

## **NEWTOWN SCHOOL**

### **LIVING AND WORKING IN THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY**

The Principles of the School Community inform every aspect of school life. The Principles describe the community the School aspires to be.

Teachers and students make a community living and working together under discipline in friendship and mutual respect.

The whole community should live together in friendship, each one recognising the special position held by the others and the contribution required from each for the perfection of the common life.

The Aims of Newtown School set out the approach to discipline within the school community.

- Rules are kept to a minimum.
- High standards of behaviour are expected.
- Students are encouraged in a supportive and caring environment.
- Adaptability, confidence, the courage to make changes where they are necessary and, above all, the ability to get on with other people are amongst the qualities Newtown School promotes through a sound, holistic education for life.

Newtown School is a relatively small community for a secondary school. The good relations students enjoy within years and between years and the positive involvement with teachers in extra-curricular activities and in the boarding context carry over into class work.

The continuing community of students and teachers living and working together generates a distinctive learning environment in which young people can gain confidence and grow in maturity.

Discipline is exercised on the basis of trust and expectation. When shortfalls in achieving expectations are identified, they are discussed and support is given to amend ways and rectify negative behaviours.

Difference in personality and outlook is allowed for so long as it does not impinge adversely or unfairly on the well-being of others. Disputes are resolved by discussion aimed at achieving agreement through consensus.

Students who experience personal difficulties may be referred for specialist advice. Counselling may be arranged for students who could benefit from the support of an agency outside school and home.

In dealing with disciplinary situations the procedures applied are guided by best practice as set out in the Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools. N.E.W.B. 2008.

If a disciplinary situation arises, the teacher immediately concerned will deal with the matter in the first instance.

If the matter is not put to rights, or if the response of the student(s) is unsatisfactory, the teacher may refer the matter to the relevant coordinator, tutor or member house staff.

A tutor or house staff may, if deemed appropriate, refer a disciplinary matter to the Deputy Principal. Serious breaches of discipline or repeated incidents of misbehaviour may be reported to the Principal, who may invite the support of parents/guardians in rectifying cases of serious misbehaviour and indiscipline.

Strategies for dealing with unacceptable behaviour include the application of an order mark and conduct mark system.

When a student lacks order in his/her life, say the student who is frequently late for class or who does not have his/her books for class or who may miss games, a teacher may impose a penalty by giving the student order marks.

The teacher will write the order marks up after the student's name on a list of students' names displayed on a notice board opposite the staff room door.

Order marks add up over the week from one detention day to the next. The first two order marks given to a student remain a matter of record. Penalties begin with the third order mark, which brings half an hour of detention. Every additional order mark brings another quarter of an hour in detention.

Students work off the detention on Wednesday afternoons and Saturday afternoons.

While in detention, students may be given useful tasks to complete (such as sweeping up leaves, collecting litter, removing graffiti) or the student may be given written work to complete in a classroom.

Conduct marks may be given when students deliberately break school rules or consciously flout the norms of acceptable sociable behaviour.

A conduct mark carries an hour in detention on the next detention day.

(Whereas the working-off of order marks may be deferred by agreement from one detention session to the next, conduct marks may not be deferred.)

Students who receive a conduct mark must report the conduct mark to their tutor/house staff and explain the circumstances in which the conduct mark was awarded.

Each student's conduct score is recorded on his/her end-of-term report.

Other strategies and penalties to deal with misbehaviour may include:

- reprimand and placing the student on report
- prescribing additional work to be completed in free time
- loss of privileges
- gating
- referral to Principal and reporting to parents
- Suspension

(Gating. This is where a student may be confined to school with no leave to either town or home for a period of time. It may also work in reverse where a day student must go home after scheduled classes).

The breadth and balance of the curriculum and the range of extra-curricular activities facilitate participation by every student in positive and worthwhile activity. They offer to all the opportunity to achieve recognition in some aspect of school life that engages their interest.

To promote positive endeavour in class work, a system of effort marks is used.

At regular intervals throughout the school year, subject teachers' award effort marks to recognise students' application to their studies and their contribution to class work. Effort marks are awarded on a five-point scale as follows:

- Effort mark of 1: excellent
- Effort mark of 2: very good
- Effort mark of 3: satisfactory
- Effort mark of 4: not satisfactory
- Effort mark of 5: unacceptable lack of effort.

When a student receives an effort mark of 4, he/she is placed on report for the subject(s) for which the 4 was given. Being on report involves presenting a report card at the end of each class in the subject when the teacher will record an effort mark for that class.

If a student receives a 4 on a report card, the student remains on report for a further week. Students who receive more than two 4s in a set of effort marks are put on report for all subjects for a week.

If anything happens to restrict a student's enjoyment of what he/she is doing at school or prevents him/her from doing what he/she enjoys, the student is encouraged to seek advice and assistance. A primary responsibility of prefects, tutors, coordinators, and house staff is to support students in their life at school.

Newtown School view the bullying and intimidation of others as completely unacceptable. This is detailed in Newtown Schools Anti Bullying Policy<sup>2</sup>. Incidents of bullying will be investigated in line with the Anti bullying policy and if it is judged that bullying has occurred sanctions outlined in this document may be applied.

If a teacher observes anything untoward in students' behaviour at school, the incident is noted in a record book. If a pattern of misbehaviour is developing it can be identified in the recorded incidents and be dealt with.

In circumstances where the continued presence of a student at school were to become untenable because of wilful disobedience, threatening, abusive or violent behaviour, the Principal reserves the right in the interests and well-being of other members of the school community to ask parents/guardians to withdraw the offending student from the school pending investigation or referral to an appropriate authority.

Parents/guardians signing the acceptance form / final application form agree "to remove the child from the school at any time if so requested by the headmaster."

### **Suspension from school.**

The Board of Management delegates to the Principal the authority to suspend students. Suspension may be imposed where the Principal is satisfied that this is warranted by serious offences such as intimidating behaviour, bullying, theft, damage to persons or property, where a student's behaviour has had a seriously detrimental effect on the education of other students, where a student undermines the authority of any member of staff, where a student has failed to respond to other forms of sanction for repeated misbehaviour or where a student's continued presence in the school constitutes a threat to safety.

Such suspensions may be imposed immediately and automatically as considered appropriate to maintain good discipline and an effective learning environment in the School. Other behaviours that will normally result in suspension from the School include: Possession, use, supply or any involvement with illegal drugs, dangerous objects, alcohol, tobacco<sup>1</sup> (See Substance Abuse Policy - The "No" rules)

In many cases suspension is imposed for a limited number of days at the expiry of which the student may return to the School. In certain cases it is required that a meeting with parents will be held to discuss whether or not it is appropriate for the offending student to return to the School and, if it is, to determine the conditions under which such return may be permitted. Students may be requested to give a written commitment to good behaviour before being permitted to return to the School.

Parents (and students over the age of 18) may appeal a decision to suspend through the Chairperson of Board of Management.

Expulsion would be considered only as a last resort. Procedures leading to an expulsion must allow for due process as required in law.

### **Removal from School - EXPULSION**

The Board of Management reserves the right to remove from the school register any student who engages in intimidating or bullying behaviour, puts the health and welfare of

other students or staff at risk, or any student who engages in persistent or serious misbehaviour which undermines the ethos of the school, undermines the education of other students or the work of the school staff. The Board of Management reserves the right to remove from the school register any student who publishes or circulates humiliating or damaging material where such circulation undermines, humiliates or causes damage to another pupil or member of staff or who has possession of, uses or supplies illegal drugs or substances or who has possession of dangerous objects, weapons or harmful substances.

### **Expulsion Procedure**

The Principal has the power for any cause which he/she judges adequate to dismiss a student subject to the approval of the Board of Management.

The process of expulsion shall conform in every way to the requirements of natural justice and to the requirements of Tusla guidelines. The following steps will be followed:

1. The Deputy-Principal, Coordinator or other appropriate person will conduct investigations into any reported misbehaviour or breach of school rules.
2. The evidence and details of the case will be presented to the Principal. The case against the student will be put to him/her and he/she will be given an opportunity to respond. If the Principal considers it appropriate, he will proceed to make a recommendation to the Board of Management that the student should be expelled from the School.
3. Parents/guardians will be written to, informing them of the allegations which their child faces and the level of punishment which may result subject to the decision of the Board of Management. Parents shall be informed of the grounds upon which expulsion is being considered and the nature of evidence being relied upon. It is accepted that the quality of proof required for expulsion need not be of the quality required in a court of law. Parents shall be provided with a fair opportunity to consider the evidence and to offer evidence in rebuttal.
4. Having considered all aspects of the case, if the Principal decides to recommend to the Board of Management that the student be expelled, he/she will inform the student's parents in writing of the decision and of their right to make representations to the Board of Management on behalf of the student. In the interest of the student, parents will be required to give notice to the Principal of their intention to make such representations no later than a specified date to enable an early hearing by the Board of Management.
5. Parents will be entitled to seek access to the student's file and to documentation relevant to the expulsion.
6. Arrangements shall be made at the earliest possible date for a meeting of the Board of Management with the Principal and parents. The recommendation of the Principal and the representations (if requested) of the parents shall be heard by the Board at this meeting.
7. The student shall stand suspended from school until this meeting.

8. When the Board of Management has heard all the evidence they shall consider the case. The Principal may not be party to the consideration of the case as he/she is an involved party. Further, the Board shall ensure that any member of the Board who might have a conflicting interest shall be excused and not participate in the decision.

9. If the recommendation of the Principal is rejected, it is a matter for the Board of Management to decide on what conditions, if any, the student will be allowed back to school.

10. If, having considered an appeal, the Board of Management decides to uphold the expulsion, parents (and students over the age of 18) will be advised of their right to appeal the decision to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

11. If the Board of Management decides to uphold the expulsion it shall notify Tusla of the decision and the reasons for it.

12. A student shall not be considered expelled before the passing of twenty school days from the receipt of such notification by the designated educational welfare officer. Suspension may be applied for this period. The school will cooperate fully with the educational welfare officer in the fulfilment of their duties under Section 24 of the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000. This is without prejudice to the rights of the Board of Management to preserve the good order and discipline of the School and the safety of all other persons in the School.

Agreed by Board of Management

Date 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2015

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<sup>1</sup> Newtown School Substance Abuse Policy – The “No” Rules.

<sup>2</sup> Newtown School Anti Bullying Policy