

Mercy College Roscommon



CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

Our school is a voluntary secondary school in the Mercy tradition under the trusteeship of CEIST

Mission Statement

In our school, we wish to provide a caring environment for all students and staff, in which every student is helped towards their fullest spiritual, educational, social, cultural and physical development.

The Code of Behaviour at Mercy College Roscommon is based on self-respect and respect for others. It seeks to promote individual self-discipline and the common good. It further seeks to encourage our students to act responsibly and take responsibility for their actions at all times.

Promoting positive behaviour is the main goal of our Code of Behaviour. School management and staff will actively foster a school ethos, policies, and practices that help to promote positive behaviour and prevent inappropriate behaviour.

A safe and orderly school environment is essential for effective teaching and learning. The Code of Behaviour at Mercy College Roscommon aims to:

- create a positive and safe environment for teaching and learning.
- create a climate that encourages and reinforces appropriate behaviour.
- encourage students to take personal responsibility for their learning and behaviour.
- help our students to mature into responsible, independent adults.
- build positive relationships of mutual respect and mutual support among students, staff and parents.

- ensure that the school's high expectations for the behaviour of all the members of the school community are widely known and understood.

The quality of relationships between teachers and students is one of the most powerful influences on student behaviour. For many students, their teachers are a major source of support, adult empathy and pastoral care, and are hugely significant figures in their lives. As adults and professionals, teachers have a strong capacity to develop good relationships with students. Mutually respectful relationships balance warmth and empathy with objectivity, professional detachment, fairness and consistency.

We, at Mercy College Roscommon are proud of the high standard of behaviour shown by our students which has enabled our school community to enjoy a positive and collaborative working relationship

Code of Behaviour - Academic Requirements

1. To enable each student to work to the best of their ability and achieve their academic potential, the school authorities insist that each student:
 - is attentive in class;
 - shows respect for the person, property and professional status of their teachers and the right of their fellow students to work and make progress in the classroom;
 - attends class punctually;
 - has the required books, equipment, etc. necessary for each class;
 - records and completes their homework to the satisfaction of their teachers.
 - brings their journal with them to class each day and presents it when requested to do so. Journals should be clean and free from graffiti.
 - refrains from eating and drinking in class.

2. Activities, including part time jobs, should not be allowed to adversely affect a student's homework, attendance or their ability to concentrate during the school day.

3. Students are not permitted to use mobile phones and/or electronic devices. This includes smart watches and smart glasses during school hours or on school campus i.e. Mon-Thurs 8.55am-3.50pm and Fri 8.55am-1.10pm **inclusive of break times, lunch times and during all extra-curricular activities including after school study**. Students can be contacted through the school office during the school day. Failure to comply with this will lead to the confiscation of the mobile phone including SIM card and/or electronic devices including smart watches and smart glasses for a period of 3 school days for the first offence and 5 days for each offence thereafter.

The school assumes that any property on the school grounds in the custody of your child is their property as Mercy College Roscommon cannot accept responsibility for property belonging to parties outside the recognised student and staff body of the school. Any property brought onto the school's grounds by your child is done so at their own risk.

As regards the confiscation of mobile phones, smart watches, smart glasses and/or electronic devices, theft is defined as follows: *"a person is guilty of theft if he or she*

dishonestly appropriates property without the consent of its owner and with the intention of depriving the owner of it” (Section 4 Criminal Justice {Theft and Fraud Offences} Act, 2001).

It must be noted that “*consent*” is given to the school once the Parent/Guardian signs the school’s Code of Behaviour and a student’s Enrolment is subject to signing the school’s Code of Behaviour.

4. In the event of a mobile phone or smart watch being confiscated, the school will provide the student with a replacement phone in order to travel home on the first evening. It is the responsibility of the student and/or their parents/guardians to return the phone the following morning to the Principal.
5. Unofficial photographic images of students in school uniform shared online/on social media are prohibited.

The school authorities expect full co-operation on these points in order to provide a setting conducive to good teaching and good learning in a disciplined environment.

Code of Behaviour - General

The highest standard of courtesy and good manners is expected when dealing with all those involved in school life - teachers, ancillary staff, fellow pupils and visitors/guest speakers. Answering back rudely, verbal insults, defiance, or any form of disrespectful behaviour to an adult or student will not be tolerated.

3. School Uniform:

- Full school uniform is obligatory and must be worn during school hours and at school functions/school activities/state examinations.
- The full uniform consists of: cream shirt (revere collar), navy school jumper (with crest), navy knee-length pleated skirt or navy pinstriped school trousers, red school jacket with school crest, navy knee socks or navy/black tights (plain tights without design). Tights must be worn with the school skirt from October 1st to April 1st of each calendar year. Flat/ low heeled black or navy leather shoes and these include PLAIN all black/all navy leather (or leatherette) footwear. Please note that the school tie must be worn with the old school shirt that does not have a revere collar.
- Canvas shoes, cloth shoes, suede shoes, PE runners, Sketchers, sandals, flipflops, Birkenstocks, Crocs, Uggs, Sliders, or other inappropriate footwear are strictly prohibited on health and safety grounds.
- School uniform is to be kept clean and neat and is not to be altered in any way. All Items of School Uniform must be clearly labelled with the student’s name.
- The school jacket must be kept in the student’s own locker or placed on the back of the chair in class.

- **PE uniform (can be purchased from George Bannon’s sport shop Roscommon Town); this consists of the official half zip School PE top with the official school PE tracksuit bottoms and runners. This PE uniform is to be worn for PE classes and can also be worn on match days.**
- Casual wear, scarves and hoodies are **not** part of the school uniform.
- Religious headwear should be plain navy in order to complement the school uniform.
- On designated non-uniform occasions, dress should be appropriate to the event.
- While wearing school uniform students are expected to behave in a manner consistent with the standards of behaviour set by the school.
- Exemptions from the school’s uniform code can only be considered with a note from a doctor/physiotherapist and an alternative item will be sanctioned by the Principal/Deputy Principal
- Jewellery should be simple and in keeping with uniform. (long dangling earrings, ear stretchers, are not allowed on health and safety grounds).
- No facial jewellery is permitted, except nose piercings are permitted if they are retained using a clear retainer.
- Nails should be appropriate length for both health and safety, hygiene and work reasons. False nails are not permitted during Home Economic cookery classes.
- Extreme hairstyles/hair colours are not allowed with the exception of natural hair colours.
- Make-up should be discreet and appropriate to our school environment (eye make-up is not allowed).

The school management reserves the right to decide whether any aspect of a student’s appearance is in compliance with the school dress code. The Principal/Deputy Principal is the final judge in this regard.

4. Personal Hygiene:

A high standard of personal hygiene is expected at all times from each student.

5. Attendance:

- Attendance is essential for effective learning. Students are required to be in attendance at school on every school day unless prevented by legitimate circumstances. Students are expected to participate in all school activities as instructed by the school authorities.
- The primary responsibility for a student’s attendance in school lies with their Parents/Guardians (The Education Welfare Act, 2000)
- It is the responsibility of the student to catch up on all work missed through any absence from class.

Procedure for students and their Parents/Guardians to explain their absence from school:

Full Day Absence

- A note with full **explanation of absence should be listed on VSware** on/before the day the student returns to school. This is a legal requirement for our attendance report to TUSLA as regular reports are required by this government agency.

- Failure to comply with this requirement will warrant one lunchtime detention.
- After three lunchtime detentions, the Parents/Guardians will be contacted by the school.

Partial Day Absence

All appointments should be made out of school hours.

Partial absences are recorded as follows:

(a) If the student becomes ill during the school day

1. If a student becomes ill during the school day the school office will telephone the parent/guardian.
Our Acceptable Usage Policy for digital technologies states that students are not permitted to use their mobile phones during the school day, therefore if a student contacts their parent/guardian without going through the school office this will be considered a breach of this policy and therefore the student's mobile phone including SIM card and/or electronic devices including smart watches and smart glasses for a period of 3 school days for the first offence and 5 days for each offence thereafter.
2. A parent will be required to collect their child at reception and sign them out in the sign out book.
3. The student must seek permission from their Year Head or the Principal/Deputy Principal before they sign out. All columns in the sign out book must be fully completed with the information required.
4. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the sign out book is fully completed.
5. The use of the Year Head's /Principals/Deputy Principal's name in the sign out book without their permission is not permitted. If this occurs this will be considered absence without permission.
6. A note with full **explanation of this partial absence must be noted in the student's school diary** on the day the student returns to school. Failure to produce a note explaining this partial absence will result in a lunch time detention.
7. If the above procedure is not followed this is considered **absence without permission** and the following sanction will apply: a lunchtime detention for each class period missed.

(b) If a family emergency occurs the during the school day:

1. In the event of a family emergency the parent/guardian will contact their child through the school office.
Our Acceptable Usage Policy for digital technologies states that students are not permitted to use their mobile phones during the school day, therefore if a parent/guardian contacts their child without going through the school office this will be considered a breach of this policy and results in the following sanction: the student's mobile phone including SIM card and/or electronic device (e.g. tablet, smart

watches or smart glasses) is confiscated for a period of 3 school days for the first offence and 5 days for each offence thereafter.

2. The parent will be required to collect their child at reception and sign them out in the sign out book.
3. The student must seek permission from their Year Head or Principal/Deputy Principal before they sign out. All columns in the sign out book must be fully completed with the information required.
4. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the sign out book is fully completed.
5. The use of the Year head's/Principals/Deputy Principal's name in the sign out book without their permission is not permitted. If this occurs this will be considered absence without permission.
6. A note with full **explanation of this partial absence must be noted in the student's school diary** on the day the student returns to school. Failure to produce a note explaining this partial absence will result in a lunch time detention.

(c) If a student is signing out for an appointment during the school day:

1. The note from the parent must be **noted in the student's school diary**.
2. This note must be signed by the Year Head /Deputy Principal/Principal before or during tutor time (10.55-11.03) on the day your child is signing out. Failure to do so will result in a lunchtime detention.
3. **The subject teacher cannot permit the student to leave their class to sign out unless the student has this note in their diary signed by a parent/guardian and a Year Head as the class teacher is legally responsible for the students they are timetabled with at any given time during the school day.**
4. The parent will be required to collect their child at reception and sign them out in the sign out book.
5. The student must seek permission from their Year Head or Principal/Deputy Principal before they sign out. All columns in the sign out book must be fully completed with the information required.
6. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the sign out book is fully completed.
7. The use of the Year Head's /Principals/Deputy Principal's name in the sign out book without their permission is not permitted. If this occurs this will be considered absence without permission.
8. If the above procedure is not followed this is considered **absence without permission** and the following sanction will apply i.e. a lunchtime detention for each class period missed.

(d) If a student is late to school or returning to school after an appointment:

1. If a student is late to school and has missed roll call during first class, a note from a parent/guardian with a full explanation as to the reason for their child's lateness must **be noted in the student's school diary**.
2. Students who are late in the morning without a note of explanation will be given a sanction of one lunchtime detention.

3. Students who are signing in late during the school day after they return from an appointment are required to have a note from a parent/guardian with a full explanation in their diary.

Monitoring Attendance

- When patterns of absence are identified, the school will endeavour to address this issue through engagement with the student and their parent/guardian.
- When 10 full day absences are identified the parent/guardian will be contacted by the Year Head.
- When 16 full day absences are identified the parent/guardian will be contacted by the Deputy Principal.
- The names of students under 16 years who are absent for twenty days annually will be forwarded to the Education Welfare Officer in accordance with the Education Welfare Act.

6. Punctuality:

The school day is as follows:

Mon-Thurs: 8.55am to 3.50pm. Breaktime 11.03am-11.15am. Lunchtime 1.15pm-1.50pm

Friday: 8.55am to 1.10pm. Breaktime 11.03am to 11.15am

7. Property

We expect that all students are respectful of school property, the property of others, and their school environment. The school building is home to all of us during our time here and each of us has a right to a clean, safe workplace.

The school assumes that any property on the school grounds in the custody of your child is their property as Mercy College Roscommon cannot accept responsibility for property belonging to parties outside the recognised student and staff body of the school. Any property brought onto the school's grounds by your child is done so at their own risk.

- School furniture must not be defaced or wilfully damaged.
- Littering is forbidden; use should be made of the school bins that are located around the school.
- Books and clothing should be clearly marked with the student's name. It is inadvisable for students to bring items of value to school. School management accepts no

responsibility for loss or damage to a student's property. School insurance does not cover loss or damage to the property of the student.

- Students should not bring valuable items to school.
- School bags must remain in the possession of the student. School management accepts no responsibility for loss or damage to a student's property. Students/Parents will be required to compensate for loss or damage caused to personal or school property.

8. Student Journal

The student journal is a valuable means of communication between the school and home. All students are required to:

- Keep their journal in their possession at all times during class.
- Keep their journal in good condition.
- Record their homework accurately in their journal.

All first year, second year and third year students are required to get their journal signed by a parent/guardian at the end of each week. Failure to have your journal signed will result in a lunchtime detention.

Any student leaving class to use the bathroom must note the time they are leaving at in their journal and this will be signed by the teacher before they leave the room.

The student's journal will remain on the teacher's desk for the duration of the student's absence from the classroom.

9. Lockers

Student lockers are available in the school for each student. This facility is advantageous to students in our school as:

- It prevents students having to carry heavy school bags
- It keeps students' property safe

In order to have the Lockers used to their best advantage, the following rules must be observed:

1. Lockers are for storing books, jackets, etc.
2. The cost of renting a locker is included in the general purpose fee which is paid annually.
3. Lockers are allocated at the beginning of each school year by the Year Head, when the fee is paid.
4. It is the responsibility of each student to provide a TESSI combination lock, to lock their locker.
5. Each student is responsible for their own locker and lockers may not be shared.
6. Lockers may be opened on the request of the school management.
7. If students do not use their locker in the appropriate manner the locker may be withdrawn from the student.
8. Lockers must be locked at all times.
9. Lockers which are left open will result in a lunchtime detention.

10. Students are not permitted to go to their lockers between classes.

11. Students may only go to their lockers at the following times:

- Before first class in the morning
- Morning break
- Lunch break
- After school

10. Prohibitive Substances:

Students are forbidden to take into school or to use any of the following:

- Chewing gum
- Cigarettes
- E-Cigarettes/Vapes
- Alcoholic Drink
- Other dangerous or illegal substances.

Chewing Gum:

To avoid damage to the general school environment, chewing gum is prohibited in all areas of the school and grounds. Its use may lead to fines, cleaning duties and possibly further sanctions.

Smoking/Vaping:

In accordance with the Department of Health Regulations, Public Health (Tobacco) Act 2002 (Section 47) Regulations 2003, smoking and vaping is strictly prohibited, inside or outside the school, in the school grounds or while in school uniform. To smoke/vape in school or while in school uniform is considered a serious offence and sanctions will be imposed. (See sanctions below). Breaches of this Act may also lead to a fine of up to €3000.

Substance Abuse:

Possession, use or supply of drugs, alcohol or any illegal substance is completely prohibited during the school day, at school functions and on school outings/trips. (See sanctions below).

11. Bullying- verbal, physical or otherwise is **forbidden**, and is considered to be a serious breach of discipline. (See our school's Anti-Bullying Policy).

12. Truancy is forbidden and is considered to be a serious breach of discipline. (See sanctions below).

13. Car Parking:

- A. All day parking within school grounds is reserved for staff only. Visitors park in the car-park at the side of the school i.e. at the front of the old convent or in the two designated visitor parking spaces at the G.P. room door.
- B. Students are not permitted to park on school grounds and students are requested to use the car park at Government buildings.

Every student without exception is expected to observe our school's Code of Behaviour.

SANCTIONS:

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

- helping students to learn that their behaviour is unacceptable.
- helping them to recognise the effect of their actions and behaviour on others.
- helping students (in ways appropriate to their age and development) to understand that they have choices about their own behaviour and that all choices have consequences.
- helping them to learn to take responsibility for their behaviour.
- to reinforce the boundaries set out in the Code of Behaviour.
- to signal to other students and to staff that their well-being is protected.

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

- prevent serious disruption of teaching and learning.
- keep the student, or other students, or adults safe.

For the great majority of students, the question of sanctions does not arise. However, sanctions will be applied where breaches of school rules occur.

Depending on the severity of the offence, sanctions may include the following

- Reasoning with student and advice given on how to improve
- Warning/verbal reprimand by teacher and/or extra work given.
- Note in school journal to be signed by parents
- Student referral form must be completed and presented to Year Head
- Detention: Break-time/Lunch-time
- Detention: After-School
- Student placed on a report card for a period of time determined by the Deputy Principal. The report card must be signed nightly by parents. This card must be presented to each class teacher at the commencement of each class.
- Student may not be permitted to travel on school tours/outings/matches etc.
- Suspension: Internal/External determined by the Principal
- Expulsion

Discipline begins in the classroom and is essential for a good learning environment. In general teachers handle minor problems and apply staff-agreed sanctions as per this code of behaviour.

Steps in the Disciplinary Process

Procedure to deal with unacceptable behaviour or failure to comply with the standards set out by the school is as follows:

1. Reasoning by the subject teacher/staff member and advice given on how to improve.
2. A reprimand is given by the subject teacher in question and an appropriate sanction is also given by this teacher.

3. If unacceptable behaviour persists the subject teacher notes details of unacceptable behaviour in the student's journal. Parent/Guardian must then sign the journal indicating an awareness of this complaint. It is the responsibility of the subject teacher to ensure the journal is signed.
4. If unacceptable behaviour persists this behaviour is detailed on a student referral form by the subject teacher. This form is available from the Deputy Principal upon request. A completed copy of this form is forwarded by the subject teacher to the Year Head. The Year Head meets with the student and completes the form. The Year Head will then post a copy of the form to the parent/guardian and will also give a copy to the Deputy Principal and the subject teacher in question. The Year Head will issue an appropriate sanction to the student.
5. If unacceptable behaviour persists, the subject teacher informs the Deputy Principal who will interview the student using the appropriate templates and previously issued Student Referral form and issues the student with a Report Card (a blank time-table which is signed by the teacher at the end of each class documenting the student's behaviour and/or improvements noted). Parents/Guardians are notified and required to sign the Report Card each night. Any negative entry on the Report Card will result in an appropriate sanction.
6. If unacceptable behaviour continues to persist, the pupil will be brought to the Principal for interview. The student will be interviewed using the appropriate template and previously issued Student Referral Form.
7. The Principal will then arrange a meeting with the Parents/Guardians to discuss the student's continued misbehaviour.
8. Failing resolution of the unacceptable behaviour, the Principal initiates a Student Case Conference attended by the Principal, Deputy Principal, Year Head and appropriate Staff Members. Case history from previous meetings will be read and documented instances of unacceptable behaviour will be discussed.
9. The decision to suspend/exclude/impose a lesser sanction will be taken by the Principal after the Case Conference. This decision will be recorded and communicated in writing to the parents/guardians at a meeting convened by the Principal for this purpose. The Board of Management will be notified of same.
10. The parents/guardians have a right to appeal any decision to the Board of Management.

Please note:

- Students may be interviewed as part of investigations carried out in the first instance by a staff member.
- These investigations may include use of CCTV footage.
- All investigations will occur during school time in so far as is possible.

Transgressions from the school's uniform code will be dealt with by the Deputy Principal as follows:

- Provide the student with the missing item of clothing/footwear (if possible) for the course of the school day.
- Notify parents/guardians of the breach of Uniform Code on second offence and impose detention. Parents/Guardians are expected to supply the missing item of clothing/footwear.

- Failure to comply with the dress code will ultimately result in removal from class.

During the course of school life, some behaviour may require urgent attention and will be referred directly to the Principal/Deputy Principal/Year Head.

Suspension:

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 student requires serious grounds such as that:

- 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.

Procedures in respect of suspension

Schools are required by law to follow fair procedures when proposing to suspend a student. Where a preliminary assessment of the facts confirms serious misbehaviour that could warrant suspension, the school should observe the following procedures:

- inform the student and their parents about the complaint
- give the parents and the student an opportunity to respond

Inform the student and parents

Let the student and their 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. It also ensures that parents are clear about what their child is alleged to have done. It serves the important function of underlining to parents the seriousness with which the school views the alleged misbehaviour.

Give an opportunity to respond

Both the parents and the student should be given an opportunity to respond before a decision is made and before any sanction is imposed.

A meeting with the student and their 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 student's behaviour. If a student and their parents fail to attend a meeting, the Principal should write advising of the gravity of the matter, the importance of attending a rescheduled meeting and, failing that, the duty of the school authorities to make a decision to respond to the negative behaviour. The school should record the invitations made to parents and their response.

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 student, other students, staff or others, a preliminary investigation should be conducted to establish the case for the imposition of the suspension. The formal investigation should immediately follow the imposition of the suspension. All of the conditions for suspension apply to immediate suspension. No suspension, including an immediate suspension, should be open-ended.

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

The period of suspension

A student should 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 of Management should provide guidance to the Principal concerning the kinds of circumstances under which suspensions of longer than three days might be approved.

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

A Board of Management may wish to 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. The Board of Management should normally place a ceiling of ten days on any one period of suspension imposed by it.

The Board should formally review any proposal to suspend a student, where the suspension would bring the number of days for which the student 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.

These provisions enable school authorities to give the student a reasonable time to reflect on their 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 of Management 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.

Appeals

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

Section 29 Appeal

Where the total number of days for which the student has been suspended in the current school year reaches twenty days, the parents, or a student aged over eighteen years, may appeal the suspension under section 29 of the Education Act 1998, as amended by the Education (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2007.

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

Implementing the suspension

Written notification

The Principal should notify the parents and the student in writing of the decision to suspend. The letter should 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 student 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 of Management
- the right to appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills (Education Act 1998, section 29).

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.

Engaging with student and parents

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 student to behave well when the student returns to school and to offer help and guidance in this.

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

Grounds for removing a suspension

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

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.

Re-integrating the student

The school should have a plan to help the student 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 student may feel angry or resentful about their suspension, and these feelings can trigger problems with reintegration which, in turn, may lead to further problem behaviour. Where possible, the school should arrange for a member of staff to provide support to the student during the re-integration process.

Clean slate

When any sanction, including suspension, is completed, a student should 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 should expect the same behaviour of this student as of all other students.

Expulsion

Authority to Expel

The Board of Management of a recognised school has the authority to expel a student. As a matter of best practice, that authority should be reserved to the Board of Management and should not be delegated.

The Grounds for Expulsion

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

- meeting with parents and the student to try to find ways of helping the student to change their behaviour
- making sure that the student understands the possible consequences of their behaviour, if it should persist
- ensuring that all possible interventions have been tried to improve the student's behaviour
- 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).

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 their safety and/or the safety of others
- the student is responsible for serious damage to property

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 student's behaviour.

'Automatic' expulsion

A Board of Management may decide, as part of the school's policy on sanctions, and following the consultation process with the Principal, parents, teachers and students, 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.

Expulsion for a first offence

There may be exceptional circumstances where the Board of Management forms the opinion that a student 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:

- a serious threat of violence against another student or member of staff
- actual violence or physical assault

- supplying illegal drugs to other students in the school
- sexual assault.

Inappropriate use of expulsion

Expulsion should not be proposed for:

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

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.

Procedures in respect of expulsion

Schools are required by law to follow fair procedures as well as procedures prescribed under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, when proposing to expel a student. Where a preliminary assessment of the facts confirms serious misbehaviour that could warrant expulsion, 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.

These procedures assume that the Board of Management is the decision-making body in relation to expulsions.

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

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

In investigating an allegation, in line with fair procedures, the Principal should:

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

Parents should 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 child is alleged to have done. It serves the important function of underlining to parents the seriousness with which the school views the alleged misbehaviour.

Both parents and the student 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 student and their 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 student's behaviour.

If a student and their parents fail to attend a meeting, the Principal should write advising of the gravity of the matter, the importance of attending a rescheduled meeting and, failing that, the duty of the school authorities to make a decision to respond to the inappropriate behaviour. The school should record the invitation issued to parents and their response.

Step 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 should:

- inform the parents and the student that the Board of Management is being asked to consider expulsion
- ensure that parents 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 to prepare for the hearing.

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

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 should undertake its own review of all documentation and the circumstances of the case. It should 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 student).

Where a Board of Management decides to consider expelling a student, it must hold a hearing. The Board meeting for the purpose of the hearing should be properly conducted in accordance with Board procedures. At the hearing, the Principal and the parents, or a student aged eighteen years or over, put their case to the Board in each other's presence. Each party should 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 student. Parents may wish to be accompanied at hearings and the Board should facilitate this, in line with good practice and Board procedures.

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

Step 4: Board of Management deliberations and actions following the hearing

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.

Where the Board of Management, having considered all the facts of the case, is of the opinion that the student should be expelled, the Board must notify the Educational Welfare Officer in writing of its opinion, and the reasons for this opinion. (Education (Welfare) Act 2000, s24(1)). The Board of Management should refer to National Educational Welfare Board reporting procedures for proposed expulsions. The student cannot be expelled before the passage of twenty school days from the date on which the EWO receives this written notification (Education (Welfare) Act 2000, s24(1)).

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) or that twenty days did not elapse from the time of notification to the Educational Welfare Officer to the implementation of the expulsion (Education (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2007, s4A).

The Board should inform the parents in writing about its conclusions and the next steps in the process. Where expulsion is proposed, the parents should be told that the Board of Management will now inform the Educational Welfare Officer.

Step 5: Consultations arranged by the Educational Welfare Officer

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

- make all reasonable efforts to hold individual consultations with the Principal, the parents and the student, and anyone else who may be of assistance
- convene a meeting of those parties who agree to attend (Education (Welfare) Act 2000, section 24).

The purpose of the consultations and the meeting is to ensure that arrangements are made for the student 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.

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

Pending these consultations about the student's continued education, a Board of Management may take steps to ensure that good order is maintained and that the safety of students is secured (Education (Welfare) Act 2000, s24(5)). A Board may consider it appropriate to suspend a student during this time. Suspension should only be considered where there is a 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.

Step 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 Board of Management should formally confirm the decision to expel (this task might be delegated to the Chairperson and the Principal). Parents should be notified immediately that the expulsion will now proceed. Parents and the student should be told about the right to appeal and supplied with the standard form on which to lodge an appeal. A formal record should be made of the decision to expel the student.

Appeals

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

The Appeals Process

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

Reward System:

We consider it important that praise and rewards should have a considerable emphasis within Mercy College Roscommon. We believe that students should be rewarded for their positive contribution to school life.

A system of informal rewards such as giving praise and encouragement for appropriate behaviour/ improved behaviour in and outside the classroom is encouraged.

A system of rewards may include formal recognition of the following:

- Good attendance

- Outstanding academic achievement
- Outstanding work ethic and effort
- Outstanding contribution to school activities
- Outstanding contribution to sport
- Outstanding student mentor
- Student of the Year nominees
- Overall Student of the Year for 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th year.
- Leaving Certificate Student of the Year

Role of Parents/Guardians

Supportive parents/guardians play a crucial role in shaping the attitudes which produce good behaviour in school.

In particular, parents are requested to:

- Cooperate with the school by ensuring their child abides by the School's Code of Behaviour
- Actively support the school staff in the application of the Code of Behaviour and appropriate sanctions
- Keep themselves informed of their child's behaviour, progress, attendance and punctuality by regularly checking their child's journal and VSWare parent App.
- Contact the school if they are concerned about any aspect of their child's behaviour and/or progress. This line of communication to discuss the issue may include Principal, Deputy Principal, Year Head, Career Guidance Counsellor or Subject Teacher. Appointments can be arranged through the school office at 090 6626321.
- In the spirit of good communication, the school will endeavour to keep parents/guardians informed of their child's progress and to alert them at an early stage if difficulties arise.

Health and Safety

The safety of each student is of prime concern to school management and staff. The school has a very clear and comprehensive Health and Safety Policy.

- Students are asked to show courtesy to others while moving around the school premises.
- Students are expected to be vigilant at all times to ensure their safety and the safety of others.
- Students must show respect for all safety notices throughout the school.
- Students should not at any time interfere with the fire alarms/smoke alarms/fire extinguishers/defibrillators/CCTV cameras.

It is not possible to cover all infringements of behaviour and their eventual sanctions. The Board of Management reserves the right to interpret the above rules and to make the final decision.

Attendance at Mercy College Roscommon, is conditional on the acceptance of the Code of Behaviour by each student and their parents/guardians. Please sign below and return immediately to the designated Year Head.

Amendments to the Code of Behaviour will be communicated in writing to parents/guardians

REPLY SLIP

I have read and understood the Code of Behaviour of Mercy College Roscommon I have discussed the Code with my child and I am happy to support the school by ensuring that my child behaves in accordance with the Code.

I am happy to support the school in the implementation of any sanctions issued to my child.

I understand that any future amendments to the Code will be communicated to me in writing.

I agree

I disagree

I have read and understood the Anti-Bullying Policy of Mercy College Roscommon. I have discussed this policy with my child and I am happy to support the school by ensuring that my child behaves in accordance with this policy. I understand that any future amendments to the Anti-bullying policy will be communicated to me in writing.

I agree

I disagree

Student's Name: _____ Class _____

Student's Signature: _____

Parent's/Guardian's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Enrolment in Mercy College Roscommon is subject to the parent/guardian signing and agreeing to the school's Code of Behaviour and Anti-bullying policy.

PLEASE SIGN AND DETACH THIS REPLY SLIP AND HAND IT TO YOUR YEAR HEAD