

Promoting the good behaviour of students

Introduction

From its foundation, Rockbrook School has sought to provide an environment that combines academic excellence, personal attention to each student and sound moral development, with a very close working relationship between teachers and parents. A school should be a happy place for students, teachers and all other staff, where people feel valued and respected and where the behaviour of all helps to ensure a good working environment and a firm but familial tone.

Promoting Good Behaviour

The day-to-day experience in Rockbrook is that students behave very well, people show respect for each other and all help each other to live up to their responsibilities within the school community. Rockbrook students also have a highly valued reputation when engaged in activities outside the school. School staff appreciate the efforts made by students. They support these efforts in the following ways:

- they seek to develop mutually respectful relationships, balancing warmth and empathy with objectivity, professional detachment, fairness and consistency.
- they involve students in the preparation of school and classroom rules.
- they allocate a range of responsibilities to students within the school community.
- they affirm good learning behaviour and give positive feedback about behaviour.
- they promote appropriate reward systems that are meaningful, that acknowledge good behaviour by individuals or groups, that are sensitive to personal factors and that are given for effort as well as achievement.

Currently the school reward system includes the following actions:

- acknowledgement of good quality work by marking it in the Student Journal
- public praise for good effort or work and the reading out of that work in the classroom.
- occasional 'fun' classes organised by a teacher as a reward for consistent good classwork
- occasional class outings organised by the Year Head for high standards of effort or work in a class group
- public acknowledgement of good or exemplary behaviour or achievements in the school assembly.
- occasional prizes awarded at assembly for high achievement (effort and attainment) in assessments.
- annual prizes awarded on Awards Day for effort, attainment, service to the school and achievements on behalf of the school.

Managing misbehaviour

- Students must observe the general rules of the school and specific rules in each classroom.
- It is recognised that the repeated correction of students, done with patience, is a normal part of the education process. This is an aspect of school 'discipline' and aims to help students acquire good social skills and to develop good habits such as order, punctuality, application to work, respect for others, self-control, good appearance, healthy lifestyle and a sporting spirit.
- Teachers make it clear to students what the expectations for behaviour are and they endeavour to positively encourage such good behaviour.
- The school Journal is used to record matters related to misbehaviour.
 - Parents are actively encouraged to review Journals. In senior classes, it can be more difficult for parents to see Journals as they may be reluctant to demand them, but the policy of the school is that all students and parents should use the Journal.
- Liaising with parents about misbehaviour is important and can help to resolve problems. The involvement of parents is a means for the school and family to work together for the best interests of the student.
- The vast majority of breaches of behaviour expectations, either inside or outside the classroom, are handled by the teacher directly involved, or by a teacher asked to become involved by a non-teaching staff member.
- When small incidents do arise, a teacher:
 - Reminds the student of expectations.
 - Re-engages the student into the work or activity at hand.
 - Provides positive direction.
- By early intervention, the school endeavours to ensure that a student avoids becoming involved in the school's Disciplinary Process. The aim is to manage the situation so as to improve the behaviour of the student and his participation in the school.
- The teacher avoids putting a student out of the classroom when the student is misbehaving.
 - However, if the teacher cannot continue with class with the disruptive student present, he places the student in another classroom by agreement with the other teacher. The teacher should bring the student to the other classroom, rather than simply asking the student to go on his own.

Recording misbehaviour

- If a teacher wishes to record misbehaviour, the teacher notes it in the student's Journal using the RM note (RM = 'Record of Misbehaviour'). This is a teacher formally recording misbehaviour.
- An RM note is used to record:
 - A student's disruption to the learning in the classroom, or
 - A student's disruption outside the classroom, or
 - A student's disrespectful behaviour toward a member of staff, or
 - Any other misbehaviour which should be recorded.

- While a teacher will always try to avoid giving an RM note, by handling the matter through positive engagement, if a student resists a patient attempt to correct him on a specific point of behaviour or attitude, the teacher will record this in the Journal using this note.
- When putting in an RM, the teacher:
 - Describes the action(s) of the student which led to the note being given.
 - Informs the student's Year Head.
- Upon receiving an RM, the student must get it counter-signed:
 - By his Year Head, and
 - By his parents.
- Other notes are available to the teacher, such as for lateness (L), incomplete homework (IH) or unexcused absence from the lesson (UA); these are generally not deemed matters of misbehaviour, especially if they are once-off.
 - They are written into the Journal as a reminder to the student to do better next time, and for the attention of Year Heads, mentors and parents.
 - Teachers do not need to refer these notes to the Year Head, as they will be seen when signing the Journals. The Year Head will also liaise with mentors to get to the root of *why* students are late, not doing homework or are absent.
- However, *consistent* notes for lateness, incomplete homework or unexcused absence from the lesson *can be* deemed to be matters of misbehaviour due to repetition, and a teacher may wish record this using RM in the Journal.
- Misbehaviour may ultimately lead to a student's involvement in school trips being curtailed. In such circumstances adequate notice will be given.

Entering into the Disciplinary Process

- When misbehaviour starts to be recurrent, the school recognises different stages in its management of it, running from Stage 1 to Stage 6 of the Disciplinary Process.
- Misbehaviour may be cumulative, working its way upwards through the Process from Stage 1.
- Misbehaviour can also be sudden, that is, a serious incident that clearly calls for immediate action.
 - Examples of such incidents include: stealing, leaving the school without permission, fighting, abusive language or behaviour, considered to be posing a threat to himself or others, damage to school property, inappropriate use of digital media, or anything else that the school regards as serious.
 - Sudden incidents inevitable skip Stages 1-2 and are dealt with under Stage 3, 4 or 5.

Disciplinary Process in detail

The process outlined below provides step by step indications with regard to handling and documenting misbehaviour and the school's response to that misbehaviour. The aim of the school is to keep students *out* of this process, but if a student does enter it, the school will then provide support to the student at each step of the way to avoid, if at all possible, the student going any further in it.

The aim, in order words, is not to push the student along through the process once he has entered it, but rather to use the process as a way of improving his behaviour, and the sooner that happens, the better for everyone. Entering the Disciplinary Process is a serious matter, as once a student has gone past Stage 1 and entered Stage 2, he cannot revert back to an earlier Stage from a more advanced

Stage during the current academic year. A misbehaving student may end up working his way along the process from beginning to end, which naturally takes time. However, a student can also skip Stages and enter the process for the first time at an advanced Stage.

Stage 1 – On Notice

- If a student receives a second RM from a teacher within the space of one week, the student will be put On Notice for five school days; he has now taken a step into the school's Disciplinary Process and he needs to do his best to avoid going any further along it.
- The Year Head should:
 - Place the student On Notice by using the On Notice stamp in his Journal, stamping each day of the **following five school days**.
 - Inform the student that receiving another RM whilst On Notice, will result in him being put On Report.
- If the student does not receive any more RM whilst On Notice, everything is back to normal.
- Students can be put On Notice multiple times (Stage 1). These cannot push the student into Stage 2 of the process.

Stage 2 – On Report

- If a student receives an RM from a teacher whilst On Notice, the teacher in question should:
 - Retain the Journal and give it to the Year Head.
- The Year Head should meet the student as soon as possible, examine the Journal with the student and, if all is in order, explain to the student that he is now On Report for **ten school days**.
- The Year Head should now:
 - Stamp the student's Journal with the On Report stamp.
 - Provide a copy of the 'On Report Letter' to the student, to give to his parents.
 - File the original letter in the office.
 - Send an advisory text to the parents.
 - Inform the mentor. The mentor should liaise with the Year Head and work closely with the student to ensure the matter does not escalate.
 - Inform the AEN co-ordinator, if applicable.
 - Meet the parents (with the mentor, if deemed necessary).
- The student must now hand up his Journal to the teacher at the start of every lesson while On Report.
- The teacher should indicate in writing at the end of class what the student behaved like in the lesson.
- Everything is back to normal for the student once the On Report period is over.
- Should a student get an RM while On Report, he enters Stage 3 of the process.
- A student can only be On Report twice in one academic year.
 - If he gets as far as being put On Notice again, having been already On Report twice, instead of being put On Notice he will enter Stage 3.

Stage 3 – Internal Reflection Day

- A student has come this far in the process because:
 - While he was On Report he got another RM, or
 - He has been On Report twice, and was about to be put On Notice again, or
 - He has skipped Stages 1 and 2, as he was involved in a sudden incident which calls for a response at Stage 3.
- A student who has entered Stage 3 should, on a day specified by his Year Head, come into school as usual but is not permitted to attend lessons.
 - The Year Head will:
 - Provide a copy of the 'Internal Reflection Letter' to the student, to give to his parents, informing them of the day in question, the purpose behind it and the school's expectations after it.
 - File the original letter in the office.
 - Send an advisory text to the parents.
 - Inform the mentor.
 - Inform the AEN co-ordinator, if applicable.
 - Inform teaching staff.
 - The student will remain for the day in an area or classroom specified by his Year Head.
 - This day is for the purpose of allowing the student time to reflect on his behaviour.
 - During the day he will meet his Year Head and his mentor, and will be assisted in his reflection.
 - He will be given material to work with which will help him.
- If he gets as far as being put On Notice again, after an Internal Reflection Day, instead of being put On Notice he will enter Stage 4.

Stage 4 – Monitoring

- A student is in Stage 4 because his recurrent misbehaviour is now deemed to be persistent misbehaviour.
- Before the Monitoring begins, the Year Head will:
 - Provide a copy of the 'Monitoring Letter' to the student, to give to his parents, informing them of the procedures, the purpose behind it and the school's expectations after it.
 - File the original letter in the office.
 - Send an advisory text to the parents.
 - Inform the mentor.
 - Inform the Deputy Principal.
 - Inform the AEN co-ordinator, if applicable.
 - Inform teaching staff.
- Being in Monitoring means the following:
 - The student must meet the Deputy Principal (DP) every morning before attending any lessons, or a person asked by the DP to carry out the Monitoring.
 - Together they will look at the student's day ahead and plan accordingly.

- The student will be encouraged to touch base with his mentor whenever he wishes, at any point during the day.
- The student must meet the DP again at the end of the day.
- The DP will talk by phone, or in person, to the parents of the student at the end of each day.
- The DP will liaise with the Year Head and the mentor during the day.
- If a student avoids being put On Notice again during Monitoring, he completes his Monitoring after 5 school days.
- If he gets as far as being put On Notice again, while still in Monitoring, instead of being put On Notice he will enter Stage 5.
- If he completes Monitoring, but gets as far as being put On Notice at a future date, instead of being put On Notice he will enter Stage 5.

Stage 5 – Temporary Suspension

- A student who has reached Stage 5 will receive a temporary suspension from school.
- The Board of Management has delegated to the Principal the authority to suspend a student. The Principal will regularly inform the Board on how that authority is used.
- Suspension will be a proportionate response to the behaviour that is causing concern.
- Multiple suspensions in any one year can be imposed.
- The following procedure is followed:
 - The Disciplinary Committee of the school meets to review the case (this committee consists of the Year Head, the Deputy Principal, the Principal) and recommend a suspension (suspension is normally for 1, 2 or 3 days; it can be longer however).
 - The committee should inform the student's mentor and AEN (if applicable) beforehand in order to get their input. If this is not possible, because the suspension will be immediate, the mentor and AEN should be informed at the earliest opportunity.
 - Besides recommending suspension, other recommendations can be made by the committee, for instance that consultation with appropriate professional counsellors should be sought (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).
 - When recommending suspension, the committee may also recommend certain conditions to be fulfilled by the student and/or his parents before normal class attendance can be resumed.
 - It may be that the Principal will suspend the student on foot of the committee's recommendations.
 - If suspension is proceeding, the Year Head will contact the parents by phone and by letter (using the 'Suspension Letter') to inform them of the suspension.
 - The letter will confirm the period of the suspension and the dates on which the suspension will begin and end, the reasons for the suspension and the arrangements for returning to school, including any commitments to be entered into by the student and the parents
 - The provision for an appeal to the Board of Management should be included when the suspension is for a period longer than three days.
 - The Year Head will inform teaching staff.

- The Principal may consider an immediate suspension to be necessary, pending formal procedures, where the continued presence of the student in the school at the time would represent a serious threat to the safety of students or staff of the school, or any other person, or where the behaviour is seen as a deliberate affront to the good order or the ethos of the school.
- For the purposes of the Education Acts, a three day suspension constitutes a first formal warning from the school to the parents about action the school might have to take in time (i.e. permanent suspension).
- After the suspension, parents are requested by the Year Head to come to the school to discuss the matter. At that meeting, it should be agreed what actions should be taken by the parents, by the student and by the school, and parents should be aware of what procedures will be followed in the event of further major breaches of discipline by the student.
- A student may be suspended from sitting State examinations in the school if there is a threat to good order in the conduct of the examination, a threat to the safety of other students and personnel or a threat to the right of other students to do their examination in a calm atmosphere.
- A suspension longer than 3 days requires the approval of the Board of Management, who may extend or reduce the suspension. The Board of Management will normally place a ceiling of ten days on any one period of suspension. The Board will 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.
- 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.
- If a suspension for three days or less is given, and the student receives no further serious sanction in the same school year, the suspension will be removed from the student's record at the end of that school year.
- If a student is suspended three times during one school year, for three days or more in each case, the case moves to Stage 7 of the Disciplinary Process for consideration.

Stage 6 – Permanent Suspension (Expulsion)

- If a student has been suspended three times during one school year, for three days or more in each case, the Disciplinary Committee has the option of recommending permanent suspension.
- In making its decisions and recommendations, the committee's primary concerns will be the welfare of the student in question and the overall good of the school.
- The committee may decide to interview the student and/or the Year Head and/or parents to take submissions in writing from these before taking its decision.
- Only the Board of Management has the authority to expel a student, which recognises that expulsion of a student is a very serious step and one that it will only take in extreme cases of unacceptable behaviour, that the school has taken all available steps to address the misbehaviour and avoid expulsion and that all possibilities for changing the student's behaviour have been exhausted.
- The Board of Management also has the power to expel a student on the basis of a *single* breach of acceptable behaviour.
- The following steps are followed in respect of expulsion:

- An investigation will be carried out under the direction of the Principal.
 - In line with fair procedures, the Principal shall:
 - Inform the student and his parents in writing about the details of misbehaviour, how it will be handled now and that it could result in expulsion.
 - Give parents and the student an opportunity to respond, by letter or in person, before a recommendation is made to the Board of Management.
- Where the Principal forms a view that expulsion may be warranted, the Principal makes a recommendation to the Board of Management to consider expulsion.
 - The Principal shall:
 - Inform the parents and the student in writing that the Board of Management is being asked to consider expulsion, including notice of the grounds on which the Board of Management is being asked to consider expulsion.
 - Provide the Board of Management with the same material as 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.
- The Board of Management will consider the recommendation; and hold a hearing.
 - The Board shall review the initial investigation and satisfy itself that the investigation was properly conducted. The Board shall undertake its own review of all documentation and the circumstances of the case and then hold a hearing. 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 will 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. Parents may wish to be accompanied at hearings and the Board will facilitate this, in line with good practice and Board procedures.
- Board of Management will decide to expel or do otherwise following the hearing.
 - Having heard from all the parties, it is the responsibility of the Board to decide 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 will notify the Educational Welfare Officer in writing of its opinion, and the reasons for this opinion. (Education (Welfare) Act 2000, s24(1)). The student will then be expelled after the passage of twenty school days from the date on which the EWO receives this written notification (Education (Welfare) Act 2000, s24(1)). The Board will inform the parents in writing about its conclusions and the next steps in the process.
- Consultations may be arranged by the Educational Welfare Officer.
 - The Educational Welfare Officer will consult with the Principal, the parents and the student, and anyone else who may be of assistance to ensure that arrangements are made for the student to continue in education. The Board may consider it appropriate to suspend a student during this time.

- Confirmation of the decision to expel will be sent to the parents and the student.
 - After the twenty days have elapsed the Board of Management will formally confirm the decision to expel, will make a formal record of the decision and will tell parents and student about the right to appeal and supply them with the standard form on which to lodge an appeal.
- 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 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.
- The Board of Management will review the use of suspension and expulsion in the school at regular intervals to ensure that its use is consistent with school policies, that patterns of use are examined to identify factors that may be influencing behaviour in the school, and to ensure that suspension and expulsion are used appropriately.