

St. Michael's N.S.



Code of Behaviour

For

The specific classes for children with Autism

St. Michael's N.S. and Centre for Autism has a central role in children's social and moral development just as it does in their academic development. In seeking to define acceptable standards of behaviour it is acknowledged that these are goals to be worked towards rather than expectations that are either fulfilled or not.

The children bring to school a wide variety of behaviours. As a community environment, in school we must work towards standards of behaviour based on the basic principles of honesty, respect, consideration and responsibility. It follows that acceptable standards of behaviour are those that reflect these principles.

Children need limits set for them in order to feel secure and develop the skills for co-operation. Parents can co-operate with the school by encouraging their children to understand the need for school rules, by visiting the school and by talking to the members of staff.

A code of behaviour is established to ensure that the individuality of each child is accommodated while at the same time acknowledging the right of each child to education in a relatively disruption free environment.

Rationale

It is a requirement under DES Circular 20/90 on School Discipline.

It is a requirement under the Education Welfare Act 2000, Section 23 (1).

It is part of our developing School Plan.

Relationship to the School Mission and Spirit

St. Michael's N.S. and Centre for Autism is dedicated to providing the highest quality of learning, teaching, and care of pupils under our instruction. In partnership with the parents/guardians, families of our pupils, we seek to provide: individual, intellectual, emotional, social, physical and spiritual development.

The dignity of every child is maintained, and we believe that each child is entitled to an education provision, regardless of individual levels of attainment and functioning. While enabling each pupil to develop his/her potential to the full, we also want our pupils to be happy in school and to enjoy their time in it.

The Code of Behaviour Policy will help to foster harmonious relationships and co-operation between staff, parents and pupils.

Aims of the Code

- To create a positive learning environment that encourages and reinforces good behaviour.
- To promote self-esteem and positive relationships.
- To encourage consistency of response to both appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.
- To foster a sense of responsibility and self-discipline in pupils and to support good behaviour patterns based on consideration and respect for the rights of others.
- To facilitate the education and development of every child.
- To foster caring attitudes to one another and to the environment.
- To enable teachers to teach without disruption.
- To ensure that the school's expectations and strategies are widely known and understood through the availability of policies and an ethos of open communication.
- To encourage the involvement of both home and school in the implementation of this policy.
- To provide guidance for pupils, teachers and parents on behavioural expectations.
- To provide for the effective and safe operation of the school.
- To allow the School to function in an orderly and harmonious way.
- To create an atmosphere of respect, tolerance and consideration for others.
- To ensure the safety and well-being of all members of the school community.
- To assist parents and pupils to understand the systems and procedures that form part of the Code of Behaviour and to seek their co-operation in the application of these procedures.

Implementation

Every member of the school community has a role to play in the implementation of the Code of Behaviour. There will be an emphasis on promoting and reinforcing positive behaviour. Rules will be kept to a minimum, and will be applied in a fair and consistent manner, with due regard to the age of the pupils and to their individual differences. Where difficulties arise, parents will be contacted at an early stage.

Before/After School

Parents are reminded that the school does not accept responsibility for pupils before the official opening time of 9:10 am or after the official closing time of 2:00/3:00 pm except where pupils are engaged in an extra-curricular activity organised by the school and approved by the Board of Management.

Board of Management's Responsibilities

- Provide a comfortable, safe environment.
- Support the Principal and staff in implementing the code.
- Ratify the code.

Principals Responsibilities

- Promote a positive climate in the school.
- Ensure that the Code of Behaviour is implemented in a fair and consistent manner.
- Arrange for review of the Code, as required.

Classroom Staff Responsibilities

- Support and implement the school's code of behaviour.
- Create a safe working environment for each pupil.
- Prepare school work and correct work done by pupils.
- Recognise and provide for individual talents and differences among pupils.
- Be courteous, consistent and fair to both fellow staff and students.
- Refrain from using personal telephones during school hours outside of scheduled breaks. Personal telephone calls should not be conducted in the school corridors or classrooms during school hours, this also applies to text messaging and internet
- Keep opportunities for disruptive behaviour to a minimum.
- Deal appropriately with minor problem behaviour.
- Keep a record of instances of serious challenging behaviour or repeated instances of problem behaviour.
- Provide support for colleagues.
- Communicate with parents when necessary and provide reports on matters of mutual concern.
- All staff will undertake training where necessary in the implementation of student behaviour plans.

- All staff will undertake training in MAPA (The Management of Actual or Potential Aggression), where this is deemed necessary.
- All staff will adhere to the positive Ethos of the school, in order to maintain a positive learning environment.
- Verbal reprimands and/or punishment will be kept to a minimum.
- Ensure consistency in implementing behaviour plans
- Ensure parents are informed of behaviour support strategies and learning goals to support their child; and provide training and support to parents where possible.
- Judgment and common sense should be exercised by all staff to maintain the Health and Safety of everyone.

Parents/Guardians' Responsibilities

- Ensure that children attend regularly and punctually.
- Be interested in, support and encourage their children's school work.
- Be familiar with the code of behaviour and support its implementation.
- Co-operate with the class staff in instances where their child's behaviour is causing difficulties for themselves and others.
- Communicate with the school in relation to any problems which may affect child's progress/behaviour.
- Become familiar with the behaviour support strategies and learning goals necessary to support their child and ensure success and generalisation outside of the school environment.

Code of conduct for parents

- Be courteous towards pupils and staff.
- Make an appointment to meet with a Teacher/ Principal/ Behaviour Support Staff through the School office.
- Keep to scheduled appointment times.
- Protect the confidentiality of students and staff.
- Respect school property and encourage their children to do the same.
- Supervise their children on school premises when collecting other pupils or visiting the school.
- Label pupils' property.

Responsibility of Adults

The adults encountered by the children at school have an important responsibility to model high standards of behaviour, both in their dealings with the children and with each other, as their example has an important influence on the children.

As adults we should aim to:

- Create a positive climate with realistic expectations.
- Promote, through example, honesty and courtesy.
- Provide a caring environment.
- Encourage relationships based on kindness, respect and understanding of the needs of others.
- Ensure fair treatment for all regardless of age, gender, race, ability and disability.
- Show appreciation of the efforts and contribution of all those in the school community.

Provision of Behaviour Support

Position Statement

St. Michael's N.S and Centre for Autism has a responsibility to ensure that people who receive a behaviour support service are protected from exploitation, abuse, neglect, and unlawful and degrading treatment. All activities related to behaviour support will be supportive and respectful of the individual needs and goals of the student, as identified through an Individual Education Plan, and based on a current and comprehensive assessment.

In addition, all services provided to children and young people must be in accordance with the standards and guidelines outlined in the following documents:

-Children First Child Protection Guidelines & more specifically St. Michael's N.S and Centre for Autism Child Protection Policy

http://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/child_welfare_protection/ChildrenFirst.pdf

A hard copy of these guidelines is available in the school office.

St. Michael's N.S and Centre for Autism approach to Behaviour Support acknowledges that the student's behavioural difficulties may be linked to the dyad of impairments, sensory sensitivities, and cognitive abilities of the individual. The school acknowledges that the

students may have a dual diagnosis and the impact this may have on behaviour. All of these factors will be assessed and will inform the approach taken when providing behaviour support for individual students. The school is committed to working with parents to help reduce problematic behaviours; however the complex needs of individual students will always inform the ultimate approach adopted.

The school ethos supports a functional approach to the management of challenging behaviour. Behaviour that may present a challenge to others is adaptive and functional for the student; that is to say that the behaviour exists in the student's repertoire because it has been learned and serves a function for the student (e.g. a student may engage in aggressive or destructive behaviour as a means of escaping a task that he/ she finds particularly demanding). The approach of school staff at St. Michael's N.S and Centre for Autism is to decrease challenging behaviour by teaching and reinforcing appropriate replacement behaviours (FERB) that serve the same function (e.g. teaching the student an appropriate means of asking for a break from a demanding task without resorting to challenging behaviour).

Within St. Michael's N.S. and Centre for Autism all staff capitalise on learning opportunities throughout the day across all school settings to teach appropriate functional communication using whatever supports necessary (e.g. gestures, verbal & visual prompts; schedules of reinforcement, communication devices, Irish Sign Language & Lámh etc.) in order to reduce as much as possible instances of challenging behaviour for all students.

The positive school ethos extends to all members of the school community adopting a positive, calm approach to challenges that may be encountered from time to time. Every effort should be made to ensure that the classroom and school environment is enriched with frequent opportunities for students and staff to encounter social praise and acknowledgement for achievements and to experience a varied schedule of activities to be enjoyed across the school day.

Strategies/incentives

Reinforcement strategies may be developed by staff to increase appropriate behaviour and/or reinforce the teaching of new skills. These may include, but are not limited to: social praise and acknowledgement; merit awards for achievements; token/points economies for

work completed throughout the day; access to preferred items/ activities/ edibles intermittently throughout the day; access to break-times following an appropriate request or the completion of a particular task; group-based reinforcement contingencies for rule-following/ appropriate behaviour. Assistance may be recruited from the on-site behaviour analyst(s) to develop additional reinforcement strategies as required.

Reducing challenging behaviour

Challenging behaviour may be defined as:

“Behaviour...of such an intensity, frequency or duration as to threaten the quality of life and/or the physical safety of the individual or others and is likely to lead to responses that are restrictive, aversive or result in exclusion.” (Royal College of Psychiatrists et al, 2007)

The approach adopted by St. Michael’s N.S. and Centre for Autism in response to challenging behaviour is to affect a decrease in inappropriate behaviour by increasing appropriate behaviour. This should be achieved through the employment of reinforcement strategies and positive programming. Only when data indicate that these positive measures have been tried and exhausted; or have been unsuccessful in eliminating or sufficiently reducing problem behaviour, should a reductive consequence be considered. Reductive consequences refer to specific consequences that are applied contingent upon the occurrence of an undesired behaviour with the purpose of decreasing the likelihood of it recurring in the future. These consequences may include: verbal reprimands, the loss of privileges/ access to preferred items/ activities, a report to a parent/ school principal, the requirement of the completion of an additional task in order to regain access to reinforcement schedules, restitution of the environment following disruptive behaviour, removal of attention from the teacher/ non-exclusionary time-out/exclusionary time out. Parents must be informed of the regular planned use of reductive consequences such as the above in response to their child’s behaviour. Every effort will be made to relate the consequences to the behavioural topography. Most importantly reductive consequences should never be used in isolation to target a reduction in a particular behaviour and should only be employed as an element within a comprehensive behaviour plan including reinforcement and teaching strategies to replace the inappropriate behaviour with an alternative functionally equivalent appropriate behaviour.

Consultation with external professionals (NEPS, SESS and any other support service) may be sought by the staff at St. Michael's N.S. and Centre for Autism if positive programming and subsequently the reductive consequences outlined above do not serve to reduce the specific challenging behaviour to a level that minimises health & safety risk to the student themselves, other students and the staff.

The Behavioural Support Plan

The behavioural support plan (BSP) is the component of the IEP that attempts to reduce behaviours that impede instruction with positive intervention strategies to reduce the occurrence of inappropriate behaviours and increase socially and contextually appropriate behaviour. In order to make this connection the BSP includes the following elements:

1. The operational definition of the behaviour impeding instruction.
2. A reference to the key results of a Functional Behaviour Assessment (FA). The full results of the FA will be available in the case file of the child / young person should further consultation be required. A functional assessment is conducted to determine the purpose (function) the challenging behaviours serve for the student.
3. The intervention strategies to be used. These are selected based on the function(s) of the behaviours. Such strategies and supports are reinforcement based and may also include curriculum and instructional modifications, and changes in the classroom environment. These strategies may take a number of forms including skills teaching, generalisation planning, parental supports, reactive strategies, environmental adaptations, and direct interventions.
4. The behavioural objective(s) that state the agreed upon change in the form or rate of the inappropriate behaviour for the student along with a measurable criterion.

Steps in scripting/compiling a Behaviour Support Plan

The process by which behaviour is identified as requiring the further attention or analysis can take a number of forms. One potential identification of need takes the form of a referral from the child/ young person's parents regarding a behavioural issue of concern. Other examples are where the staff in the school witness a behavioural episode and report it to the school's Principal or class teacher.

The steps that will be followed in the identification of behaviours for further attention and the compiling of a BSP are as follows;

- Identification of behavioural issue requiring further analysis.
- Baseline of behavioural incidents will be taken.
- Observation of behaviour of student.
- Consult with parent/s of the student.
- Consult with staff working directly with the child/young person.
- Carry out functional assessment and/ or collect additional data.
- Consult behavioural literature and tactics available in the science.
- If necessary consult external multi-disciplinary support services. This will especially be the case where students are receiving medication which may have an effect on behaviour.

Script Behaviour Support Plan

Receive the informed consent from the child/ young person's parent/s.*

Training for staff implementing BSP and the signature of staff when the BSP has been explained.

*Informed consent will be sought for all new Behaviour support plans regardless of the specifics of the interventions. Any tactical changes during the plans lifespan will also require additional parental consent.

Maintaining Data

Programs that use evidence based practice as the educational model spend much time and effort in data analysis to guide the decision-making process. This ensures an objective view of the behaviour. Once an intervention procedure has been implemented, data will be maintained on how the intervention is having an effect on the behaviour. This data will determine if the intervention is effective or not. This is an essential part of any intervention phase as it ensures objectivity in decision-making. If the behaviour is improving, the behaviour support team will make a decision as to when the intervention will be discontinued. Data displays and analysis should play a key role in decision-making.

Elements of the Behaviour Support Plan

- Target Behaviour
- Functional Assessment Data Results
- Direction Intervention
- Alternative Skills to be taught

- Environmental Accommodations (Antecedent Interventions)
- Reactive Strategy
- Measurement
- Criterion
- Generalisation Plan
- Review Date
- Authors
- Staff Sign Off

Prohibited Practices

Prohibited practices which are criminal offences and civil wrongs may lead to legal action.

Prohibited Practices include those that may not be unlawful, but are unethical.

Prohibited Practices include those that:

- Cause physical pain or serious discomfort;
- Restrict access to basic needs or supports;
- Are degrading or demeaning to the Service User;
- Are aversive;
- Are unethical.

The safety, dignity & welfare of pupils are prioritised at all times. Aversive stimuli, which can include sounds, smells, tastes, visual images or physical sensations that cause pain/overall discomfort are never used.

Role of multidisciplinary team in BSP

All steps in the provision of behaviour support may require collaboration with a range of parties including (but not limited to):

- The child/young person (where appropriate);
- The child/young person parents or carers;
- Significant others who are important to the child/young person (e.g. siblings, extended family members, friends/ where appropriate);
- Professionals who are involved with provision of care and/or support to the child/young person (e.g. teacher, tutor, Occupational or Speech & Language

therapist, neurologist, paediatrician, psychiatrist, Psychologist, and Behaviour Analyst);

- Practitioners from other disciplines who are involved in providing a service to the child/young person, or to others within their support system (e.g. mental health worker, Social worker).

Medication and Behaviour Support

Parents are asked to inform the school if their child is receiving any regular medication. Where prescribed medications are known to have a behavioural effect these possible effects will be factored in to all behaviour support measures.

Informed Consent

During the process of scripting a Behaviour Support Plan the proposed interventions are discussed with the parent and they are made aware of all potential outcomes or consequences of any proposed intervention. Consent will be sought in written form. The legal guardians will be presented with a consent request form and the behaviour support plan in question and their signature will be requested.

In the event of Parental/Guardian Consent not being granted

Behavioural interventions implemented in the school will only be done so with full parental/guardian support. In situations where parental/guardian support for the best practice intervention as selected is not forthcoming, a meeting will be held with the child/young person's family to present and examine all of alternative interventions available. The potential effectiveness, outcomes, and consequences of each intervention will be discussed with reference to the school's duty of care towards all its students and staff. After all outcomes and risks have been examined a decision will be proposed. If agreement can't be arrived at then the matter is referred to the Board of Management at St. Michael's N.S. and Centre for Autism for consideration.

If the Board of Management at St. Michael's N.S. and Centre for Autism and the family cannot arrive at an agreement then the matter will be referred to the Department of Education and Science for support and guidance. It may also be appropriate to involve the relevant external support services for the student in question (NEPS, SESS etc.).

Exceptional Behavioural Supports

Due to the nature of the student's behavioural excesses and deficits, situations may arise where a parent cannot be contacted prior to crisis situation. In this event the staff will take the necessary steps to ensure the safety of the student, his/ hers teachers, and the other students in the school. An exceptional response may be required in situations where there is a clear and immediate risk of harm linked to behaviour(s) and there is no Behaviour Support Plan (BSP) in place. The risk may impact on the child/ young person or on others. In such circumstances immediate intervention may be considered necessary in order to manage the risk to the student and staff. This is referred to as an emergency response.

The incident must be recorded on a ***behaviour incident report form*** and will be completed by all staff involved in the incident. As such, it must be fully documented, the levels of injury reported and dealt with appropriately in accordance with *Health and Safety* requirements. A copy of all behaviour incident reports will be kept in the child/young person's file in school and a second copy will be sent to the child/young person's legal guardian/s.

An exceptional behavioural response may require the use of emergency behavioural support in order to prevent serious self-injury or harm to another person. After any *emergency responses* the staff involved will be debriefed while the behaviour incident report form is completed and receive any supports that the school can provide. Their feedback on the incident will be requested and any changes that can be suggested.

As soon as practicable after the *emergency response* has been managed, data should be collected and steps should be taken to have a *Behaviour Support Plan (BSP)* developed in accordance with the procedures outlined in this policy.

The family of the child/ young person will be informed of any *emergency response* that occurs in writing in order to confirm their understanding of the incident in question. ABACAS will offer any support that it can to the child/ young person in question and the family of this individual.

Crisis management

Episodes of challenging behaviour may occur from time to time at varying levels of intensity. At all times the health and safety of all students and staff is our priority. For this reason the school will be adopting the MAPA approach, from the U.K. MAPA has been developed as a set of procedures designed to avoid physical confrontation, to de-escalate a situation, and to manage crises in the safest way possible.

All staff at St. Michael's N.S. and Centre for Autism who is required to work with students who display physically challenging behaviour will be trained in MAPA procedures. Recertification will be on a two yearly basis through on-site training.

MAPA provides school staff with a repertoire of crisis management techniques; it is not intended to be used as a behaviour intervention program. Crisis management techniques may be prescribed as part of a comprehensive behaviour support plan for a student with a history of intense levels of challenging behaviour/ behaviour that may pose a risk to self/ others. In such cases informed parental consent must be obtained in writing for the use of the procedures. The school will document all instances where a MAPA technique has been used. Consultation with external professionals (NEPS, SESS) may be sought when reporting suggests that incidents requiring crisis management are occurring at a high frequency.

Key points of crisis management:

1. Emergency procedures should only be used when there is a documented need to do so to protect the student, and/ or others in the environment.
2. The protection of the health and safety of the person with whom intervention is taken should be paramount in the decision as to which emergency procedure is used.
3. The use of emergency procedures should occasion an assessment of the factors leading up to its use and consideration of the measures, if any, that should be taken to reduce or eliminate the need to use the procedure in the future.

Parents should be informed by phone and in writing via incident report forms following a crisis incident. School copies of incident report forms should also be maintained.

A full debriefing meeting should be conducted following any intense/ crisis level episodes of challenging behaviour. These meetings should involve all relevant staff and use the standard behaviour incident reporting format developed within the school.

Duty of Care & Suspension

Before serious sanctions such as suspension are used, the normal channels of communication between school and parents will be utilised. Communication with parents may be verbal or by letter depending on the circumstances. Where there are repeated

instances of serious challenging behaviour, the parents will be requested to attend at the school to meet the Principal & other key staff.

Should it be assessed that St. Michael's N.S. and Centre for Autism school can't fulfil its *duty of care* toward a child/ young person due to the consequences of challenging behaviour, or the school assesses that it's *duty of care* towards other child/ young persons and the staff of the school is compromised due to episodes of extreme challenging behaviour, the matter will be forwarded to the Board of Management of the school for consideration. The Board of management reserves the right to suspend the child/ young person in question until the school has implemented the necessary supports or changes to safeguard its *Duty of care* for the individual child/young person or others.

Suspension will be in accordance with the Rules for National Schools and the Education Welfare Act 2000. In the case of extreme challenging behaviour, where it is necessary to secure the safety of the pupils and staff, the Board may authorise the Chairperson or Principal to sanction an immediate suspension for a period not exceeding three school days, pending a discussion of the matter with the parents. The Board of management reserves the right to suspend the child/ young person in question until the school has implemented the necessary supports or changes to safeguard its *Duty of care* for the individual child/young person or others.

St. Michael's N.S. and Centre for Autism school currently does not expel any child / or young person enrolled in the school.

Removal of Suspension (Reinstatement)

Following or during a period of suspension, the parent/s may apply to have the pupil reinstated to the school. The application will be considered with reference to any necessary support and resources required by the school (e.g. physical changes, consulting other experts where applicable etc). The Principal will facilitate a review of the existing behaviour plan for the pupil if required and will re-admit the pupil formally to the class.

Methods of Communicating with Parents

Communication with parents is central to maintaining a positive approach to dealing with children. Parents and teachers should develop a joint strategy to address specific difficulties, in addition to sharing a broader philosophy which can be implemented at home and in school.

A high level of co-operation and open communication is seen as an important factor encouraging positive behaviour in the school. Structures and channels designed to maintain a high level of communication among staff and between staff, pupils and parents have been established and are being reviewed regularly.

Parents should be encouraged to talk in confidence to teachers about any significant developments in a child's life, in the past or present, which may affect the child's behaviour.

The following communication methods are to be used at all levels within the school:

- Informal parent/teacher meetings and formal parent/teacher meetings
- Through children's homework journal.
- Letters/notes from school to home and from home to school
- School notice board
- Email
- Text
- Behaviour diary (where necessary)
- Phone call
- Behaviour incident reports

Limitations.

This document is not designed to list all the possible situations that may arise, nor state all the possible strategies to address challenging behaviour, but to serve as a general guide to the students, the teacher, and the Principal to be used to solve individual problems.

Roles and Responsibilities

All staff at St. Michael's N.S. and Centre for Autism must adhere to the Code of Behaviour Policy.

The Principal is responsible for ensuring that all staff is made aware of it.

Policy Review

It is fully acknowledged by all parties that this code of behaviour policy will be reviewed from time to time to ensure that it is kept up to date and that it retains its relevance.

Ongoing evaluation and new approaches to education, Ministry guidelines and DES agreements may require this document to be modified.

Ratified by the Board of Management on:

Signed:

Date: