

**Loch an
Gháir**



Mol an Óige

Scoil Mhuire,

Loughegar,
Mullingar,
Co. Westmeath
N91 TD 95



Code of Behaviour

The Code of Behaviour of Scoil Mhuire, Loughegar reflects the vision and values of our school, its patron and the National Education Welfare Board guidelines for schools. This code was developed in consultation with the staff, parents/guardians and the Board of Management, in compliance with Section 23 of the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000. It translates the expectations of the school community into practical arrangements, routines and procedures which ensure that its aims are implemented and that the particular needs and circumstances of our school and community are met.

Aims

The aims of our Code of Behaviour are as follows:

- To foster an orderly, harmonious school where high standards of behaviour are expected, explained, understood and supported.
- To help create a positive learning environment in which all pupils can benefit from the education system and achieve their personal best.
- To ensure the safety and well-being of all members of the school community as well as caring for the school and its environment.
- To assist parents/guardians and pupils in understanding the systems and procedures that form part of the code of behaviour and to seek their co-operation in the application of these procedures.
- To ensure that the system of rules, rewards, and sanctions are implemented in a fair and consistent manner throughout the school.

Principles Underlining Our Code of Behaviour

- Every effort will be made to ensure that our code is implemented in a reasonable, fair and consistent manner and that all members of staff adopt a positive approach to the question of behaviour in the school.
- Differences amongst our pupils e.g. SEN pupils will be acknowledged.
- A whole school approach will be adopted. This requires a strong sense of community within the school and a high level of co-operation and sense of ownership from all the stake holders – BOM, teachers, parents/guardians, pupils and ancillary staff.
- Good behaviour will be encouraged and rewarded. Where difficulties arise, parents/guardians will be contacted at an early stage.

Whole School Approach to Promoting Positive Behaviour

An effective code of behaviour requires the co-operation of all stakeholders in the school. To this end there are specific roles and responsibilities in achieving high standards of behaviour in our school.

Staff

- Teachers are expected to adhere to the Code of Professional Behaviour and Practice for teachers as developed by the Teaching Council of Ireland.
- As a staff we work together to devise reward/sanction programmes as necessary and we undergo any professional development necessary to ensure that there is a united front in dealing with behavioural matters.
- The SPHE curriculum also supports our code of behaviour. This curriculum helps children to develop communication and problem-solving skills while fostering self-esteem.
- For children with Special Educational Needs, who may present with behavioural difficulties arising from their needs, learning support and class teachers liaise regularly to develop behavioural targets for such children consulting with NEPS as necessary.
- This behaviour policy is circulated to all teachers and all temporary or new staff members are also made aware of the policy and its content. Through regular staff meetings and good communication, the policy is reviewed and updated on an on-going basis.

Board of Management

- Members of the Board of Management were involved in drafting this policy and the board will be involved in any future review of the policy.
- The Board of Management supports the code of behaviour in the school on an on-going basis.
- The Board of Management supports the staff in implementing the code of behaviour and provides as necessary professional development in behaviour management education and training.
- The Board of Management gives authorisation for particular sanctions in the case of serious breaches of behaviour.

Parents/Guardians

- Positive relationships are built from the start with parents/guardians and they are encouraged to take an active role in the development of their child. Teachers work in collaboration with parents/guardians to develop any specific behaviour plans needed for their child.
- There are clear channels through which parents/guardians can communicate any concerns they may have about a pupil.
- On the Induction Day, parents/guardians are given a copy of the Code of Behaviour in the school and the expectations of pupils are discussed, along with the role of parents/guardians in helping pupils to meet these expectations. Parents/Guardians are encouraged to share information about anything that might affect their child's behaviour in school, and are informed how to go about doing this.
- Parents/Guardians are notified early if there is a concern about a pupil's behaviour, so that ways of helping the pupils can be discussed and agreed.
- The school has a Parents' Association. Parents/Guardians are encouraged to get involved in this association as a structure through which they can work together for the best possible education for their children.

Parents/Guardians are expected to:

- Equip pupils with appropriate school materials, sufficient healthy lunch and full uniform.
- Be courteous towards pupils and staff
- Make an appointment to meet with a teacher/principal through the school office
- Respect school property and encourage their children to do the same
- Label pupils' coats, uniforms and other property.
- Supervise their young children on school premises when collecting other pupils or visiting the school

Pupils

At the beginning of each academic year, the class teacher will draft a list of class rules with the children which reflect and support the school rules, but are presented in a way that is accessible to the children.

The classes are regularly visited by the principal during which any behavioural concerns may be raised and discussed.

Where difficulties arise, parents/guardians will be contacted at an early stage.

Content of the Code of Behaviour

The Code of Behaviour covers the following areas:

- General Standards of Behaviour
- Bullying
- Expected Behaviour in Class
- Expected Behaviour in the School Play Areas
- Expected Behaviour in the School Environment
- Expected Behaviour on School Trips/Outings
- Attendance and Dismissal
- Rules regarding Miscellaneous Items
- Ladder of Intervention
- Rewards
- Responding to Inappropriate Behaviour

General Standards of Behaviour

- Pupils are expected to treat all adults and fellow pupils with respect and courtesy at all times. Behaviour that interferes with the rights of others to learn and to feel safe is unacceptable.
- Pupils are expected to show respect for all school property and to keep the school environment clean and litter free.
- Pupils are expected to take pride in their appearance, to have the correct uniform, books and required materials and to be in the correct place at the correct time.
- Pupils are expected to obey a teacher's lawful instructions, to work to the best of their ability and to present assignments neatly.

Bullying

- Bullying is a pattern of deliberate abuse – physical, verbal or emotional, by an individual or group that adversely affects a pupil's well-being.
- The most common forms of bullying are aggressive physical contact, name-calling, intimidation, extortion, isolation, taunting and more recently cyber bullying which involves the use of ICT. Bullying will not be tolerated and parents/guardians will be expected to cooperate with the school at all times in dealing with instances of bullying in accordance with the school's Anti-Bullying Policy.

Expected Behaviour in Class

- Pupils are expected to respect the right of other pupils to learn and to avoid disrupting the work of the classroom.
- Pupils are expected to have respect for their teachers and follow instructions given by them.
- All pupils are expected to go to and from their classrooms in an orderly manner. Running is

not allowed at any time in classrooms or corridor.

- Pupils are expected to show courtesy and respect towards other pupils.
- Visitors should be greeted politely and pupils should continue to work quietly.
- Pupils should have their own basic equipment, books, pens, pencils, rubbers, markers etc.
- No unnecessary money should be brought to school.
- Mobile phones should not be brought to school.
- Proactive strategies and supervision practices are in place to decrease yard problems.
- On wet days, children in classrooms are allowed to play with board games/cards etc.

Expected Behaviour in School Play Areas

- All pupils are encouraged to enjoy their games in school. It is expected that such activities will proceed without interference from other children.
- Bullying, rough play, spitting, teasing, fighting and intimidation shall not be tolerated.
- Pupils must play within their own designated area unless they have permission from the supervising teacher.
- The following behaviours are also forbidden: piggy backs, handstands, swinging out of railings and lifting other pupils and any other behaviour which the supervising teacher deems unsafe.
- Students are not permitted to bring lunch into the playground.
- When the bell rings, pupils should stop and walk to their lines.

Expected Behaviour in General School Environment

- Pupils are expected to move about the school in an orderly manner.
- Pupils shall not remain on the school premises after school activities are finished.
- Pupils are expected to show respect for school property.
- Pupils are expected to come to and from school with due care for other pupils, for property, for traffic and pedestrians.

Expected Behaviour on School Trips/Outings

School tours and outings present particular challenges for the school. As well as the normal standard of behaviour expected from all our pupils, a specific policy regarding school outings will be used in conjunction with this Code of Behaviour.

Attendance and Dismissal

- School begins at 9.20 am for all classes. Pupils should arrive to school before 9.20 am. On entering school in the morning pupils are asked to walk in an orderly fashion to their designated class assembly area where they will line up to await the school bell at 9.20 am.
- Infants go home at 2.00 pm. All other classes end at 3.00 pm. Parents/Guardians who wish to have their children escorted home should make their own arrangements to have them met no later than 2.00 pm or 3.00pm as the school cannot accept responsibility for looking after the children after this time.
- Pupils are expected to attend every day unless there is a genuine reason for absence, in which case the school must be informed in writing or by phone to the school office, clearly stating the reason for absence. The Principal is required by law to report such absences to the National Educational Welfare Board.
- Pupils are expected to be on time for school each day and, in the event of a late arrival, bring a note to the teacher. Please note that where a child attends school after attendance has been taken he/she will be marked absent.

- No child will be allowed to leave school during school hours without a signed letter stating time child is to be allowed home. Alternatively parents/guardians may call to the school and having consulted with the class teacher or the principal they may bring child home.
- If a child is sick during school hours we will endeavour to contact his/her home. It is important that every child has a phone number where his/her parents/guardians can be contacted. Parents/Guardians who will be absent from home, or normal place of work, should arrange a contact phone number in case an emergency should arise.
- A child who is sick in the morning should not be sent to school unless there are strong indications that it is a minor matter that will not necessitate him/her being sent home.

Rules Regarding Miscellaneous Items

- Pupils are expected to take pride in their appearance, to have the correct uniform, books and required materials each day.
- Jewellery: Students should not wear any jewellery to school. Girls are only permitted to wear stud earrings.
- Neat hairstyles are expected for boys and girls. Dyed hair colours and shaved designs are not permitted.
- Toys and other electronic devices are not permitted in the school
- Mobile phones are not permitted in the school.

Ladder of Intervention

- Consistent clear rules and routines in class and in school assist the majority of pupils to behave appropriately. Minor misbehaviour will be checked regularly by the class teacher.
- More active interventions will be used to help some students manage their behaviour including, parental involvement, setting targets for behaviour and monitoring them with the student in a supportive way, behaviour contracts and the involvement of another teacher/Principal.
- Interventions tried and how the pupil responded will be noted.

Rewards

Our policy is to promote and encourage good standards of behaviour. It is therefore essential that it be rewarded and be seen to be reinforced by the following:

- Good behaviour is constantly acknowledged by teachers, principal, ancillary staff throughout the day.
- Pupil's journal is used to convey positive behaviour to parents/guardians.
- Each teacher recognises and acknowledges good behaviour in their own class and may develop systems of rewarding individuals/groups of children on a regular basis.

Responding to Inappropriate Behaviour

In order to facilitate the smooth running of the school and to ensure the safety of all, and to maintain an orderly atmosphere for learning, sanctions/behaviour checks must and will be imposed where inappropriate behaviour occurs. It must be clear why the sanction is being applied and what changes in behaviour are required to avoid future sanctions. When sanctions are used pupils should understand that what they have done is not acceptable and that it is the behaviour that is rejected not the child. Incidents of inappropriate behaviour are categorised according to age level and the nature of misbehaviour.

The following are samples of unacceptable behaviours. This is not an exhaustive list.

- **Minor Misbehaviours:** Homework not done and no note, rudeness, borrowing items without asking, inattentiveness, answering out of turn, alienating friends, not wearing uniform.
- **Serious Misbehaviours:** Fighting, bullying, mitching, bad language, name calling, exclusion, rough play, disrespecting others, hitting, back talking, belittling personal comments, damaging play equipment or school property, stealing, leaving school premises without permission, climbing on walls
- **Gross Misbehaviours:** Gross Misbehaviours are where a student's behaviour has a seriously detrimental effect on the safe operation of the school. A single incident of gross misbehaviour may be grounds for suspension.

Examples of Gross Misbehaviour include:

- Aggressive, threatening or violent behaviour towards a pupil/staff member.
- Bringing dangerous weapons to school.
- Deliberately damaging school property.
- Being in possession of alcohol/drugs
- Serious physical violence which threatens safety of other pupils It should be noted that persistent misbehaviour may also warrant a period of suspension.

Sanctions

The use of sanctions or consequences should be characterised by certain features:

- It must be clear why the sanction is being applied
- The consequence must relate as closely as possible to the behaviour
- It must be made clear what changes in behaviour are required to avoid future sanctions
- There should be a clear distinction between minor and major offences
- It should be the behaviour rather than the person that is the focus

The following steps will be taken when the children behave inappropriately. They are listed in order of severity with one being for a minor misbehaviour and eight being for serious or gross misbehaviour. The aim of any sanction is to prevent the behaviour occurring again and if necessary to help the pupils devise strategies for this. The particular stage used will depend on the seriousness of the misbehaviour.

Communication with parents/guardians/guardians through letters, phone call or meetings will occur where necessary so that parents/guardians/guardians are involved at an early stage rather than as a last resort.

- Reasoning with the pupil (including advice on how to improve).
- Reprimand or warning regarding behaviour.
- Class strategies such as – reasoning with pupil, reprimand, temporary separation from the rest of the class and/or additional work are implemented.
- Loss of privileges.
- If the misbehaviour persists the parents/guardians will be notified and they will be requested to attend a meeting with the class teacher to discuss the on-going behavioural issues. The principal will be notified about the meeting.
- Referral to Principal: parents/guardians will be requested to attend at the school to meet the Class Teacher and the Principal.
- Temporary suspension.
- Expulsion.

Suspension

Section 21 (4) of the Education (Welfare) 2000 Act requires that if a pupil is suspended for a period of not less than 6 days, the Education Welfare officer shall be informed, by notice in writing. While the BOM has the

authority to suspend, they have delegated this authority to the Principal together with either the chairperson of the BOM or the Deputy Principal for periods of up to three days. Where the cumulative total of days suspension reaches 6, the NEWB will be notified.

The following procedures as outlined in the current NEWB guidelines will apply:

- Investigation of the facts to confirm serious misbehaviour.
- Parents/guardians will be informed by phone or in writing about the incident.
- Parents/guardians will be given an opportunity to respond.
- If suspension is still decided upon the Principal notifies parents/guardians in writing of the decision to suspend.

The letter should confirm:

- a) The period of the suspension and the dates on which the suspension will begin and end.
- b) The reasons for the suspension.
- c) Any study programme to be followed.
- d) The arrangements for returning to school, including any commitments to be entered into by the student and the parents/guardians.
- e) Provision for appeal to the Board of Management or Secretary General of the DES. (Only where the total number of days for which the student has been suspended in the current school year reaches 20 days.)

Factors which influence a decision to suspend are as follows:

- The nature, seriousness, impact and context of the behaviour.
- The interventions tried to date.
- Whether suspension is the appropriate response.
- Whether the pupil's behaviour has had a seriously detrimental effect on the education of other pupils e.g. shouting at teacher, being disruptive, refusing to work, not allowing others to work, taking up teacher's teaching time due to inappropriate behaviour.
- Whether the pupil's continued presence in the school at the time constitutes a threat to the safety of pupils/staff e.g. physical fights in school yard, leaving school premises without permission, serious consistent incidents of bullying or racism, use of bad language to any member of school community.

Expulsion

The decision to permanently exclude a pupil from Scoil Mhuire, Loughgar will be made solely by the Board of Management. Expulsion is a very serious step and is only taken in extreme cases of unacceptable behaviour and only after the school has taken significant steps to address the behaviour.

These steps include the following:

- Meeting with parents/guardians and pupil to explore ways of helping pupil change his behaviour.
- Making sure that the pupil understands the possible consequences of the behaviour (if it should persist).
- Ensuring that all other possible options have been tried.
- Seeking the assistance of support agencies e.g. National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), Health Service Executive Community Services (HSE), National Behavioural Support Service (NBSS). The grounds for expulsion and the factors which need to be considered are similar to those for suspension, however where expulsion is concerned the school will already have tried a series of other interventions including suspension which unfortunately haven't changed the pupil's behaviour.

Expulsion for a First Offence

The following kinds of behaviour may warrant such expulsion:

- A serious threat of violence against another pupil or staff member.
- Actual violence or physical assault.
- Supplying of alcohol / drugs.

Procedures in Respect of Expulsion

- A detailed investigation carried out under the direction of the Principal.
- Inform parents/guardians in writing of alleged misbehaviour, how it will be investigated and that it could result in expulsion.
 - Give parents/guardians and students the opportunity to respond before a decision is made.
 - A recommendation to the BOM by the Principal (see page 84 NEWB guidelines)
- Consideration by the BOM of the Principal's recommendations and the holding of a hearing. (see page 84 NEWB Guidelines)
- BOM deliberations and actions following the hearing. (page 85 NEWB Guidelines)
- If BOM is of the opinion that the student should be expelled, the Board must notify the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) in writing, of its opinion and the reasons for this opinion. The intention to expel a student does not take effect until 20 school days have elapsed after NEWB have received written notification. The NEWB should be notified using a Notice of Intention to Expel form which is available on www.schoolreturn.ie or from their helpline (1890 36 3666). This form should be completed and sent to School Return Section, National Educational Welfare Board, 16-22 Green St, Dublin 7.
- Consultations arranged by the EWO.
- Confirmation of the decision to expel. Appeals Parents/guardians may appeal the decision to expel to the Secretary General of DES. The appeals process under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998 begins with the appointment of a mediator. An appeal may also be brought by NEPS on behalf of the pupil.

Agreement

Parents/guardians/guardians who apply to enrol their children will be given a copy of the school's Code of Behaviour. An agreement signed by the parents/guardians/guardians to abide by the Code of Behaviour must be returned in advance of enrolment.

The Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire, Loughgar acknowledges the support of all teaching and ancillary Staff and the Parents' Association in the formulation of this code.

The following policies should be read in conjunction with this policy:

- School Tour Policy
- Parental Complaints Procedure
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Child Protection Policy

This policy was reviewed in October 2021.

Signed: 
Chairperson, B.O.M.

Signed: 
Principal