

# St. Mary's Secondary School, Baldoyle



## Suspension Policy

### 1. Definition

Suspension is defined as requiring the student to absent herself from the school for a specified, limited period of school days.

#### Authority to suspend

The Board of Management of St Mary's Secondary School has the authority to suspend. This authority is delegated to the Principal formally and in writing and to the Deputy Principal in his/her absence.

#### The grounds for suspension

Suspension of a student is a serious step and will only be taken in serious cases of unacceptable behaviour. It will be a proportionate response to the behaviour that is causing concern. Normally, the school will have taken steps to address the behaviour and to avoid suspension:

- Utilising the sanctions in the School Code of Behaviour.
- Making sure that the student understands the possible consequences of her behaviour, if it should persist.
- Meeting with parents/guardians and the student to try to find ways of helping the student to improve her misbehaviour.

The school will have reviewed the reason why these have not worked.

The decision to suspend a student requires grounds such as that:

- The student's behaviour is having a seriously detrimental effect on the teaching and learning of other students.
- The student's continued presence in the school constitutes a significant threat to health and safety.
- The student is responsible for damage to property.

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

### 2. Forms of Suspension

#### 2.1. Suspension as part of a Behaviour Management Plan

- To enable the school to set behavioural goals with the student and their parents

- To give school staff an opportunity to plan other interventions
- To impress on a student and their parents the seriousness of the behaviour

## **2.2. In-house Suspension**

- The Principal may consider in-house suspension from classes as an alternative to suspension from school in certain circumstances as part of a behavioural management plan.

## **2.3 Reduced Timetable**

- The principal may consider suspension from classes as an alternative to suspension from school in certain circumstances as part of a behavioural management plan.

## **2.4. Immediate Suspension**

The Principal may consider an immediate suspension to be necessary 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. The kinds of behaviour that might result in such a suspension include:

- A serious threat of violence against another student or member of staff
- Actual violence, physical or sexual assault
- Possession of a weapon
- Sexual assault
- Verbal abuse of a member of staff in certain circumstances
- Outright refusal to follow the instructions of the Principal/Deputy Principal
- Having on his/her person, to use or misuse, any inappropriate substances, mind altering substances deemed by the Board of Management to be inappropriate on school premises.

## **2.5 Substances deemed inappropriate include:**

- Cigarettes, whether for sale, supply or personal use
- Any product available to purchase from head shops or similar type shops
- Any illegal substances
- Solvents
- Alcohol

## **2.6. Suspension during a State examination**

This sanction will normally be approved by the Board of Management and may be used where there is:

- A threat to good order in the conduct of the examination
- A threat to the safety of other students and personnel
- A threat to the right of other students to do their examination in a calm atmosphere

The sanction will be a proportionate response to the behaviour. Suspension may be used as a sanction for a first offence if the student's behaviour presents a threat to the good order of the conduct of the examination. The principles and fair procedures governing suspensions will be applied.

## **2.7. Automatic suspension**

The Board of Management has decided as part of the school's policy on sanctions that the following behaviours may result in automatic suspension:

- Verbal abuse of a teacher in certain circumstances
- Outright refusal to follow the Code of Behaviour
- Outright refusal to follow rules regarding uniform
- Outright refusal to follow the instructions of the Principal/Deputy Principal

## **2.8. Rolling suspension**

A student may be suspended again shortly after they return to school following a suspension if:

- They engage in serious misbehaviour that warrants suspension.

- Fair procedures will be observed in full and
- The standard applied to judging the behaviour will be the same as the standard applied to the behaviour of any other student.

### **3. Determining the appropriateness of suspending a student**

A number of factors will be considered before deciding to suspend a student:

- The nature and seriousness of the behaviour
- The context of the behaviour
- The impact of the behaviour
- The interventions tried to date
- Whether suspension is a proportionate response
- The possible impact of suspension

### **4. Procedures in respect of a Possible Suspension**

- 4.1. **Inform the student and their parents of the alleged misbehaviour**, hear the student's and parents' viewpoint, and explain how the allegation has been investigated and that it could result in suspension.

Inform the parents/guardians by phone (if possible), and by letter of the following:

- The alleged misbehaviour
- How it is being investigated
- That it could result in suspension
- Invite the parents/guardians and their son/daughter into the school for a meeting.

- 4.2. **Meeting between Parents/Guardians, Student, Principal/Deputy Principal/Year Head**  
If parents/guardians and the student fail to attend the meeting, the school will phone (if possible) and write to them, advising them of the gravity of the matter and the importance of attending a rescheduled meeting, and failing that, the duty of the school authorities to respond to the negative behaviour. The school will record invitations made to parents and their response.

### **5. Procedures in relation to an immediate suspension**

- 5.1 Where an immediate suspension is considered by the Principal to be warranted for reasons of the safety of the student, other students, staff or others, a preliminary investigation will be conducted to establish the case for the imposition of suspension.
- 5.2 In the case of immediate suspension, parents will be notified, and arrangements will be made with them for the student to be collected.

### **6. The Period of Suspension**

- 6.1 A student will not be suspended for more than three days, except in exceptional circumstances where the Principal considers that a period of suspension longer than three days is needed in order to achieve a particular objective.
- 6.2 If a suspension longer than three days is being proposed by the Principal, the matter will normally be referred to the Board of Management for consideration and approval, giving the circumstances and the expected outcomes.
- 6.3 However, the Board of Management may wish to authorise the Principal, with the approval of the Chairperson of the Board, to impose a suspension of up to five days in circumstances where a meeting of the Board cannot be convened in a timely fashion, subject to the guidance concerning such suspensions.
- 6.4 The Board of Management normally places a ceiling of ten days on any one period of suspension imposed by it.
- 6.5 The Board will formally review any proposal to suspend a student, where suspension would bring the number of days for which the student 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.

## **7. Appeals**

7.1 The Board of Management offers an opportunity to appeal the Principal's decision to suspend a student. In the case of decisions to suspend made by the Board of Management, there is no appeals process provided by the Patron.

### **7.2 Section 29 Appeal**

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.

7.3 At the time when parents are being formally notified of such a suspension, they and the student will be told about their right to appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills under section 29 of the Education Act 1998 and will be given information about how to appeal.

## **8. Implementing the Suspension**

8.1 The Principal will notify the parents and the student in writing of the decision to suspend. The letter will confirm:

- The period of suspension and the dates on which the suspension will begin and end
- The reasons for the suspension
- Any study programme to be followed
- The arrangement 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
- The right to appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills (Education Act 1998, section 29).

### **8.2 Engaging with Students and Parents**

Where a decision to suspend has been made, it can maximise the impact and value of suspension if the Principal/Deputy Principal/Year Head or another staff member delegated by the Principal meets with the parents to emphasise their responsibility in helping the student to behave well when the student returns to school and to offer help and guidance in this.

Where parents do not agree to meet with the Principal, written notification will serve as notice to impose a suspension.

## **9. Grounds for Removing a Suspension**

A suspension may be removed if the Board of Management decides to remove the suspension for any reason or if the secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills directs that it be removed following an appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

## **10. After the Suspension Ends**

A period of suspension will end on the date given in the letter of notification to the parents about the suspension.

Although a record is kept of the behaviour and any sanction imposed, once the sanction has been completed, the school expects the same behaviour of this student as of all other students.

## **11. Records and Reports**

### **11.1. Records of investigation and decision –making**

Formal records will be kept of:

- The investigation (including notes of all interviews held)
- The decision making process
- The decision and rationale for the decision
- The duration of the suspension and any conditions attached to the suspension

**11.2. Report to the Board of Management**

The Principal will report all suspensions to the Board of Management, with the reasons and the duration of each suspension.

**11.3. Report to the NEWB**

The Principal is required to report suspensions in accordance with the NEWB reporting guidelines (Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, section 21(4)(a).

**12. Review of Use of Suspension**

The Board of Management will review the use of suspension in the school once a term 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 the use of suspension is appropriate and effective.

**Ratified: Board of Management ratified and reviewed 23 March 21**



Gerard Dwyer

**Chairperson:**



Edel Greene

**Dr. E. Greene – Principal / Secretary to Board of Management**

**Date:** 23/3/21