

# CODE OF BEHAVIOUR



**St. Mary's Secondary School,  
Nenagh  
Co. Tipperary**

## **Preamble**

St. Mary's Secondary School is a Catholic all girls' school under the Trusteeship of CEIST (Catholic Education and Irish School's Trust). It is an inclusive community with students, teachers, non-teaching staff, parents, Board of Management and trustees interacting collaboratively. Our school aims to provide each girl with a holistic education built on respect. We have a strong commitment to the excellence required for each student to reach her full potential as a uniquely gifted and precious human being.

Our Code of Behaviour includes a set of practices and procedures that together promote a positive learning and teaching environment conducive to the growth and development of each person. In choosing St Mary's Secondary School parents/guardians are committing themselves to uphold and cooperate with our Code of Behaviour.

## **Charter of Expectations for Student Behaviour**

In order to create a positive, holistic, teaching and learning environment in St. Mary's Secondary School in which each student may develop to her full potential, the following Charter of Expectations must be adhered to:

- Respect for self, fellow students, all staff members and the school environment
- Courtesy, good manners and sensitivity to the needs of others
- Regular attendance, be punctual and be in full uniform
- Commitment from students to their own learning and that of their peers
- Doing one's best in class
- Taking responsibility for one's own work
- Having necessary books, copies and other equipment as required for each class and homework completed
- Taking pride in representing the school and in participating in school activities

## CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

### Attendance/Punctuality

For a student to develop her full potential, both personally and academically, regular attendance at school and punctuality are essential. The Education Welfare Act 2000 imposes statutory duties on parents and schools regarding attendance. The duty of the school is to inform the National Educational Welfare Board when a pupil is absent for 20 days or more aggregate in a school year, for any reason.

### Attendance

- ✓ Regular attendance is required from all students unless prevented from doing so by illness or other exceptional circumstances.
- ✓ We recommend that family holidays should take place outside the school term.
- ✓ Unauthorised absence from school/class shall be considered a serious offence.
- ✓ The school reserves the right to investigate all unauthorised absences.

### Explanations

- ✓ It is statutory that where a student is absent from the school during part of a school day, or for a school day or for more than a school day, the parent/guardian of such a student notify the Principal of the school, in writing, of the reasons for the student's absence (Education Welfare Act 2000).
- ✓ On the day the student returns to school, after an absence, a note of explanation must be written in the student Journal stating:
  - *Date/s of absence*
  - *Reasons for absence*
  - *This must be signed by a parent/guardian.*
- ✓ A student who is unable to participate in a class activity requires a written explanation, in the Student Journal, signed by a parent/guardian for the teacher of that class. The student must, never the less, present herself for that class unless other arrangements are made for her by the teacher.
- ✓ A student who is unable to participate in a particular class activity, on an on-going basis, for medical reasons, must present a doctor's certificate to the relevant teacher.

### Punctuality

- ✓ Students are expected to be in class for 9.00a.m. and to attend until completion of the school day.
- ✓ Students, who arrive late for school in the morning and after lunch, are required to present at reception where they will receive a late stamp in their journals.
- ✓ Locker use should be limited to before 9.00am, at break time, during lunchtime and after school.

## **Leaving the School premises**

In the interests of the safety of the student, a pupil may not leave the school premises during school hours, without permission from the school authorities.

- ✓ Senior students may leave the school premises at Lunchtime.
- ✓ Junior students must remain on the school premises at Lunchtime, unless they are *going home* for lunch. In this situation a Permission Slip must be signed by the parent/guardian at the beginning of the school year.
- ✓ In the event of accident/illness, the parent/guardian or nearest contact will be informed by the school authorities, so that arrangements can be made to collect the student.

We recommend that medical/dental appointments be made outside of school hours. When this is unavoidable:

- ✓ Prior notification, signed by the parent/guardian, must be given to the Principal/Deputy Principal. The appointment card must accompany this.
- ✓ Prior to leaving the school, students are required to complete the *Signing-out Book* at Reception, and if the student returns to school that day, she must also sign back in.

## **Uniform/Dress Code**

In school, students are prepared for life, learning respect for self and for others. Personal grooming and appropriate dress code are important life skills.

- ✓ Students are expected to be well groomed at all times and must wear the school uniform as listed. P.E. attire should be worn for P.E. class and appropriate clubs, only.
- ✓ Students are not allowed facial or tongue piercings of any kind due to Health & Safety considerations.

## **Mobile Phones/Electronic Devices**

Mobile phones/electronic devices are a distraction to students throughout the school day. Nationally, it has been highlighted that mobile phones can often be used by students to bully each other and they also interrupt the learning climate of the school. Mobile phones/electronic devices are not allowed during the school day.

*We ask for your total co-operation in implementing this policy.*

## **Health & Safety**

In compliance with The Health, Safety and Welfare at Work Act 1989 and the Equal Status Act 2000, the Board of Management and Staff of St. Mary's Secondary School are committed to the creation of a safe environment for everyone who uses or works in our school.

- ✓ Smoking is forbidden.
- ✓ The possession or consumption of Alcoholic drink is forbidden.

- ✓ The possession/abuse/distribution of prohibited substances are prohibited.
- ✓ Students must be familiar with Fire Regulations and must never interfere with safety equipment/alarms/CCTV.
- ✓ Students must be especially mindful of the dangers of mistreating chemicals and specialist equipment.
- ✓ Students must protect the school environment from litter, graffiti, etc, so that the school will be a pleasant place for all.
- ✓ Classroom cleanliness and tidiness is every student's responsibility.
- ✓ We expect our students to behave in a manner that reflects well on themselves and on the school.
- ✓ Students must adhere to the School's Internet Acceptable Use Policy.
- ✓ Bullying in any form will not be tolerated.
- ✓ Harassment and Sexual Harassment are prohibited.

*Note: It should be understood that it is impossible to anticipate every single misdemeanour/unsafe action in any given context. The various types of misconduct mentioned are intended to be indicative only and not intended as exhaustive definitions of each category.*

## **POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR**

The culture and ethos of St. Mary's Secondary School are focused on personal development, respect for all and a positive approach to learning. The Code of Behaviour seeks to recognize and reinforce patterns of positive behaviour in students and encourage attitudes and values that nurture same. All students should be afforded an opportunity to reflect on their actions. Support structures are in place to assist students in taking responsibility for improving their behaviour and to validate and reinforce effort and commitment. Teachers can record positive comments and reward effort in the Student Personal Record Card under the following headings:

### **1. Classroom Behaviour**

- Positive approach to learning
- Quality homework
- Behaviour in class
- General attitude

### **2. Contribution to School Life**

- Class Captain/Vice Captain
- Class representative on Environmental/SRC or other groups that contribute to school life
- School President
- Prefects/Cara Leaders

### **3. Extra Curricular Activities**

- Generosity re extra curricular activities
- Generosity with their time
- Personal initiatives
- Other areas that a teacher may deem to merit a positive entry

#### **4. Other Areas**

- Students who overcome particular difficulties to achieve
- Full attendance
- No recorded lateness
- Automatic positive entry for having no recorded negative entry for breaches of the Code of Behaviour

### **SANCTIONS AND STRATEGIES FOR BREACHES OF THE CODE OF BEHAVIOUR**

#### **Introduction**

The following is an outline of the possible consequences for breach(es) of the school's Code of Behaviour. The sanction(s) applied will depend on the seriousness and frequency of the breach(es). Common sense and best professional practice shall prevail in application of sanctions.

#### **Negative Entries**

- **Negative entry for each of the following:**
  - Lateness (3 times late)
  - Late after lunch
  - Homework not done repeatedly
  - Not having necessary books/equipment/ingredients/PE gear, etc, repeatedly
  - Not being in full uniform
  - Classroom disruption (minor)
  - Disorderly behaviour (minor)
  - Graffiti/litter (minor)
  - Having mobile phones/electronic devices during class time (first offence)
  - Not using the designated entrances to enter and exit from the school

#### **Conduct Points**

- **1 Conduct Point:**
  - Mithing class (in school)
  - Leaving school at lunchtime without permission (Junior School). Student is issued with a Green Card
  - Class disruption (serious/ongoing)
  - Graffiti (ongoing)
  - Inappropriate language/behaviour among students
  - Having mobile phones/electronic devices during class time (for second and subsequent offences)

- **2 Conduct Points:**

- Mithing class (not in school)
- Leaving the school premises without permission
- Misuse of the School's Internet
- Harassment or Sexual Harassment

- **4 Conduct Points:**

*(Direct consultation with the Principal/Deputy Principal)*

- Bullying
- Stealing or intentional damage to another person's property
- Abusive language to a member of staff
- Serious graffiti
- Interfering with Fire Safety equipment
- Interfering with school CCTV system
- Mistreating chemicals/Specialist equipment
- Using an E-Cigarette/Smoking on school grounds/premises
- Serious malicious damage to school property

- **6 Conduct Points:**

*(Direct consultation with the Principal/Deputy Principal)*

- Consumption of alcoholic drink on the school grounds/premises
- Possession/abuse/distribution of prohibited substances on school grounds/premises

## **STRATEGIES FOR SPECIFIC MISDEMEANOURS**

### **Attendance**

- **Junior Students down town at lunchtime**

- ✓ 2 conduct Points
- ✓ Student put on lunchtime report card for 1 week
- ✓ Card to be signed by staff member on supervision duty at an agreed time

### **Punctuality**

- **Late in the morning**

- ✓ Student presents at Reception with their journal and receives a Late Stamp
- ✓ 3 Lates = Negative entry in Student Personal Record Card
- ✓ If lateness is ongoing, parent(s)/guardian(s) are informed by the Year Head
- ✓ Referral to the Principal/Deputy Principal who will decide on what further action should be taken.

- **Late after lunch**

- ✓ Student presents at Reception with their journal and receives a Late Stamp
- ✓ Negative entry in Student Personal Record Card

### **Uniform**

- **Out of uniform**

- ✓ Negative entry in the Student Personal Record Card
- ✓ If it is ongoing, Year Head informed. S/he will inform parent(s)/guardian(s) and request co-operation to address the matter.

### **School/Classroom behaviour**

Classroom management, towards an effective learning environment for the class, is a fundamental responsibility of each teacher.

- **Homework Not Completed (Ongoing)**

- ✓ Entry in Student's Journal, to be signed by parent(s) guardian(s)
- ✓ 1 Negative entry
- ✓ Further consultation may be required with some or all of the following: Class Tutor, Year Head, Learning Support Teacher, Guidance Counsellor, Principal/Deputy Principal, Parent(s)/Guardian(s), Psychological Services.

- **Not having Necessary Books, Equipment, P.E. Gear, Ingredients etc. (Ongoing)**

- ✓ Entry in Student Journal, to be signed by parent(s)/guardian(s).
- ✓ 1 Negative Entry
- ✓ Further consultation may be required with some or all of the following: Class Tutor, Year Head, Learning Support Teacher, Guidance Counsellor, Principal/Deputy Principal, Parent(s)/Guardian(s), Psychological Services.

- **Classroom Disruption**

- ✓ Teacher advises student on expected behaviour
- ✓ Teacher may use Student Journal to inform parent(s)/guardian(s) re student's behaviour

#### ***Continuous classroom disruption:***

- ✓ 1 Negative Entry in Student Personal Record Card.

#### ***2nd Offence refer to Class Tutor***

- ✓ 1 Conduct Point
- ✓ Further consultation may be required with some or all of the following: Year Head, Learning Support Teacher, Guidance Counsellor, Principal/Deputy Principal, Parent(s)/Guardian(s), Psychological Services
- ✓ On-going classroom disruption may merit suspension.

### **Mobile Phones/Electronic Devices**

- **Sanction for using Mobile Phones, Electronic devices during class time:**
  - ✓ 1 Negative Entry on Student Personal Record Card and item will be confiscated for the day.
  - ✓ 2nd and Subsequent Offences = 1 Conduct Point on Student Personal Record Card and item will be confiscated for the day.

### **Serious Malicious Damage to School Property**

- ✓ 4 Conduct Points
- ✓ Direct consultation with the Principal/Deputy Principal
- ✓ The cost of repair/restoration of any damage will be charged to the student/parent(s)/guardian(s).

### **Health & Safety**

- **Graffiti (minor)**
  - ✓ 1 Conduct Point
  - ✓ Year Head informed
  - ✓ Student will be required, in consultation with the Caretaker, to remove graffiti/tidy up the affected area.
- **Graffiti (serious)**
  - ✓ 4 Conduct Points
  - ✓ Direct consultation with the Principal/Deputy Principal
  - ✓ Student will be required, in consultation with the Caretaker, to remove graffiti/tidy up the affected area.
- **Bullying**
  - ✓ 4 Conduct Points
  - ✓ Every reported incident of bullying is investigated, through consultation with some or all of the following, depending on the seriousness of the situation: Class Tutor/Year Head/Guidance Counsellor/Principal/Deputy Principal, Parent(s)/Guardian(s), Psychological Services.
- **Harassment and Sexual Harassment**
  - ✓ 2 Conduct Points
  - ✓ Every recorded incident of harassment and sexual harassment is investigated, through consultation with some or all of the following, depending on the seriousness of the situation: Class Tutor/Year Head/Guidance Counsellor/Principal/Deputy Principal, Parent(s)/Guardian(s), Psychological Services.
  - ✓ If necessary, the Gardaí and the Health Authorities or other agencies may be consulted and asked to intervene.

- **Interfering with Fire Safety Equipment/CCTV Equipment**
  - ✓ 4 Conduct points
  - ✓ Direct consultation with the Principal / Deputy Principal
  - ✓ The cost of servicing/repairing the equipment will be charged to the student/parent(s)/guardian(s).
  
- **Mistreating Chemicals/Specialist Equipment**
  - ✓ 4 Conduct points
  - ✓ Direct consultation with the Principal/Deputy Principal
  - ✓ The cost of servicing/repairing the equipment will be charged to the student/parent(s)/guardian(s).
  
- **Smoking on the School Grounds/Premises**
  - ✓ 4 Conduct points
  - ✓ Direct consultation with the Principal/Deputy Principal who may consult with the Gardaí
  - ✓ Ongoing offences may lead to suspension.
  
- **Consumption of Alcoholic Drink on the School Grounds/Premises**
  - ✓ 6 Conduct points
  - ✓ Direct consultation with the Principal/Deputy Principal
  - ✓ Parent(s)/Guardian(s) are informed
  - ✓ Gardaí may be consulted
  - ✓ Suspension
  
- **Possession/Abuse/Distribution of Prohibited Substances on School Grounds/Premises**
  - ✓ 6 Conduct points
  - ✓ Direct consultation with the Principal/Deputy Principal
  - ✓ Parent(s)/Guardian(s) are informed
  - ✓ Gardaí will be consulted
  - ✓ Suspension

**Standard Procedures for Issuing Negative Entries/Conduct Points**

- **1 Negative Entry**
  - ✓ Class Teacher meets with student and advises her on how to improve her behaviour and informs Class Tutor
  
- **5 Negative Entries**
  - ✓ Class Tutor informs Year Head
  - ✓ Year Head meets student re negative entries

- ✓ Year Head may consult with the Guidance Counsellor
  - ✓ Year Head puts student on White Report Card for a week
  - ✓ Year Head informs parent(s)/guardian(s) by standard letter
  - ✓ Parent(s)/Guardian(s) sign completed card.
- **8 Negative Entries**
    - ✓ Class Tutor informs Year Head
    - ✓ Year Head informs Principal/Deputy Principal re student's misdemeanours
    - ✓ Principal/Deputy Principal may consult with the Guidance Counsellor
    - ✓ Deputy Principal puts student on White Report Card and informs parent(s)/guardian(s), by standard letter
    - ✓ When White Report Card is completed and signed by parent(s)/guardian(s) it is returned to the Year Head.
  - **10 Negative Entries**
    - ✓ Class Tutor informs Year Head
    - ✓ Year Head informs Principal re student's misdemeanours
    - ✓ Student is put on a White Report Card by Principal
    - ✓ Principal informs the Parent(s)/Guardian(s) who are requested to meet Principal and other relevant personnel
    - ✓ Parent(s)/Guardian(s) sign completed Report Card before it is handed back to the Year Head, who puts it on file
    - ✓ Psychological assistance may be sought.

### **Conduct Points**

- **1 Conduct Point**
  - ✓ Class Tutor meets student re behaviour
- **2 Conduct Points**
  - ✓ Class Tutor informs Year Head
  - ✓ Year Head meets student re behaviour and puts student on Yellow Report Card/Lunch Time Report Card for 1 week
  - ✓ Year Head informs Deputy Principal/Principal
  - ✓ Parent(s)/Guardian(s) signs the completed Yellow Report Card before being returned to the Year Head.
- **4 Conduct Points**
  - ✓ Class Tutor informs Year Head
  - ✓ Year Head informs Guidance Counsellor/Deputy Principal/Principal
  - ✓ Deputy Principal/Principal meets with the student and puts her on a Red Report Card for 1 week
  - ✓ Parent(s)/Guardian(s) are requested to meet with Principal/Deputy Principal and other relevant personnel.

- ✓ Parents sign the completed Report Card before it is handed up to the Year Head
- ✓ Psychological assistance may be sought

- **6 Conduct Points**

- ✓ Class Tutor informs Year Head
- ✓ Year Head informs Guidance Counsellor/Deputy Principal/Principal
- ✓ Guidance Counsellor may meet with student
- ✓ Deputy Principal/Principal meets with the student, puts her on Red Report Card for 2 weeks, informs parent(s)/guardian(s) who are requested to attend meeting re the student.
- ✓ Psychological assistance may be sought
- ✓ Board of Management may be informed
- ✓ Suspension warning may be issued

The Principal reserves the right to suspend a student for serious misconduct without going through the disciplinary procedures. The Board of Management has the authority to expel a student in extreme cases of unacceptable behaviour following a consultation process with the Principal, parent(s), guardian(s), teachers and student.

The student/parent(s)/guardian(s) have the right of appeal to the Board of Management (Section 29, Education Act, 1998).

*Note: It should be understood that it is impossible to anticipate every single misdemeanour/unsafe action in any given context. Therefore, the school reserves the right to vary these procedures and sanctions, taking into account the particular circumstances of incidents, the individual record of students, health and safety considerations, the rights of other students to learn and of teachers to teach in a safe and respectful environment.*



### **RELEVANT LEGISLATION**

This Code adheres to the following legislation enacted since 1997:

- ✓ Freedom of Information Act, 1997
- ✓ Education Act, 1998
- ✓ Safety & Welfare at Work Act, 1998
- ✓ Education (Welfare) Act, 2000
- ✓ Equal Status Act, 2000

***Ratified by Board of Management***

***Date: 13/12/2011***

### **Addendum to Code of Behaviour**

At a Board of Management meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2025, the Board of Management approved an addendum to the Code of Behaviour as follows:

From Monday 8<sup>th</sup> December, St. Mary's Secondary School will introduce a weekly lunchtime detention as a sanction.

This sanction will be implemented where a student has accumulated three Uniform Breach notifications on VS Ware, three Unexplained Late notes on their attendance record or other circumstances where the Principal deems a lunchtime detention an appropriate sanction, including where other sanctions have been deemed to be ineffective. The Deputy Principal will be delegated the authority to place a student on lunchtime detention in the absence of the Principal.

Students will be given a minimum of forty-eight hours' notice in advance of being placed on lunchtime detention. Parents/Guardians will be notified via the school app. Students will be given twenty minutes to eat their lunch on the day of detention, and detention will then run from 1.35pm to 2pm. This is a 25-minute detention. Senior students are not permitted to go down town on the day of a detention.

Non-attendance at detention will be deemed a serious breach of the school's Code of Behaviour, except in cases where a student is on an explained absence. In this case the detention will be rescheduled for the following week.

The requirement to attend lunchtime detention will supersede other events for the student on that day, so if a student is scheduled to be involved in an activity they may have to forego that activity to complete lunchtime detention.