



Discipline, Suspensions & Expulsions Policy

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1.0	Jan 2012	Original Version
2.0	Sep 2019	Major revision

Introduction

The ethos of Glenstal Abbey School is based on three essential principles which should characterise a Benedictine school: reverence, respect and responsibility. The school's rules and standards of behaviour are derived from these principles, and good behaviour is expected of all students at all times. This policy should be read in conjunction with the school *Code of Conduct* and *Anti-Bullying Policy* and all students and parents must indicate their acceptance of both, in writing, before a boy enters the school.

The school seeks to implement a fair and consistent, though suitably flexible, system of sanctions. Perpetrators of aggressive, intimidating or bullying behaviour may face strong sanctions. As Saint Benedict makes clear, the purpose of punishment is to bring about reform, and we take as our starting point his advice to the Abbot that he must deal with those who are guilty of misdeeds 'so that they may be healed' (RB:30:3).

The school will be guided by the following:

- The prevention of serious disruption to teaching and learning
- The goal of achieving a positive change in the student's conduct
- Helping the student to understand that his behaviour is unacceptable, has a detrimental effect on others and that he needs to take responsibility for his actions
- The need to balance the educational need of a student whose behaviour is unacceptable with the educational needs of the other students
- A duty of care to the student and all other members of the school community.
- The need for fairness, consistency and timelines
- Ensuring that sanctions will be proportionate and appropriate to the age and developmental stage of the student

1. Behaviour in the classroom

All teachers aim to conduct their classes in an orderly and co-operative atmosphere and achieve this by taking responsibility for the management of conduct within their own classrooms. In so far as is practicable, unacceptable behaviour in the classroom will be dealt with by the class teacher. Each staff member has the right to supervise and correct students in all areas of the school. In response to unacceptable behaviour a teacher may:

- Issue a verbal warning
- Move the student to a different position in the classroom
- Require additional work to be completed
- Record the negative behaviour on the Compass system
- In the case of persistent unacceptable behaviour, refer the student to the relevant Behaviour Dean
- In the case of a serious incident where the safety of students or staff was placed at risk, refer the student to the Deputy Principal or Principal

2. Behaviour during Study

Students need to be able to do homework and revise in a quiet, meaningful and constructive manner. The study supervisor takes responsibility for the management of the study environment in order to promote an orderly and co-operative atmosphere, with minimal disruption. In so far as is practicable, unacceptable behaviour during Study will be dealt with by the study supervisor. In response to unacceptable behaviour a supervisor may:

- Direct the student to continue with his work in an appropriate manner
- Issue a verbal warning
- Move the student to a different position in the Study centre
- Require additional work to be completed
- Record the negative behaviour on the Compass system

- Place the student 'On Report' for evening Study
- In the case of persistent unacceptable behaviour, refer the student to the Head of Boarding
- In the case of a serious incident where the safety of students or staff was placed at risk, refer the student to the Principal or Headmaster

3. Behaviour during Activities, Meals and at Night

Care and courtesy for every person in the school and for the physical environment and equipment of the school itself is expected at all times. When a student's behaviour is not in accordance with this expectation, the supervisor or housemaster may:

- Direct the student to desist from the inappropriate behaviour
- Issue a verbal warning
- Record the negative behaviour on the Compass system
- Assign meaningful 'community service' tasks
- Withdraw privileges, especially at weekends
- Place the student 'On Report' for the Boarding House
- In the case of persistent unacceptable behaviour, refer the student to the Head of Boarding

4. Detention

All behaviour incidents recorded on the Compass system will be reviewed weekly by the Behaviour Deans. The Behaviour Deans will draw up and publish weekly Detention lists and ensure that the parents of those required to attend receive notification. Detention is a one-hour sanction on Thursday. Attendance at detention takes precedence over all other school activities, including sporting fixtures and class outings. Failure to attend will result in a two-hour Detention the following Thursday. Failure to attend this second Detention will result in a meeting with the relevant Behaviour Dean and attendance at Special Detention on Saturday. On being assigned to serve Detention for a fifth time during the year, a student will be summoned to a meeting with the Deputy Principal. His parents will be informed and may be requested to attend. A student whose behaviour does not improve after these interventions will be required to appear before a Disciplinary Committee and may be suspended.

5. Referrals and Interventions

Behaviour issues will be processed, generally in a hierarchical sequence from:

- Teacher / Housemaster / Supervisor
- Behaviour Deans
- Head of Boarding
- Deputy Principal
- Disciplinary Committee
- Principal and Headmaster
- Board of Management

Where necessary, the relevant Behaviour Dean or the Head of Boarding will interview the student and investigate the incident or behaviour pattern. This may include contacting parents/guardians. Daily or weekly 'On Report' cards may be issued to the student to monitor his behaviour, homework and attitude in class.

6. Disciplinary Committee

Persistent problems or serious breaches of discipline (including bullying, theft, damage to school or personal property, and use of unauthorized substances) may be referred to a Disciplinary Committee by the Principal. Members have a responsibility to act in a fair and non-discriminatory manner and adhere to the principles of natural justice. Disciplinary Committees will always respect the fact that the student in question has the right to be heard and the right to be treated impartially. The student's right to be heard means that he has a right:

- to know that the alleged behaviour is being investigated
- to details of the allegation and any other information being considered
- to know how the issue will be decided
- to an adequate opportunity for either the student or his parents/guardians to respond
- to be heard by the decision-making body, whether that be the Headmaster/Principal or the Board of Management
- to ask questions of the other party or witness where the facts are disputed

The Deputy Principal or the Head of Boarding (or, where necessary, another staff member nominated by the Headmaster or Principal) will investigate the matter thoroughly and make a detailed written record of the facts. Written statements from parties to the incident and/or witnesses will be taken where appropriate. The facts will then be put to the student involved and he will be asked to give a response. His response will be carefully noted and clarification sought/provided where needed.

The Principal may direct that a Disciplinary Committee be convened at the end of this process. The committee will generally be formed of three staff members. (Both the Headmaster and Principal may exercise the right to be present at any Disciplinary Committee meeting.) Where the sanction of suspension is being considered, the student's parents will be informed and given the opportunity to respond. A member of staff will be nominated to accompany the student at the meeting. The assembled information and statements will be considered by the committee and put again to the student, with the aim of ascertaining the most accurate details possible and, where appropriate, assisting the student to reflect on his behaviour. The committee will consider the matter further after the student has left, and decide on what recommendation should be made to the Headmaster and Principal. Possible sanctions include – but are not limited to – restitution/compensation, 'community service' tasks, 'gating', removal from planned school outings, withdrawal of the right to represent the school in sporting or other activities, and suspension.

Though the committee is advisory and sanctions are imposed by the Headmaster and/or Principal, the members of the Disciplinary Committee should not have been directly affected by the behaviour under investigation. Similarly, a staff member who is also a member of the Board of Management may not be a member of the Disciplinary Committee, since the Board may ultimately be required to adjudicate on an appeal.

7. Suspension

In certain cases of unacceptable behaviour, it may be in the best interests of the school community and/or the student involved to remove the student from the school or from class for a period of time. Suspension is a serious sanction and the Board of Management will be informed of all suspensions. Suspension imposed by the Headmaster/Principal should not usually exceed three days but, in exceptional circumstances, it may be extended to a maximum of five days. The power to suspend for longer periods rests with the Board of Management alone.

Procedure

In some cases, the Headmaster and/or Principal may consider an immediate suspension to be necessary. Such circumstances include cases where the facts are clear and undisputed and cases where the continued presence of the student in the school could represent a threat to the safety of either the student himself or of others in the school community. Fair procedures must still be applied and a full investigation of the behaviour in question will take place. In other cases, a Disciplinary Committee will be convened as outlined above.

Should the Headmaster/Principal decide to impose a suspension, the parents will be informed of the length of the suspension and of their right to appeal the basis of the suspension to the Board of Management at its next meeting. The suspension stands, pending such an appeal. If the boy is over 18 years of age he may exercise the right of appeal himself.

Where the total number of days for which the student has been suspended in the current school year reaches twenty days, the parents may appeal the sanction under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998, as amended by the Education (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2007. The Headmaster or Principal will confirm the suspension and the right of appeal in writing to the parents. The student may be set school work or other reasonable tasks to complete during the period of his suspension in order to help him reflect on his behaviour.

8. Withdrawal of Residential Boarding Facilities

In certain cases, where a student's behaviour contravenes the school's standards of conduct for residential schooling, the Headmaster and Principal may judge that the withdrawal of residential boarding facilities is appropriate. Such cases may include – but are not limited to – persistent aggressive or disruptive behaviour in dormitories and common areas and actions outside class time that pose a threat to the health and safety of the student himself and/or others who live or work on the Glenstal campus. Withdrawal of residential facilities may be for a fixed or indefinite period of time. In such cases, the student may continue to attend the school as a day student.

9. Expulsion

Expulsion is the ultimate sanction in the school and will not be considered lightly. The authority to expel a pupil rests with the Board of Management alone. Expulsion will be considered for very serious incidents, such as continuous serious disruption, violence or the possession or supply of illegal substances. However, the grounds for expulsion may, in fact, be similar to the grounds for suspension. In addition to factors such as the degree of seriousness and the persistence of the behaviour, a key difference is that expulsion is considered when the school authorities have tried a series of other interventions and believe they have exhausted all possibilities for changing the student's behaviour.

Procedure

The Headmaster and Principal will interview the student about his behaviour, and give him the opportunity to respond. They will then write to the boy's parents/guardians, informing them that expulsion is being considered and the nature of the evidence on which this is based. They will offer them the opportunity to consider this evidence, and to make a submission by way of rebuttal within fourteen days.

After fourteen days, and having considered the parents/guardians' response (if any), if the Headmaster and Principal still intend to recommend that the Board of Management expel the student, the Principal will:

- Inform the student's parents/guardians by registered post of the intention to ask the Board to expel the student, stating the reason(s) for the recommendation
- Give at least five days' notice of the Board meeting at which the recommendation will be considered.
- Inform the student's parents/guardians of their right to be present and heard at the Board meeting *or* to make a written submission to the Board. (In the case of a lone parent opting to attend the Board meeting, he/she may be accompanied by a friend or relative.)
- Prepare a report for the Board containing all the relevant material relating to the case.
- Send out a copy of the report by post to the parents/guardians of the student on time for the meeting.

The boy may be suspended from school pending the decision of the Board regarding expulsion. Parents are required to give two days' notice to the Secretary of the Board of Management of their intention to be present and speak at the Board meeting, after which they will be invited to attend the meeting at a designated time.

The Board will examine the report and may seek clarification from the Headmaster and Principal. The Chairperson will give the parents sufficient time to respond to the report and make representations on behalf of the student. The Headmaster and Principal (even if either is a full member of the Board) will take no further part in the discussion other than to clarify matters raised in the parents/guardians appeal. After the presentations and any clarifications, the Headmaster, Principal and parents will leave the meeting. The Board makes its decision and communicates it to the parents/guardians by registered letter.

If the Board decides to expel the student:

- The National Education Welfare Board is informed.
- The expulsion does not take effect until at least twenty school days have elapsed after receipt of notification by the NEWB, though the student may be suspended from school during that period.
- The parents will be informed of their right to appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills, under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998, within forty-two calendar days of receipt of written notification of the Board's decision.

If the Board decides not to expel the student, it will decide on an alternative sanction, in consultation with the Headmaster and Principal.

10. Reasonable Measures

The provisions of this code and this policy are without prejudice to the right of the Headmaster and Principal, on behalf of the Board of Governors and Board of Management, to take all reasonable measures as they consider appropriate to ensure that good order and discipline are maintained in the school and that the safety of students, employees and visitors is secured.

In exceptional circumstances where a serious breach of the school rules and regulations and/or a breach of the law are apprehended, the Headmaster or Principal may order a search of lockers, dormitories, or personal effects without notice to the student(s) concerned.

In addition to such searches the Headmaster or Principal may request the student to disclose the contents of his pockets/clothing. Refusal so to do shall be deemed to constitute gross misbehaviour and shall attract the sanctions set out in this policy.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 16th September 2019.

This policy has been made available to school personnel and published on the school website.

Signed Alec Gabbett
Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed Carmel Honan
Principal

Date 16th September 2019

Date of next review: October 2020