# St. Declan's National School

Bourne Avenue, Ashbourne, Co. Meath - A84KT02
School Roll Number: 19486K
Charity Number: 20201057
Phone: 01-8350594
www.decsash.ie
Email: info@decsash.ie
Twitter: @decsash

School Policy

## Code of Behaviour

This policy was formulated by St. Declan's National School to inform staff, pupils and parents of our Code of Behaviour. It is guided by the Education Act 1998, Education (Welfare) Act 2000, Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools by the National Education Welfare Board (NEWB, 2008), Behavioural, Emotional & Social Difficulties: A Continuum of Support by the National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS, 2009) and the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (Department of Education, 2013).

# Contents


1. Introduction
2. Rationale
3. Aims
4. Standards of Behaviour
    - 4.1. Expectations of Pupils
    - 4.2. Expectations of Parents
    - 4.3. Expectations of School Staff
5. School and Classroom Rules
    - 5.1. School Rules
    - 5.2. Classroom Rules
    - 5.3. Yard Rules
6. Promoting Positive Behaviour
    - 6.1. Ideas for Promoting Positive Behaviour
    - 6.2. Examples of Rewards
7. Responding to Behaviours of Concern
    - 7.1. Minor Breaches of the Code of Behaviour
    - 7.2. Serious Breaches of the Code of Behaviour
    - 7.3. Gross Breaches of the Code of Behaviour
8. Pupils with Additional Needs
9. Suspension
    - 9.1. Procedures in respect of suspension
    - 9.2. Immediate suspension
    - 9.3. Appealing a suspension
10. Expulsion
    - 10.1. Procedures in respect of expulsion
11. Implementation and Review
12. Ratification and Communication
13. Appendices
    - 13.1. Appendix A - St. Declan's Code
    - 13.2. Appendix B - Restorative Practice Questions

# 1. Introduction

St. Declan's N.S. is a large, vertical, co-educational, Catholic primary school located in an urban area in Ashbourne, Co. Meath with an enrolment of approximately 650 pupils in 2023/4.

The school's mission is to cherish all pupils equally. We aim, with the involvement and cooperation of the entire school community, to assist each pupil to reach their full potential as individuals.

# 2. Rationale

All partners in St. Declan's N.S. recognise the importance of a Code of Behaviour in fostering a good learning environment and a pleasant atmosphere. This will result in a happier pupil, higher standards and a framework where pupils can derive maximum benefit from their years in our school. In St. Declan's N.S. we value achievement in its broadest sense, both academic and non-academic.

# 3. Aims

a. To help each pupil develop to his/her full potential.
b. To approach our Code of Behaviour in a positive frame of mind, by providing our pupils with a clear and consistent set of rules that will foster respect and courtesy in our school.
c. To promote positive behaviour and self-discipline recognizing the differences between pupils and the need to accommodate these differences.
d. To create an atmosphere of respect, tolerance and consideration of others.
e. To allow the school to function in an orderly way where pupils can make progress in all aspects of their development.
f. To ensure that the system of rules, rewards and consequences are implemented in a fair and consistent manner throughout the school.
g. To assist the parents and pupils in understanding the systems and procedures that form part of the Code and to seek their cooperation in the application of these procedures.

# 4. Standards of Behaviour

The standards of behaviour expect that all members of the school community will behave in ways that show respect for others. It is recognised that pupils are more likely to benefit from their education and to be happy in a structured, caring environment where high standards of behaviour are expected and adhered to.

### 4.1 Expectations of Pupils:

- Show respect for self and others
- Show kindness and a willingness to help others
- Show courtesy and good manners
- Show fairness
- Show readiness to use respectful ways of resolving difficulties and conflict
- Show forgiveness
- Show respect for school property and keep the school tidy and litter free
- Attend school regularly and punctually
- Do their best in class
- Take responsibility and pride in their work
- Keep the rules agreed for the classroom, yard and school
- Help create a safe, positive environment
- Be proud to be a pupil of St. Declan's and not damage its good name wherever you are

To help communicate expectations to pupils, the *St. Declan's Code* was introduced in 2022 (see appendix A). This will be clearly communicated to pupils and displayed in classrooms and around the school building.

### 4.2 Expectations of Parents/Guardians:

- Encourage a positive attitude to the school and expect your child to abide by the Code of Behaviour
- Ensure the punctuality and regular attendance of your child
- Provide a contact number where you can be reached in an emergency
- Always model the behaviour you expect from your child

- Be familiar with the various policies and codes of the school and the expectations for pupils
- Be interested in, support, praise and encourage your child's work in school; ensure that he/she has all the necessary materials, adheres to the dress code, has a healthy lunch, has his/her homework carefully completed and participates in school activities
- Exert firm but fair discipline in cases where your child's behaviour is having a negative impact on the behaviour of others
- Be available to meet your child's teacher – make an appointment so that the teacher is available to speak with you.
- To respect the school staff and to support them in their implementation of the school's policies.

### 4.3 Expectations of School Staff:

- Provide a safe and happy learning environment where pupils receive fairness and consistency
- Encourage and support pupils and affirm their abilities in an atmosphere of support and inclusion rather than criticism
- Show a willingness to listen to the viewpoint of pupils and parents
- Use respectful ways of resolving difficulties and conflict
- Explore restorative justice practices
- To allow a "fresh start" once an issue has been resolved.

# 5. School and Classroom Rules

School, classroom and yard rules translate standards into practical guidance about the behaviours expected of pupils, as set out in the previous section.

### 5.1 School Rules

1. Pupils wear the school uniform and school tracksuit on the appropriate days. If a child is not wearing the correct uniform on a given day, a note of explanation must be written to the class teacher.
2. Smart Watches/Fits bits are not permitted to be worn. If a pupil brings a mobile phone or other electronic device to school, it must be switched off and

kept in the school bag. If switched on, the device will be confiscated for 2 days to be collected by a parent/guardian from the school office.

3. Chewing gum is not allowed on school grounds.
4. Looped earrings and other facial jewellery must not be worn to school.
5. Children are not permitted to wear make-up to school (this includes face-make up, eye-shadow, eye liner, mascara, false eyelashes, artificial nails and fake tan).
6. Pupils are not permitted to leave the school premises. If arriving late or leaving early, they must be accompanied by an adult and a reason for the late arrival/early leaving must be provided and recorded on Aladdin.
7. Only school-related items may be brought to school i.e. no gadgets, games, dangerous items etc.
8. Cycling or scooting is not permitted on school grounds, unless under the supervision of a staff member. Bicycles/scooters must be dismounted at the school gate.
9. Furthermore electric scooters/electric bikes (e-scooters/e-bikes) are not permitted to be brought to school by children. If a child brings an e-scooter/e-bike to school, it will be confiscated and the parent will be contacted to collect the e-scooter/e-bike from the school directly.

### 5.2 Classroom Rules

Classroom rules will be developed through consultation with pupils. They will be displayed clearly in each classroom, kept to a minimum and stated positively. These rules will be communicated and referred to regularly.

Consequences will be applied according to the gravity of the incident in question, with due regard to age and emotional development.

Examples of Classroom rules:

- We listen to others and wait our turn to speak.
- We remain in our seats, unless instructed otherwise.
- We arrive at school on time, wearing a complete school uniform/tracksuit.
- We show respect for the property of the school and other pupils/staff.
- We complete all assigned work, including homework.

- We are truthful, obedient and respectful at all times.

**5.3 Yard Rules**

- We behave safely (Kind hands, feet + words!)
- We are respectful to staff and pupils
- We line up quickly and safely
- We only leave the yard with permission
- We help keep St. Declan's a bully-free zone

# 6. Promoting Positive Behaviour

Promoting positive behaviour is the main goal of the code. The staff will highlight positive aspects of pupil behaviour and work at every opportunity, either individually or on a whole-class basis.

Pupils have an inherent need for a safe and secure environment. Teachers model positive behaviour, by treating pupils and adults with respect and building up a positive relationship with pupils.

In general, pupils react well to routines and boundaries. Establishing and maintaining rules. In addition, it recognised that positive pupil-teacher relationships are a key factor in promoting positive behaviour.

**6.1 Ideas for promoting positive behaviour:**

- Words of praise or congratulations from the teacher and/or the Principal in class, in a larger group or over the school intercom
- Involving pupils in the preparation of classroom rules
- Careful lesson planning
- Good class routines that are clear and easy to follow and well-rehearsed
- Helping pupils to recognise and affirm good behaviour
- Exploring with pupils how they should treat each other
- Praise of pupil work and behaviour in class
- A favourable comment or note to parent
- Reward system for good behaviour - group or individual
- Pupil of the week/month award or certificate

- Extra school privileges or responsibilities
- Discussing positive behaviour at assemblies

These systems are more likely to motivate pupils when they are meaningful and the pupil understands what the reward is given for. Care is needed to ensure that rewards do not become the goal of learning, do not result in unhelpful competition, are not repeatedly awarded to the same pupils and do not seem unattainable to some pupils and as a result de-motivate them.

### 6.2 Examples of Rewards

Rewards for good behaviour may include homework pass, group rewards, extra yard time, stickers, ticking chart, book/copy with stamps, reward when a certain amount is achieved, lucky dip, Golden Time and Class Dojo points etc.

# 7. Responding to Behaviours of Concern

The Class Teacher will respond to routine incidents through classroom management strategies, thus minimising the need for other interventions.

In order to establish a common understanding and a consistent response, the Code of Behaviour classifies behaviours of concern into three levels based on the degree of severity. The code also specifies the strategies and consequences for responding to the behaviour of concern (please also refer to separate Behaviours of Concern policy)

### 7.1 Level 1: Minor Breaches of the Code of Behaviour

| Description of Behaviours | Strategies and Consequences for responding to this type of behaviour |
|---|---|
| ● Not listening in class and failure to follow instructions given by teacher and other adults working within the school<br>● Interruption of and disruption of work within the classroom<br>● Being discourteous to others | ● Non-verbal reminder<br>● Reasoning with the pupil<br>(We encourage the use of restorative questions in St. Declan's - see Appendix B)<br>● Verbal reminder including advice on how to improve |

| | |
|---|---|
| ● Not completing homework without good reason<br>● Not wearing the correct school uniform<br>● Wearing make-up to school (including face-makeup, eye-shadow, eye liner, mascara, false eyelashes, artificial nails and fake tan etc.).<br>● Littering inside and outside school<br>● Rough play on the yard<br>● Arriving late to school<br>● Leaving seat without permission during lunch break<br>● Distracting other pupils<br>● Disrespectful to teacher (eye rolling, muttering under breath, answering back)<br>● Other behaviours as may arise | ● Encouraging pupils to problem solve and/or discuss the incident or behaviour of concern<br>● Temporary separation from peers, friends or others (Time out) or supervised separation from peers at break times<br>● Temporary loss of privileges<br>● Name recorded in yard notebook<br>● Note for parents in journal or informal consultation with parents<br>● Record kept of repeated minor behaviour of concern<br>● Complete a behaviour reflection form |

## 7.2 Level 2: Serious Breaches of the Code of Behaviour

| Description of Behaviours | **Strategies and Consequences for responding to this type of behaviour** |
|---|---|
| ● Repeated incidences of minor breaches despite repeated reminders and warnings regarding future conduct<br>● Leaving classroom, yard, field or school grounds without permission during school hours<br>● Inappropriate use of I.C.T.<br>● Use of or possession of any offensive items by a pupil on school grounds<br>● Stealing<br>● Telling lies<br>● Damaging school property/the property of others<br>● Using unacceptable language<br>● Engaging in actions which put other pupils in danger e.g. fighting, spitting, kicking | ● As for Minor Breaches of the Code above, as appropriate<br>● Pupil is given a reminder about his/her behaviour and principal/deputy principal may be informed<br>● Parents of the pupils involved may be informed by a phone call by the class teacher of the behaviour and the steps that have been taken to solve it.<br>● Behaviour is recorded by the relevant teacher<br>● Where appropriate senior pupils write an account of what has occurred<br>● Confiscation of mobile phone, smart device or other offending articles |

| | |
|---|---|
| ● Constantly disruptive in class<br>● Bullying/Identity-based bullying<br>● Using electronic devices during school hours<br>● Breach of the school Acceptable Use Policy<br>● Cyber bullying<br>● Derogatory reference towards a person's race, gender, religion, physical condition, disability or ethnic origin. | ● Parents may receive notification from school and/or are requested to attend a meeting with teacher/principal<br>● Pupils who misbehave frequently and who have made insufficient effort to modify their behaviour may not be allowed to participate in school outings for their own safety and that of others |

## 7.3 Level 3: Gross Breaches of the Code of Behaviour

| **Description of Behaviours** | **Strategies and Consequences for responding to this type of behaviour** |
|---|---|
| ● Repeated incidences of minor and/or serious misbehaviour despite repeated reminders and warnings regarding future conduct<br>● Use of threatening language or behaviour towards teachers or others<br>● Acts of wilful violence towards pupils, teachers, ancillary staff or visitors<br>● Possession of or supply or use of alcohol, cigarettes/vapes, illegal drugs and/or other harmful substances<br>● Wilful or attempted wilful damage of school property or the property of teachers, ancillary staff, other pupils or visitors to school.<br>● Discriminatory or prejudicial activities or actions towards another person or group involving gender, religion, disability or ethnic origin | ● As for Minor and Serious Breaches of the Code above, as appropriate<br>● Pupil may be given a written reminder about his/her behaviour and principal/deputy principal may be informed<br>● Record of behaviour incident(s) is recorded by the relevant teacher/principal<br>● Supervised separation from peers at break times<br>● For gross breaches or repeated incidents of serious breaches suspension/expulsion may be seriously considered and used by the principal or Board of Management |

# 8. Pupils with Additional Needs

While all pupils in the school are subject to the school's Code of Behaviour, some pupils have special educational needs or other additional needs. Staff in St. Declan's have an appreciation and awareness of these complex and individual needs. The school will use appropriate interventions to support pupils who demonstrate behaviours of concern. The school's approach to intervention is based on a 3-tiered model as envisaged by National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) Continuum of Support.

**Level 1 Support for All**

Support at this level is led by the relevant Class Teacher.

**Level 2 Support for Some**

Some pupils may need the support of other staff such as a Special Education teacher or SNA to support their behaviour. This level of support may involve the drafting of a Behaviour Support plan.

**Level 3 Support for a Few**

A small minority of pupils may show particularly persistent and serious behaviours of concern. In addition to the support of school staff and parents, the advice and/or guidance of outside agencies may be requested/accessed. Our Special and Inclusive Education policy and Behaviours of Concern policy may be consulted.

# 9.Suspension

The Board of Management has the authority to suspend a pupil. The Board of Management delegates the authority to suspend for a maximum period of three days to the Principal. This delegation of authority is noted formally and in writing by the Board. The Principal is accountable to the Board of Management and will report all suspensions to the Board including the reasons for and the duration of the suspension.

If a period of suspension longer than three days is being proposed by the Principal, the matter should be referred to the Board of Management for consideration. If it is not possible to convene a meeting of the Board in a timely fashion, the Board of Management authorises the Principal, in consultation with and approval of the Chairperson of the Board, to impose a suspension of up to five days. 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 pupil, where the suspension would bring the total number of days for which the pupil has been suspended in the current school year to twenty days or more. Any such suspension is subject to appeal under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

Suspension should be a proportionate response to the behaviour of concern. The decision to suspend requires serious grounds such as that:

- The pupil's behaviour has had a serious detrimental effect on the education of other pupils
- The pupil's continued presence in the school at this time constitutes a threat to safety
- The pupil is responsible for serious damage to property

A single incident of serious misconduct may be grounds for suspension.

Where the purpose of a proposed suspension is clearly identified, and that purpose cannot be achieved in any other way, suspension can have value.

### 9.1 Procedures in respect of suspension

Where a preliminary assessment of the facts confirms serious inappropriate behaviour that could warrant suspension, the school will observe the following procedures:

- The pupil and their parents will be informed about the incident, that it will be investigated and that it may result in suspension.
- The pupil and their parents will be given an opportunity to respond before sanctions are imposed

If a pupil and their parents fail to attend a meeting, the Principal/Deputy Principal will inform them in writing advising them of the gravity of the matter, the importance of attending a rescheduled meeting and, failing that, the duty of the school authorities to make a decision to respond to the inappropriate behaviour.

Any decision to suspend will be given in writing to the parents by the Principal/Deputy Principal. The letter should confirm:

- The period of the suspension and the dates on which the suspension will begin and end
- The reasons for the suspension
- Any study programme to be followed
- The arrangements for returning to school, including any commitments to be entered into by the pupil
- The parent(s) and pupil(s) involved will be asked to reaffirm their commitment to the code of behaviour
- That the pupil will be given the opportunity to make a fresh start
- The provision for an appeal to the Board of Management
- The right to appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education (where the period of suspension will bring the total number of days suspended to twenty days or more in a school year)

A suspension may be removed if the Board of Management decides to remove the suspension for any reason.

### 9.2 Immediate Suspension

Where an immediate suspension is considered by the Principal to be warranted, a preliminary investigation will be conducted to establish the case for the imposition of the suspension. The formal investigation will immediately follow the imposition of the suspension. All of the conditions for suspension apply to immediate suspension.
In the case of an immediate suspension, parents will be notified, and arrangements will be made with them for the pupil to be collected. The school will have regard to its duty of care for the pupil. In no circumstances will a pupil be sent home from school without first notifying parents.

### 9.3 Appealing a Suspension

a) Appeal to Board of Management: The Board of Management will offer an opportunity to appeal a Principal's decision to suspend a pupil. In the case of decisions to suspend made by the Board of Management, an appeals process may be provided by the Patron.

b) Appeal to Secretary General of Department of Education: Where the total number of days for which the pupil has been suspended in the current school year reaches twenty days or more, the parents may appeal the suspension under section 29 of the Education Act 1998. At the time when parents are being formally notified of such a suspension, they will be told about their right to appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education under section 29 of the Education Act 1998, and they will be given information about how to appeal.

When any consequence, including suspension is completed, pupils should be given an opportunity to make a fresh start. The suspension will be officially recorded and the Principal/Deputy Principal is required to report suspensions to TUSLA in accordance to the Education Welfare Act 2000.

# 10. Expulsion

A pupil is expelled from a school when a Board of Management makes a decision to permanently exclude him or her from the school, having complied with the provisions of section 24 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000. Expulsion of a pupil is a very serious step, and one that will only be taken by the Board of Management in extreme cases of unacceptable behaviour.

A proposal to expel a pupil requires serious grounds such as:

- The pupil's behaviour is a persistent cause of significant disruption to the learning of others or to the teaching process.
- The pupil's continued presence in the school constitutes a real and significant threat to safety.
- The pupil is responsible for serious damage to property.

The grounds for expulsion may 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, where expulsion is considered, the Board of Management will have tried a series of other interventions, and believe they have exhausted all possibilities for changing the pupil's behaviour. There may be exceptional circumstances where the Board of Management forms the opinion that a pupil should be expelled for a first offence.

### 10.1 Procedures for Expulsion

Where a preliminary assessment of the facts confirms serious inappropriate behaviour that could warrant expulsion, the procedural steps (as outlined in Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools) will include:

- A detailed investigation carried out under the direction of the Principal/Deputy Principal
- A recommendation to the Board of Management by the Principal/Deputy Principal.
- Consideration by the Board of Management of the Principal's/Deputy Principal's recommendation; and the holding of a hearing.
- Board of Management deliberations and actions following the hearing.
- Consultations arranged by the Educational Welfare Officer.
- Confirmation of the decision to expel.

The Board of Management will review the use of 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 expulsion is used appropriately.

# 11. Implementation and Review

The Code of Behaviour will be implemented following ratification by the Board of Management and will be reviewed annually. The feedback of staff, parents and pupils will be considered and will form an important part of the review process.

# 12. Ratification and Communication

The Code of Behaviour was reviewed by the Board of Management and ratified on the 6th October 2026. It will be appropriately communicated to members of the school community and made available on our school's website. Hard copies are available on request.

Parents of all incoming pupils will be required to familiarise themselves with the Code of Behaviour. In addition, they must give their consent to the Code of Behaviour as a condition of enrolment.

**Signed and dated:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Geraldine Boyla | Cian Kearins |
| Ms. Geraldine Boylan | Mr. Cian Kearins |
| **Chairperson of the Board of Management** | **Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management** |
| Date: 6/10/2026 | Date: 6/10/2026 |

# St. Declan's Code

*We have high expectations for pupil behaviour which include:*

★ Be Respectful

★ Be Responsible

★ Be Safe

★ Be Honest

★ Be the Best you can be

★ **Being Respectful means….**
- using nice manners
- being kind and caring
- working quietly
- using appropriate language
- following teachers directions
- being helpful
- Listening
- waiting your turn to speak

★ **Being Responsible means….**
- taking care of property
- doing homework
- following class and school rules
- eating a healthy and nutritious lunch
- putting litter in the bin

★ **Being Safe means...**
- acting in a considerate, safe manner
- playing safely
- being careful not to be rough or harm others in any way

★ **Being Honest means….**
- telling the truth even when it's tough
- 'owning up' when you're in the wrong.
- Telling when you see someone being hurt deliberately

★ **Being the Best you can be means….**
- having a positive attitude
- always trying to do your best even when it's not your favourite thing to do.

## Appendix B - Restorative Practice Questions

1. What happened?
2. What were you thinking of at the time?
3. What have you thought about since it happened?
4. Who has been affected and in what way?
5. How could things have been done differently?
6. What rule did you break?
7. What do you think needs to happen next?