful and caring way. We think of how our behaviour affects others. We are responsible for our own actions and the effect of those actions on others.

5. Strategies for Encouraging Positive Behaviour

- 5.1 A positive school and class atmosphere fosters positive behaviour. Our expectation is that children are safe and respectful. Appropriate behaviour is explained and discussed in class. Where necessary, behaviour is modelled for children in a variety of settings. Expectations about work and tasks are explained clearly to the children. Organisation within the classrooms is well planned, in so far as possible, with regard to seating, movement capability and access to equipment. Strategies for conflict resolution and self-regulation are taught and practised within the school. Students are an active part of creating a positive learning environment. Class teachers and pupils work in partnership to generate class agreements and contracts.
- 5.2 We work to foster a community based on safety, belonging and connection that encourages intrinsic motivation for children. We understand that children, like adults, sometimes need extrinsic motivation to enable them to grow and learn. We encourage pupils; we acknowledge and praise their efforts and successes. Praise is given in a variety of ways.
- A quiet word or gesture of approval.
 - Praise from other pupils/teacher/classes/Principal.
 - Verbal communication with parent/guardian.
 - Prudent use of merit stamps, stickers, stars, certificates, etc.
 - Special responsibility or privilege.

6. Behaviour that Challenges

- 6.1 The staff of Stapolin Educate Together National School devotes considerable time and energy to establishing class rules and reinforcing our School Rules formally at the beginning of each school year and informally throughout the school year. Class discussions, S.P.H.E lessons and Circle Time provide a wealth of opportunities and resources for exploring personal development, behaviour, self-regulation, communication and problem-solving issues before they arise.
- 6.2 We know that all behaviour is communication. We approach behaviour management with a 'learning' mind, ready to observe the feelings and needs behind the behaviour.
- 6.3 Our classrooms are places of learning and we expect our pupils to live our values in class, ensuring that the needs of all are met in order to get the best out of their learning opportunities. Maintaining high standards of behaviour will involve, in some instances, the use of strategies to help the child to regulate their behaviour.
- 6.4 Strategies and interventions are restorative rather than punitive. They are used in a respectful way as part of a plan to help pupils understand the effect of their actions and take responsibility for changing it. Interventions are meant to diffuse not escalate.
- 6.5 It is first and foremost our priority to provide safety for our students and our staff. Once safety is established, we can move toward problem solving and restoring relationships. Our steps for dealing with distressed behaviour are:
- remove any threat to safety
 - de-escalate the situation by providing safety allowing pupil(s) to calm through a designated safe space, an intervention strategy or connection with a team leader.
 - reflecting on the behaviour with the student once the student is calm (this might be directly after the behaviour or at a designated time in day)
 - re-enforcing boundaries and expectations, re-teaching where necessary

- establish a clear plan of expected behaviour moving forward, encourage students to use self-regulation skills as needed
- reflect on the behaviour ourselves, noticing patterns and planning for helpful strategies for intervention

6.6 In order to have a clear and consistent approach, a series of steps for staff to follow are organised into levels. They are child centred and focus on enabling the child to recognise the behaviour and to teach them strategies to help them to manage. We want the children to understand that everyone experiences feelings of frustration and anger at times and that how we manage these feelings is what is important.

Terms:

Calm Corner: a dedicated area in the classroom where students feel safe and have the necessary tools to help regain a level of calm and optimal brain state. The Calm Corner is not used as punishment or a 'time out'. Students choose to go to the Calm Corner and are encouraged to use it as a healthy option.

| Level | Sample Behaviours | Strategies |
|--------------|--|---|
| 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talking over the teacher or another child • Not following instructions. • Shouting out • Disrupting the class | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refocus the child • Quiet word or non-verbal cues • Ensure the instructions are clear • Review the class rules with the child • Redirect or distract the child |
| 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Escalation and continuation of level one behaviours • Rudeness and disrespect • Refusal to work or cooperate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion with child • The seating arrangements in the class may be changed to enable the child to refocus and regulate their behaviour. |
| 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Escalation and continuation of level two behaviours • Harm to others | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child is given the opportunity to move into the Calm Corner of the class where they have an opportunity to reflect on their behaviour and to engage in self-regulation activities. |
| 4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Escalation and continuation of level three behaviours. • Targeted harm to others • Destruction of property | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child is given the opportunity to move to a Calm Corner outside of their classroom. This enables the child to have some space to reflect and self-regulate. • The class teacher speaks to the child's parent(s) to discuss the issues. |

- 6.7 On the rare occasions that the above procedure does not improve the situation the following steps will be taken
- 6.7.1 Formal meeting with the Chairperson of the Board of Management and the Principal
 - 6.7.2 Temporary suspension (See Appendix)
 - 6.7.3 Expulsion (See Appendix)

7. Children with Additional Needs

- 7.1 We recognise that certain behavioural problems are a result of specific conditions (e.g. ASD, ADD, ADHD). The specific needs and capabilities of a child with special needs will be taken into account when managing behaviour. Where a serious behavioural problem arises, every effort will be made to accommodate the child's needs. In the case of ongoing serious misbehaviour, an Individual Behaviour Plan will be drawn up in collaboration with parents/guardians, teachers, the Principal and the child. The terms of each IBP may vary depending on the requirements of the child.

8. Attendance

- 8.1 In order to comply with our obligations under the Education Welfare Act 2000 Stapolin Educate Together National School must send a report on pupils' attendance of to the National Education Welfare Board (Tusla) at the end of each school quarter. Therefore, we must keep accurate and detailed records of each pupil's attendance.
- 8.2 We ask that parents let the school know the reasons for **all** absences from school. Absence reasons can be input by parents on Aladdin through the Aladdin Connect App. Alternatively, a written note of explanation should be emailed to the school. Where absences are unexplained, this is noted on school attendance records. We are obliged to report pupils who are absent for 20+ days to Tusla at the end of each reporting period. We are also required to indicate patterns of absences e.g. Mondays and/or Fridays etc.
- 8.3 The official opening time of our school is 8.20am. All children are expected to be in the school yard in time to line up for class each morning. Parents/guardians are asked to say goodbye to their child in their line and let the teacher take them into the classroom.
- 8.4 If for any reason a child has to leave the school before dismissal time, he/she must be collected by a parent/guardian. A note regarding early collection should be emailed to the school in advance. In the event of an unforeseen early collection, the child must be signed out in the office before the teacher can allow him to leave.

9. How Parents/Guardians can Help

- 9.1 Schools need the support of parents/guardians in order to meet legitimate expectations with regard to good behaviour and discipline. Parents play a crucial role in shaping the attitudes which produce good behaviour in school.
- 9.2 Parents/guardians can help their children in the following ways:
- Parents should provide their children with positive models of behaviour.
 - Children need boundaries and rules about behaviour. Talk to your child about school rules. They help make school a safe place where everyone can learn and where nobody feels left out or threatened. The rules are there to encourage us to cooperate and work together.
 - Provide full and complete information re. early medical and developmental history when enrolling child in school. Provide copies of specialist reports. Request a meeting with the Principal where necessary.
 - Ensure the school has up-to date contact information for parents/ guardians.

- Teach your child to be polite and mannerly and to have respect for others and themselves. Insist they say “please” when asking for something, “thank you” when they receive it.
- Ensure an ordered, structured day for your child with regular mealtimes and bedtimes. Include a story as part of the bedtime routine.
- Encourage healthy eating at home as well as in school. Avoid sugary foods. Give children plain water, milk or freshly squeezed fruit juice to drink.
- Send your child to school on time every day. Inform the school when he/she is ill.
- Ensure you have downloaded the Aladdin Connect App, so you stay up to date with school notices.
- Create a quiet space where your child can do homework after school. Make sure that the homework is done every night.
- Share information with the school which might affect behaviour in school e.g family illness/bereavements etc.
- Attend school meetings (enrolment, induction and Parent-Teacher meetings) as required.
- Join Parents’ Association and become involved in school activities.
- Enrol your child in after school activities. e.g. soccer, swimming, karate, basketball and dancing etc. Exercise is hugely important for a child’s physical, mental and social well-being. It also gives them the opportunity to socialise and learn new skills.
- Where a pupil has serious behavioural problems the parents/guardians are expected to cooperate and work with the Teachers/Board of Management in seeking professional help for their child.

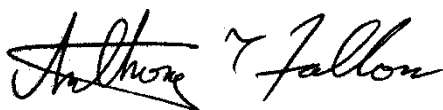
9.3 When the whole school community works together our children can achieve the very highest standards in behaviour and high academic standards in all areas of the curriculum.

10. Implementation

This policy will be implemented from 3rd November 2020.

11. Ratification and Review

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 2nd November 2020 and will be reviewed every three years.



Signed: Anthony Fallon, Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: 2nd November 2020

Appendix A – Suspension and Expulsion Procedures

A. Suspension

A.1 Authority to suspend

A.1.1 The Board has the authority to suspend a pupil. Where this authority is delegated to the Principal, the delegation should be done formally and in writing stating any limits on that authority and specifying how the Principal is accountable to the Board for his or her use of that authority. The delegation of authority should reflect the provisions of these Guidelines, any relevant legal requirements and Articles of Management, where appropriate.

A.2 Grounds for suspension

A.2.1 Suspension should be a proportionate response to the behaviour that is causing concern. Normally, other interventions will have been tried before suspension, and school staff will have reviewed the reasons why these have not worked. The decision to suspend a pupil requires serious grounds such as that:

A.2.1.1 the pupil's behaviour has had a seriously detrimental effect on the education of other pupils

A.2.1.2 the pupil's continued presence in the school at this time constitutes a threat to safety

A.2.1.3 the pupil is responsible for serious damage to property.

A.2.2 A single incident of serious misconduct may be grounds for suspension.

A.3 Determining the appropriateness of suspending a pupil

A.3.1 Where the purpose of a proposed suspension is clearly identified, and that purpose cannot be achieved in any other way, suspension can have value. Suspensions can provide a respite for staff and the pupil, give the pupil time to reflect on the link between their action and its consequences, and give staff time to plan ways of helping the pupil to change unacceptable behaviour.

A.3.2 However, suspension can be counter-productive if used without a clear rationale or without measuring its impact and value. School management will consider the risk of any unwanted outcomes from suspension, such as an increased sense of alienation from school that could lead to a cycle of behavioural and academic problems.

A.4 Factors to consider before suspending a pupil

A.4.1 The nature and seriousness of the behaviour

A.4.1.1 What is the precise description of the behaviour?

A.4.1.2 How persistent has the unacceptable behaviour been?

A.4.1.3 Has the problem behaviour escalated, in spite of the interventions tried?

A.4.2 The context of the behaviour

A.4.2.1 What are the circumstances of the incidents of serious misbehaviour (e.g. in class, in the yard, in a group)?

- A.4.2.2 What factors may have triggered incidents of serious misbehaviour (e.g. bullying, cultural or family factors)?
- A.4.2.3 What is the age, stage of development and cognitive ability of the pupil?
- A.4.2.4 Are there any factors that may be associated with the behaviour? (e.g. particular home circumstances, special educational needs)

A.4.3 The impact of the behaviour

- A.4.3.1 How are other pupils and staff affected by the pupil's behaviour?
- A.4.3.2 What is the impact of the behaviour on the teaching and learning of the class?
- A.4.3.3 Does the behaviour have a particular or greater impact on some pupils or teachers?
- A.4.3.4 Does the pupil understand the impact of their behaviour on others?

A.4.4 The interventions tried to date

- A.4.4.1 What interventions have been tried? Over what period?
- A.4.4.2 How have the interventions been recorded and monitored?
- A.4.4.3 What has been the result of those interventions?
- A.4.4.4 Have the parents been involved in finding a solution to the problem behaviour?
- A.4.4.5 Has the intervention of NEPS or other psychological assessment or counselling been sought, where appropriate?
- A.4.4.6 Are any other interventions such as peer mediation, restorative justice approaches or family conferencing available?
- A.4.4.7 Is the pupil or parent involved with any support service and has this agency or support service been asked for help in solving this problem?
- A.4.4.8 Has any other agency been asked for assistance (e.g. Child Guidance Clinic, Child and Adolescent services)?

A.4.5 Whether suspension is a proportionate response

- A.4.5.1 Does the pupil's behaviour warrant suspension?
- A.4.5.2 Is the standard being applied to judging the behaviour the same as the standard applied to the behaviour of any other pupil?

A.4.6 The possible impact of suspension

- A.4.6.1 Will suspension allow additional or alternative interventions to be made?
- A.4.6.2 Will suspension help the pupil to change the inappropriate behaviour?
- A.4.6.3 How will suspension help teachers or other pupils affected by the behaviour?
- A.4.6.4 Will suspension exacerbate any educational vulnerability of the pupil?

A.5 Forms of suspension

A.5.1 Immediate suspension

In exceptional circumstances, the Principal may consider an immediate suspension to be necessary where the continued presence of the pupil in the school at the time

would represent a serious threat to the safety of pupils or staff of the school, or any other person. Fair procedures will still be applied.

A.5.2 Automatic Suspension

The Board may decide, as part of the school's policy on sanctions, and following the consultation process with the Principal, parents, teachers and pupils, that particular named behaviours incur suspension as a sanction. However, a general decision to impose suspension for named behaviours does not remove the duty to follow due process and fair procedures in each case.

A.5.3 Rolling suspension

A pupil will not be suspended again shortly after he returns to school unless:

- he engages in serious misbehaviour that warrants suspension, and
- fair procedures are observed in full, and
- the standard applied to judging the behaviour is the same as the standard applied to the behaviour of any other pupil.

A.5.4 Informal or unacknowledged suspension

Exclusion of a pupil for part of the school day, as a sanction, or asking parents to keep a child from school, as a sanction, is a suspension. Any exclusion imposed by the school is a suspension and will follow these Guidelines relating to suspension.

A.5.5 Open-ended suspension

Pupils will not be suspended for an indefinite period. Any such suspension would be regarded as an expulsion.

A.5.6 Inappropriate use of suspension

Pupils will not usually be suspended for:

- poor academic performance
- poor attendance or lateness
- minor breaches of the code of behaviour.

However, any behaviour that is persistently disruptive to learning or potentially dangerous can be a serious matter. Behaviour must be examined in context to understand both the behaviour itself and the response or sanction that is most appropriate.

A.6 Fair procedures based on the principles of natural justice

A.6.1 The School will follow fair procedures when proposing to suspend or expel a pupil. Fair procedures have two essential parts:

- the right to be heard,
- the right to impartiality.

A.6.2 The right to be heard means:

- the right to know that the alleged misbehaviour is being investigated
- the right to know the details of the allegations being made and any other information that will be taken into account
- the right to know how the issue will be decided
- the right to respond to the allegations
- where the possible sanction is of a serious nature, the right to be heard by the decision-making body
- where the possible sanction is of a serious nature, the right to ask questions of the other party or witnesses where there is a dispute about the facts.

A.6.3 The right to impartiality means:

- the right to an absence of bias in the decision-maker
- the right to impartiality in the investigation and the decision-making.

A.6.4 Freedom from bias entails ensuring that a person with an interest in the matter is not involved in the investigation or decision-making. If a person has pre-conceived opinions, a vested interest or personal involvement in the matter, they should not attempt to settle that matter.

A.6.5 An impartial process is one that allows a decision to be made based on an unbiased evaluation of information and evidence. Generally, impartiality requires that the investigation is separated from the process of making a decision so that the decision-maker comes to the task with an open mind.

A.7 Applying fair procedures in school

A.7.1 In the School, fair procedures apply to:

A.7.1.1 the investigation of alleged misbehaviour that may lead to suspension or expulsion and

A.7.1.2 the process of decision-making as to (a) whether the pupil did engage in the misbehaviour and (b) what sanction to impose.

A.7.2 The way in which fair procedures are applied will take account of the seriousness of the alleged misbehaviour and will have regard to what is reasonable in the school.

A.7.3 The principles of fair procedures always apply, but the degree of formality required in implementing fair procedures will depend on the gravity of the alleged misbehaviour and on the seriousness of the possible sanction. The level of formality required, for example for a suspension of fewer than three days, would be less than that required in the case of a longer suspension or in circumstances that might lead to an expulsion.

A.7.4 Even informal processes, however, must be fair and be seen to be fair. The principles of ensuring the right to be heard and the right to impartiality apply in all cases.

A.7.5 The right to be heard means that a pupil and his parents are fully informed about an allegation and the processes that will be used to investigate and decide the matter; and that they must be given an opportunity to respond to an allegation before a decision is made and before a serious sanction is imposed.

A.7.6 Absence of bias in the decision-maker would mean, for example that if the child of a member of the Board was accused of misconduct, that parent would absent themselves from the Board for any consideration of the matter by the Board.

A.7.7 The principle of impartiality in decision-making means it is preferable that, where possible, the Principal arranges for another member or members of staff to conduct the investigation and to present a full report on the facts of the case and any other relevant information to the Principal. The Principal is then free to take a view about whether the pupil did engage in the behaviour and about the sanction, based on the report of the investigation.

A.7.8 Where circumstances require the Principal to conduct the investigation as well as making a finding and proposing the sanction, he or she must not only act fairly but be seen to act fairly. It is incumbent upon the Principal to review the investigation to ensure that it has been fully and fairly conducted. It should be evident to the pupil, parents, staff and other pupils that the Principal, as decision-maker, is basing their decision, in an objective way, on the findings of the investigation.

A.7.9 The person alleging the misbehaviour, or who is a victim, or a witness should not usually conduct the investigation.

A.7.10 Thoughtful application of professional judgement and knowledge of the requirements of fair procedures will generally guide decision-making about suspension and expulsion. However, in circumstances of particular complexity, the Board may seek legal advice to support its decision-making.

A.8 Involving the Gardaí

Where allegations of criminal behaviour are made about a pupil, these will usually be referred to the Gardaí who have responsibility for investigating criminal matters. The Juvenile Liaison Officer can be a significant source of support and advice for the school and the pupil.

A.9 Procedures in respect of suspension

A.9.1 Where a preliminary assessment of the facts confirms serious misbehaviour that could warrant suspension, the school will observe the following procedures:

- inform the pupil and his/her parents about the complaint
- give parents and pupil an opportunity to respond.

A.9.1.1 Inform the pupil and parents

Let the pupil and his parents know about the complaint, how it will be investigated, and that it could result in suspension.

Parents may be informed by phone or in writing, depending on the seriousness of the matter. Informing parents in writing has the benefit of ensuring that there is a formal and permanent record of having let parents know. It also ensures that parents are clear about what their son is alleged to have done. It serves the important function of underlining to parents the seriousness with which the school views the alleged misbehaviour.

A.9.1.2 Give an opportunity to respond

Parents and pupil will be given an opportunity to respond before a decision is made and before any sanction is imposed.

A meeting with the pupil and his parents provides an opportunity for them to give their side of the story and to ask questions about the evidence of serious misbehaviour, especially where there is a dispute about the facts. It may also be an opportunity for parents to make their case for lessening the sanction, and for the school to explore with parents how best to address the pupil's behaviour. If a pupil and his parents fail to attend a meeting, the Principal will write advising of the gravity of the matter, the importance of attending a re-scheduled meeting and, failing that, the duty of the school authorities to make a decision to respond to the

negative behaviour. The school will record the invitations made to parents and their response.

A.9.2 Procedures in relation to immediate suspension

Where an immediate suspension is considered by the Principal to be warranted for reasons of the safety of the pupil, other pupils, staff or others, a preliminary investigation should be conducted to establish the case for the imposition of the suspension. The formal investigation will immediately follow the imposition of the suspension. All of the conditions for suspension apply to immediate suspension. No suspension, including an immediate suspension, will be open-ended.

In the case of an immediate suspension, parents will be notified, and arrangements made with them for the pupil to be collected. The school will have regard to its duty of care for the pupil. In no circumstances will a pupil be sent home from school without first notifying parents.

A.10 The period of suspension

A.10.1 A pupil will not be suspended for more than 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 will provide guidance to the Principal concerning the kinds of circumstances under which suspensions of longer than three days might be approved.

A.10.2 If a suspension longer than three days is being proposed by the Principal, the matter will be referred to the Board for consideration and approval, giving the circumstances and the expected outcomes.

A.10.3 However, the Board may authorise the Principal, with the approval of the Chairperson of the Board, to impose a suspension of up to five days in circumstances where a meeting of the Board cannot be convened in a timely fashion, subject to the guidance concerning such suspensions.

A.10.4 The Board will normally place a ceiling of ten days on any one period of suspension imposed by it.

A.10.5 The Board will formally review any proposal to suspend a pupil, where the suspension would bring the number of days for which the pupil has been suspended in the current school year to twenty days or more. Any such suspension is subject to appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

A.10.6 These provisions enable the school authorities to give the pupil a reasonable time to reflect on his behaviour while avoiding undue loss of teaching time and loss of contact with the positive influences of school. They recognise the serious nature of the sanction of suspension and ensure that this seriousness is reflected in school procedures. The provisions mean that the Board takes ultimate responsibility for sanctions of significant length, especially where such suspensions might reach twenty days in one school year and therefore might lead to an appeal.

A.11 Appeals

A.11.1 The Board will offer an opportunity to appeal a Principal's decision to suspend a pupil. In the case of decisions to suspend made by the Board, an appeals process may be provided by the Patron.

A.11.2 Where the total number of days for which the pupil has been suspended in the current school year reaches twenty days, the parents may appeal the suspension under section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

A.11.3 At the time when parents are being formally notified of such a suspension, they and the pupil will be told about their right to appeal to the Secretary General of the Department under section 29 of the Education Act 1998, and will be given information about how to appeal.

A.12 Implementing the suspension

A.12.1 Written notification

A.12.1.1 The Principal will notify the parents and the pupil in writing of the decision to suspend. The letter will confirm:

- the period of the suspension and the dates on which the suspension will begin and end
- the reasons for the suspension
- any study programme to be followed
- the arrangements for returning to school, including any commitments to be entered into by the pupil and the parents (for example, parents might be asked to reaffirm their commitment to the Code of Behaviour)
- the provision for an appeal to the Board
- the right to appeal to the Secretary General of the Department under section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

A.12.1.2 The letter should be clear and easy to understand. Particular care should be taken in communicating with parents who may have reading difficulties, or whose first language is not the language of the school.

A.12.1.3 Where a decision to suspend has been made, it can maximise the impact and value of suspension if the Principal or another staff member delegated by the Principal meets with the parents to emphasise their responsibility in helping the pupil to behave well when the pupil returns to school and to offer help and guidance in this.

A.12.1.4 Where parents do not agree to meet with the Principal, written notification will serve as notice to impose a suspension.

A.13 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 directs that it be removed following an appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

A.14 After the suspension ends

A period of suspension will end on the date given in the letter of notification to the parents about the suspension.

A.14.1 Re-integrating the pupil

The school should have a plan to help the pupil to take responsibility for catching up on work missed. This plan will help to avoid the possibility that suspension starts or amplifies a cycle of academic failure. Successful re-integration goes beyond academic work. A suspended pupil may feel angry or resentful about his suspension, and these feelings can trigger problems with reintegration which, in turn, may lead to further problem behaviour. Where possible, the school will arrange for a member of staff to provide support to the pupil during the re-integration process.

A.14.2 Clean slate

When any sanction, including suspension, is completed, a pupil will be given the opportunity and support for a fresh start. Although a record is kept of the behaviour and any sanction imposed, once the sanction has been completed the school will expect the same behaviour of this pupil as of all other pupils.

A.15 Records and reports

A.15.1 Records of Investigation and Decision-making

Formal written records will be kept of:

- the investigation (including notes of all interviews held)
- the decision-making process
- the decision and the rationale for the decision
- the duration of the suspension and any conditions attached to the suspension.

A.15.2 Report to the Board

The Principal will report all suspensions to the Board with the reasons for and the duration of each suspension.

A.15.3 Report to Tusla

The Principal is required to report suspensions of more than 5 days in accordance with Tusla's reporting guidelines.

A.16 Review of use of suspension

The Board will review the use of suspension in the school at regular intervals 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.

B. Expulsion

B.1 Authority to expel

The Board has the authority to expel a pupil. This authority is reserved to the Board and will not be delegated.

B.2 The grounds for expulsion

B.2.1 Expulsion should be a proportionate response to the pupil's behaviour. Expulsion of a pupil is a very serious step, and one that will only be taken by the Board in extreme cases of unacceptable behaviour. The school will have taken significant steps to address the misbehaviour and to avoid expulsion of a pupil including, as appropriate:

B.2.1.1 meeting with Parents and the pupil to try to find ways of helping the pupil to change his behaviour

B.2.1.2 making sure that the pupil understands the possible consequences of his behaviour, if it should persist

B.2.1.3 ensuring that all other possible options have been tried

B.2.1.4 seeking the assistance of support agencies (e.g. National Educational Psychological Service, Health Service Executive Community Services, the National Behavioural Support Service, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, National Council for Special Education).

B.2.2 A proposal to expel a pupil requires serious grounds such as that:

B.2.2.1 the pupil's behaviour is a persistent cause of significant disruption to the learning of others or to the teaching process

B.2.2.2 the pupil's continued presence in the school constitutes a real and significant threat to safety

B.2.2.3 the pupil is responsible for serious damage to property.

B.2.3 The grounds for expulsion may be similar to the grounds for suspension. In addition to factors such as the degree of seriousness and the persistence of the behaviour, a key difference is that, where expulsion is considered, school authorities have tried a series of other interventions, and believe they have exhausted all possibilities for changing the pupil's behaviour.

B.3 Automatic expulsion

The Board may decide, as part of the school's policy on sanctions, and following the consultation process with the Principal, parents, teachers and pupils, that particular named behaviours incur expulsion as a sanction. However, a general decision to impose expulsion for named behaviours does not remove the duty to follow due process and fair procedures.

B.3.1 Expulsion for a first offence

There may be exceptional circumstances where the Board forms the opinion that a pupil should be expelled for a first offence. The kinds of behaviour that might result in a proposal to expel on the basis of a single breach of the code could include:

- B.3.1.1 a serious threat of violence against another pupil or member of staff
- B.3.1.2 supplying illegal drugs to other pupils in the school
- B.3.1.3 actual violence or physical assault
- B.3.1.4 sexual assault.

B.4 Determining the appropriateness of expelling a pupil

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

B.5 Factors to consider before proposing to expel a pupil

- B.5.1 The nature and seriousness of the behaviour
 - B.5.1.1 What is the precise description of the behaviour?
 - B.5.1.2 How persistent has the unacceptable behaviour been and over what period of time?
 - B.5.1.3 Has the problem behaviour escalated, in spite of the interventions tried?

- B.5.2 The context of the behaviour
 - B.5.2.1 What are the circumstances of the incidents of serious misbehaviour (e.g. in class, in a particular teacher's class, in the yard, in a group)?
 - B.5.2.2 What factors may have triggered or provoked incidents of serious misbehaviour (e.g. bullying, cultural or family factors)?
 - B.5.2.3 Are there any factors that may be associated with the behaviour (e.g. particular home circumstances, special educational needs)?

- B.5.3 The impact of the behaviour
 - B.5.3.1 How are other pupils and staff affected by the pupil's behaviour?
 - B.5.3.2 What is the impact of the behaviour on the teaching and learning of the class?

- B.5.4 The interventions tried to date
 - B.5.4.1 What interventions have been tried? Over what period?
 - B.5.4.2 How have the interventions been recorded and monitored?
 - B.5.4.3 What has been the result of these interventions?
 - B.5.4.4 Have the parents been involved in finding a solution to the problem behaviour?
 - B.5.4.5 Has the intervention of NEPS or other psychological assessment or counselling been sought, where appropriate?
 - B.5.4.6 Is the pupil or parent involved with any support service and has this agency or support service been asked for help in solving this problem?
 - B.5.4.7 Has any other agency been asked for assistance (e.g. Child Guidance Clinic, Child and Adolescent Mental Health services)?
 - B.5.4.8 Is the Board satisfied that no other intervention can be tried or is likely to help the pupil to change their behaviour?

- B.5.5 Whether expulsion is a proportionate response
 - B.5.5.1 Is the pupil's behaviour sufficiently serious to warrant expulsion?
 - B.5.5.2 Is the standard being applied to judging the behaviour the same as the standard applied to the behaviour of any other pupil?

- B.5.6 The possible impact of expulsion
 - B.5.6.1 To what extent may expulsion exacerbate any social or educational vulnerability of the pupil?

B.5.6.2 Will the pupil be able to take part in, and benefit from, education with his peers?

B.5.6.3 In the case of a pupil who is in care, what might be the implications of expulsion for the care arrangements?

B.6 Inappropriate use of expulsion

B.6.1 Expulsion will not be proposed for:

B.6.1.1 poor academic performance

B.6.1.2 poor attendance or lateness

B.6.1.3 minor breaches of the code of behaviour.

B.6.2 However, any behaviour that is persistently disruptive to learning or dangerous can be a serious matter. Behaviour must be examined in context to understand both the behaviour itself and the response or sanction that is most appropriate.

B.7 Fair procedures based on the principles of natural justice

The School will follow fair procedures when proposing to suspend or expel a pupil. These are set out in the section above on Suspension.

B.8 Applying fair procedures in school

These are set out in the section above on Suspension.

B.9 Involving the Gardaí

Where allegations of criminal behaviour are made about a pupil, these will usually be referred to the Gardaí who have responsibility for investigating criminal matters. The Juvenile Liaison Officer can be a significant source of support and advice for the school and the pupil.

B.10 Procedures in respect of expulsion

B.10.1 Where a preliminary assessment of the facts confirms serious misbehaviour that could warrant expulsion, the procedural steps will include:

B.10.1.1 A detailed investigation carried out under the direction of the Principal.

B.10.1.2 A recommendation to the Board by the Principal.

B.10.1.3 Consideration by the Board of the Principal's recommendation; and the holding of a hearing.

B.10.1.4 Board deliberations and actions following the hearing.

B.10.1.5 Consultations arranged by the Educational Welfare Officer.

B.10.1.6 Confirmation of the decision to expel.

B.10.2 It is a matter for the Board 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.

B.10.3 Step 1: A detailed investigation carried out under the direction of the Principal

B.10.3.1 In investigating an allegation, in line with fair procedures, the Principal will:

- inform the pupil and his parents about the details of the alleged misbehaviour, how it will be investigated and that it could result in expulsion
- give parents and the pupil every opportunity to respond to the complaint of serious misbehaviour before a decision is made and before a sanction is imposed.

B.10.3.2 Parents will be informed in writing of the alleged misbehaviour and the proposed investigation in order to have a permanent record of having let them know. This also ensures that parents are very clear about what their son is alleged to have done. It serves the important function of underlining to parents the seriousness with which the school views the alleged misbehaviour.

B.10.3.3 Parents and the pupil must have every opportunity to respond to the complaint of serious misbehaviour before a decision is made about the veracity of the allegation, and before a sanction is imposed. Where expulsion may result from an investigation, a meeting with the pupil and his parents is essential. It provides the opportunity for them to give their side of the story and to ask questions about the evidence of serious misbehaviour, especially where there is a dispute about the facts. It may also be an opportunity for parents to make their case for lessening the sanction, and for the school to explore with parents how best to address the pupil's behaviour.

B.10.3.4 If a pupil and his parents fail to attend a meeting, the Principal will write advising of the gravity of the matter, the importance of attending a re-scheduled meeting and, failing that, the duty of the school authorities to make a decision to respond to the inappropriate behaviour. The school will record the invitation issued to parents and their response.

B.10.4 Step 2: A recommendation to the Board by the principal

B.10.4.1 Where the Principal forms a view, based on the investigation of the alleged misbehaviour, that expulsion may be warranted the Principal will make a recommendation to the Board to consider expulsion. The Principal will:

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

B.10.5 Step 3: Consideration by the Board of the Principal's recommendation; and the holding of a hearing

B.10.5.1 It is the responsibility of the Board to review the initial investigation and satisfy itself that the investigation was properly conducted in line with fair procedures. The Board will undertake its own review of all documentation and the circumstances of the case. It will ensure that no party who has had any involvement with the circumstances of the case is part of the Board's deliberations (for example, a member of the Board who may have made an allegation about the pupil).

B.10.5.2 Where a Board decides to consider expelling a pupil, it must hold a hearing. The Board meeting for the purpose of the hearing will be properly conducted in accordance with Board procedures. At the hearing, the Principal and the parents 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. The meeting may also be an opportunity for parents to make their case for lessening the sanction. In the conduct of the hearing, the Board must take care to ensure that they are, and are seen to be, impartial as between the Principal and the pupil. Parents may wish to be accompanied at hearings and the Board will facilitate this, in line with good practice and Board procedures.

B.10.5.3 After both sides have been heard, the Board will ensure that the Principal and parents are not present for the Board's deliberations.

B.10.6 Step 4: Board deliberations and actions following the hearing

B.10.6.1 Having heard from all the parties, it is the responsibility of the Board to decide whether or not the allegation is substantiated and, if so, whether or not expulsion is the appropriate sanction.

B.10.6.2 Where the Board, having considered all the facts of the case, is of the opinion that the pupil should be expelled, the Board will inform the parents in writing about its conclusions and the next steps in the process.

B.10.6.3 Where expulsion is proposed, the parents will be told that the Board will inform the Educational Welfare Officer. The Board will notify the Educational Welfare Officer ("EWO") in writing of its opinion, and the reasons for this opinion. The Board will refer to Tusla's reporting procedures for proposed expulsions. The pupil cannot be expelled before the passage of twenty school days from the date on which the EWO receives this written notification.

B.10.6.4 An appeal against an expulsion under section 29 of the Education Act 1998 will automatically succeed if it is shown that the Educational Welfare Officer was not notified in accordance with section 24(1) Education (Welfare) Act 2000 or that twenty days did not elapse from the time of notification to the Educational Welfare Officer to the implementation of the expulsion.

B.10.7 Step 5: Consultations arranged by the Educational Welfare Officer

B.10.7.1 Within twenty days of receipt of a notification from a Board of its opinion that a pupil should be expelled, the Educational Welfare Officer is required to:

- make all reasonable efforts to hold individual consultations with the Principal, the parents and the pupil, and anyone else who may be of assistance
- convene a meeting of those parties who agree to attend.

B.10.7.2 The purpose of the consultations and the meeting is to ensure that arrangements are made for the pupil to continue in education. These consultations may result in an agreement about an alternative intervention that would avoid expulsion. However, where the possibility of continuing in the

school is not an option, at least in the short term, the consultation should focus on alternative educational possibilities.

B.10.7.3 In the interests of the educational welfare of the pupil, those concerned should come together with the Educational Welfare Officer to plan for the pupil's future education.

B.10.7.4 Pending these consultations about the pupil's continued education, a Board may take steps to ensure that good order is maintained, and that the safety of pupils is secured. A Board may consider it appropriate to suspend a pupil during this time. Suspension should only be considered where there is a likelihood that the continued presence of the pupil during this time will seriously disrupt the learning of others or represent a threat to the safety of other pupils or staff.

B.10.8 Step 6: Confirmation of the decision to expel

B.10.8.1 Where the twenty-day period following notification to the Educational Welfare Officer has elapsed, and where the Board remains of the view that the pupil should be expelled, the Board will formally confirm the decision to expel. This task may be delegated to the Chairperson and the Principal. Parents will be notified immediately that the expulsion will now proceed. Parents and the pupil will be told about the right to appeal and supplied with the standard form on which to lodge an appeal. A formal record will be made of the decision to expel the pupil.

B.11 Appeals

B.11.1 A parent may appeal a decision to expel to the Secretary General of the Department. An appeal may also be brought by Tusla on behalf of a pupil.

B.11.2 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 Skills). For further details about the Appeals process, including requirements for documentation, and the steps in the process, refer to current Department guidance.

B.12 Review of use of expulsion

B.12.1 The Board will review the use of expulsion in the school at regular intervals 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.