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Code Of Behaviour

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A. Introductory Statement

Saplins Special School for Children with Autism and Complex Needs, Mullingar (hereafter known as Saplings Special School), is a special school for children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. Saplings Special School has an obligation to the students and families to provide an educational setting that caters to all the needs that may arise. In addition to the core symptoms of autism, problem behaviour is common

among those with ASD. Given there is a high prevalence of problem behaviour among those with ASD, such behaviour can be observed to occur within the school environment. We do not view such behaviour of concern as unacceptable, but as a need that must be met. Our main goal at the school is to reduce behaviours of concern and inappropriate behaviours and to teach and replace with more socially appropriate behaviours. We do this through a transdisciplinary model of education, with various professionals working together to produce evidence and data-based educational and behavioural programs.

B. Rationale

This policy was developed by the staff, in consultation with representation from the Parents Association. It follows guidelines as set out in the National Educational Welfare Boards booklet “Developing a Code of Behaviour, guidelines for school”. (May 2008)

It was initially ratified by the Board of Management on July 20th, 2011. However, it was reviewed in January 2012 and ratified at our Board of Management meeting on Jan 31st, 2012. It is reviewed annually.

It is a requirement under the Education Welfare Act, 2000, Section 23 (1) which refers to the obligation on schools to prepare a code of behaviour in respect of the students registered at the school. It details in Section 23(2), that the Code of Behaviour shall specify:

- A. The standards of behaviour that shall be observed by each student attending the school.
- B. The measures that shall be taken when a student fails or refuses to observe those standards.
- C. The procedures to be followed before a student may be suspended or expelled from the school concerned.
- D. The grounds for removing a suspension imposed in relation to a student; and
- E. The procedures to be followed in relation to a child’s absence from school.

This policy has been developed in the context of Saplings Special School being a school which caters for children with autism and complex needs. A few of our children may exhibit problem behaviour from time to time. Each child will have a Behavioural Support Plan which directly links to the school’s code of behaviour policy. Under section 23 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, the Board of Management of each school must prepare and make available a code of behaviour for its students. The Act requires that the school code of behaviour is prepared in accordance with Guidelines issued by the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) 2008.

These Guidelines have been used to assist us in the preparation of the school’s Code of Behaviour, and we will continue to refer to these guidelines when required.

C. Relationship with School Ethos

Our Ethos is to support individuals with a diagnosis of autism and their families; assisting them to achieve their full potential and participate in their family and community life, through the provision of holistic evidence-based services, celebrating each individual’s dignity, uniqueness and right to an optimal education.

D. Aims

To ensure an educational environment that is guided by our ethos as stated above.

To allow the school to function in an orderly way where children are helped to progress in all aspects of their development.

To create an atmosphere of respect, tolerance and consideration for others.

To promote positive behaviour and self-regulation, recognising the differences between children and the need to accommodate these differences.

To ensure the safety and well-being of all members of the school community.

To assist Parents/Guardians and pupils in understanding the systems and procedures that form part of the code of behaviour and to seek their co-operation in the application of these procedures.

To ensure that the system of rules and rewards are individualized to meet the needs of each student.

To ensure that all Behaviour Support Plans (BSPs) and Student Support Plans (SSPs), emphasise the development of appropriate behaviours rather than the suppression or elimination of inappropriate ones.

To ensure that all school staff members know that reliance on punishment as the primary means of behaviour control is unacceptable.

To ensure that intervention (changes to BSP) in managing behaviour emphasises rewarding of appropriate

behaviours rather than the punishment of inappropriate ones.
To ensure that all changes to BSPs and SSPs are supported by data.

1. Guidelines for behaviour in the school

Student

Saplings Special School will employ various procedures and strategies to guide the behaviours of students in the school and endeavour to enable them to attain the following objectives.

Each pupil will learn to display appropriate behaviours, more often than inappropriate behaviours.

Each pupil will learn to tolerate and respect other children and staff in their environment and will learn to respect the property of the school and of the other students and staff.

Each pupil will learn to treat their own bodies with respect.

Each pupil will learn various coping strategies and self-regulation strategies (academic, social, self-care, daily living etc.) as a replacement to behaviours of concern.

Each pupil is expected to attend school on a regular basis and to be punctual.

Each pupil is expected to do his/her best both in school and for homework.

2. Whole school approach in promoting appropriate behaviour

2.1 Staff

The Principal, Behavioural Analyst and all staff shall be responsible for the implementation of the COB.

All staff of Saplings Special School shall frequently review each student's behaviours, both adaptive and maladaptive, with other staff member and the Behaviour Analyst.

The school Behaviour Analyst shall frequently conduct trainings on BSPs and the various procedures within them with staff, to ensure proper implementation.

All staff members of Saplings Special School shall be offered training in CPI; with primary focus on the prevention, de-escalation and verbal intervention procedures, and emphasis placed on physical intervention being a last resort after all attempts at verbal intervention have failed and the individual poses a threat to the welfare and safety of themselves or others.

All staff members of Saplings Special School shall request the assistance of others, if necessary.

The school's SPHE curriculum, and Junior Cycle Priority Learning Units of Personal Care and Living in a Community, in conjunction with each student's BSP is used to support the code of behaviour. It aims to help our children develop communication skills, appropriate ways of interacting and behaving, and conflict resolution skills. It also aims to foster self-esteem and to help children accommodate differences and develop citizenship. Parents/Guardians, teachers, Behaviour Analysts, and SNAs are all involved in developing goals for the SPHE section of each student's SSP along with all other curricular areas.

The school takes and retains data related to students on an ongoing basis and is able to provide data to Parents/Guardians/guardians at any point regarding their child's behaviours.

2.2 Promoting Positive Behaviour

Every effort will be made by all staff members to adopt a positive approach to pupils' behaviour in school. The school places greater emphasis on positivity and praise than on sanctions in the belief that this will promote good behaviour.

Examples of strategies for promoting positive behaviour

1. A quiet word or gesture to show approval
2. Praise in front of class or group
3. A visit to another class or the principal for commendation.
4. A mention to a parent – written or verbal
6. Delegating some special responsibility or privilege
7. Social contract rewards
8. Golden Time – e.g. children may choose an appropriate activity which they enjoy

2.3 Whole school approach in promoting positive behaviour

1. All staff share our school ethos which emphasises care, respect, and responsibility
2. Adults model the behaviour that is expected from pupils

3. Teachers use a classroom management plan to promote positive behaviour
4. Parents are welcome in our school and staff consult with them, where necessary and beneficial.
5. Problems are noticed and dealt with as soon as possible – early intervention
6. Staff treat pupils with respect and build up positive relationships with them
7. S.P.H.E. is used as a structure within which to address the teaching of social skills, self-esteem and respect and care for others

2.4 Board of Management

The board of management has ultimate responsibility for the implementation of this policy. The Board has particular responsibility for the ethos of the school, as well as having overall responsibility for learning within the school.

The board has recruited staff who are trained in their areas of expertise.

The BOM is responsible for reviewing the COB and deciding on what, if any changes, should be made to it, before they will ratify it.

The BOM will review the COB on an annual basis.

The BOM will support various staff trainings that the COB deems necessary (CPI etc.).

Responsibility for dealing with breaches of the COB ultimately lie with the BOM.

2.5 Parents/Guardians

The school recognises and encourages the importance of effective communication between itself and the Parents/Guardians. Their involvement and cooperation are vital to the success of the programme.

Parents/Guardians are encouraged to discuss any behavioural problems that may arise at home with the school Behaviour Analyst.

Parents/Guardians input, review, and approval are always required before implementing BSPs and SSPs.

Communication occurs daily via email between the Parents/Guardians and the class teacher.

Upon enrolment of their child, Parents/Guardians are given all policies and are required to sign a disclaimer stating that they have read, understood and agree with the policies, the school's ethos and the practices employed by the school to ensure safety of staff and pupils.

Parents/Guardians are expected to help the school implement the COB by:

Ensuring their children attend school regularly and punctually.

Following the school BSP, as best as possible, within the home.

Requesting help and support from the school Behaviour Analyst who will draft a suitable programme and following any home BSPs as best as possible.

Attending any trainings offered by the school Behaviour Analyst.

Encouraging their children to do their best with their work.

Attending meetings at the school if requested.

Helping their children with homework and ensuring that it is completed.

Ensuring their children have the necessary materials for school.

Informing the school immediately of medication their child may be on and subsequent changes to the dosage of that medication.

Providing medical personnel with data (provided by school) if a child's inappropriate behaviour is increasing as a result of or lack of prescribed medication.

Consenting to the BSP and the procedures within this.

2.6 Pupils

Each student will have a BSP which supports their SSP. Before implementation, this is signed off by the Behaviour Analyst, Principal and Parents/Guardians (see 2.4.1 below in the event of non-signing off of a BSP).

The BSP will emphasise the development of appropriate behaviours rather than the suppression or elimination of inappropriate ones. SSPs are yearly documents setting targets for the year in terms of academia and occupational, speech and behavioural therapies.

BSPs shall be developed, reviewed, and revised either directly by or under the direction of a Board-Certified Behaviour Analyst.

Changes to the BSPs and SSPs will be guided by the student's progress, or lack thereof, indicated by the

data taken on appropriate and inappropriate behaviours from the BSP and SSP.

The Saplings School cannot be held liable if a desired change in a student's behaviour is not observed at home or in any other setting other than school, if the student's caregivers are not actively running the Behaviour Support Plan and/or any other behavioural strategies/techniques that the school has deemed necessary for behaviour change.

The Behaviour Analyst at Saplings School requires feedback and data for all problem behaviours and other problems observed outside of school, in order to provide help and support. The Behaviour Analyst at Saplings School will also provide training and support for the appropriate running of Behaviour Support Plans and/or any other behavioural strategies and techniques, upon request.

It is important to know that, in order to observe the most significant changes in behaviour, the BSP, as well as any other specific procedures and techniques in place for your student at the school (e.g., specific toileting and eating/feeding plans, etc.), must be carried out consistently and appropriately in all settings, at all times.

2.7 Protocol for Non-Signing of BSP by a Parent/Guardian

If Parents/Guardians do not agree with and will not sign off on the BSP for their child, the following procedure will be implemented in an effort to resolve matters.

Behaviour Analyst or Principal, Parents/Guardians and any other relevant parties will meet to discuss the element of the BSP that is in question. Part of this discussion will be to ascertain if the parent fully understands the procedure/intervention that is in question. Reference should be made to the disclaimer sign-off on school mission, policies and procedures by the parent upon enrolment (see 2.3 above). The school will present the data and rationale behind their decision and try to agree a common ground with the Parents/Guardians.

If the Parents/Guardians are still unhappy to sign off on the BSP the school will conduct a risk assessment to determine whether it is safe for the student to continue to attend the school or whether he/she needs to be suspended in the interim. This assessment will consider the safety of the student themselves as well as the safety of other students and staff.

A further meeting will be held with the Parents/Guardians to discuss the results of the assessment and the school's subsequent decision. If the Principal deems it necessary at this point to impose a suspension the board will be notified.

The Board of Management will meet with the principal to review the causes for suspension and define the grounds upon which the suspension can be lifted. These will be communicated to the parent.

3.0 Positive strategies for managing behaviour in Saplings

3.1 Student Canteen/Lunch times/ Playground/Classroom.

Implementation of Individualised BSPs that identify the function and reason behind each behaviour of concern, and how to respond. Each BSP should also contain preventative strategies.

Training and monitoring on the implementation of BSP is ongoing.

Appropriate goals in each student's SSP, at the appropriate level for each student (guided from initial and on-going assessments of student strengths and deficits).

Appropriate group activities, at the appropriate level for each student.

A wide range of 1:1 and group activities.

Proper data collection of each SSP and BSP goal, to ensure that each goal can be moved on and/or changed frequently according to the student's progress or lack thereof.

Ensure appropriate ratios of adults: students in group situations, depending on needs of each student.

Individual token economies (either interval or response based), which specify behavioural expectations for students working 1:1 with SNA's and teachers.

Group token economies, which specify behavioural expectations within the group.

Individual reinforcement schedules (Differential Reinforcement of Alternative/Other/Incompatible/Low Rates of Behaviour), which specify behavioural expectations targeting one specific behaviour.

Reinforcement schedules and visual schedules are clearly displayed.

Various communication devices and functional communication training (PECS, sign language, spoken

language, etc.) to ensure that each student is continuously learning how to communicate their wants and needs more appropriately and effectively (e.g. teaching the students to appropriately ask for breaks, ask to be finished with something, ask for help, ask for attention, etc.)

Classroom management techniques that ensure a variety of activities and methodologies to sustain pupil interest and motivation.

General reinforcement for appropriate behaviours.

Non-contingent access to reinforcing items or activities

Social Stories

3.2 Home Behaviour Impacting Other Students:

As students get older, they may learn to appropriately use technology at home, such as mobile phones, iPhones, iPads, email, Facebook or other social networking, etc.

An isolated or one-time incident of intentional negative behaviour from 1 student to another student from a home environment does not fall within the definition of bullying and, so, is not addressed in our Anti-Bullying Policy but rather in this Code of Behaviour Policy. An example of an intentional negative behaviour from home may include an offensive or hurtful text message or other private messaging, a public offensive or hurtful statement on a social networking site, etc.

In the case of this happening once, the Parents/Guardians should inform the school, and the school should assess the situation and determine what teaching and prevention strategies should be put in place to prevent this behaviour from occurring again. Some examples include:

Social stories

Role-Play Scenarios

Implementation of an Individualized BSP that identifies the function and reason behind this intentional negative behaviour and how to respond. Each BSP should also contain preventative strategies.

Parent training in preventative strategies and response strategies.

Appropriate goals in the student's SSP, at the appropriate level for the student (guided from initial and on-going assessments of student strengths and deficits).

Appropriate group activities, at the appropriate level for the student.

Proper data collection of each SSP and BSP goal, to ensure that each goal can be moved on and/or changed frequently according to the student's progress or lack thereof.

Individual reinforcement schedule (Differential Reinforcement of alternative/other/incompatible/low rates of behaviour), which specifies behavioural expectations targeting the intentional behaviour.

3.3 School related activities

All BSPs should be run during school outings in as far as is possible. If a parent is accompanying a child on a school outing the ultimate responsibility lies with Behaviour Analyst, SNA and teacher to run the student's BSP. If possible, issues have been highlighted to the parent it will be agreed by both school and parent that the parent will assume responsibility of their child. If it is unsafe for the child to attend school outings a decision will be made beforehand for the child not to attend after a risk assessment has been carried out.

3.4 List of Incentives encouraging appropriate behaviour

Saplings Special School places an emphasis on positive reinforcement of appropriate behaviour to decrease inappropriate behaviours and increase appropriate behaviours.

Strategies / Incentives

Tangibles

Tokens

Stickers

Stamp

Certificates

Badges

Positive notes home

Positive notes to principal / Behaviour Analyst.

Badges

Bookmarks

Points

Edibles with prior parental consent

Social Rewards

Visit to the principal / Behaviour Analyst

Earn a whole class reward

Work on display

Affirmation at school assembly

Natural Rewards:

Praise

Smiles

Positive Attention

Encouragement

Positive Signal, e.g. thumbs up etc

Frequent marking and positive comments on students work.

The following support structures and strategies are used:

Visual Strategies: Structured Schedule

Written

Line Drawing

Photo

Object

Communication System Development

Verbal

Sign

PECS

Augmentative/Alternative Devices

Prompting/Fading

Verbal

Gestural

Positional

Hand over hand assistance

4. Rewards and Sanctions

4.1 Promotion of Appropriate Behaviour

The purpose of sanctions and other strategies is to promote appropriate behaviour and discourage inappropriate behaviours. Sanctions will be applied according to the gravity of the inappropriate behaviour, with due regard to emotional development and the children's individual needs and in line with their Individualised Behaviour Plan. No sanction will be implemented in the absence of first implementing more proactive and reinforcement-based strategies. Sanctions which are part of their Individualised Behaviour Plan may include:

Reasoning with pupil.

Verbal reprimand including advice on how to improve.

Temporary separation from peers within class and/or temporary removal to another class.

Loss of privileges.

Communication with Parents/Guardians.

Referral to Principal.

Principal communicating with Parents/Guardians.

Pupils will not be deprived of engagement in a curricular area, except on the grounds of health/safety.

Exclusion (suspension or expulsion) from school (in accordance with Rule 130 of the Rules for National School as amended by circular and Education Welfare Act 2000.

Most school staff have received training in personal safety techniques (CPI).

The school also has an onsite Behaviour Analyst.

Physical Intervention can only be used as a last resort emergency safety intervention. It will only be used if it meets the criteria of a crisis situation.

Successful behaviour management along with proactive strategies should ensure a safe and dignified environment where physical intervention is not the norm.

4.2 Rewards and acknowledgement of appropriate behaviour

BSPs along with SSPs, shall emphasise the development of appropriate behaviours rather than the suppression or elimination of inappropriate ones. Reliance on punishment as the primary means of behaviour control is unacceptable. Any intervention in managing behaviour should emphasise rewarding of appropriate behaviours rather than the punishment of inappropriate ones.

Some interventions which may be found in individual student's BSPs and within their SSPs to prevent behaviours of concern from occurring may include the following:

Implementation of Individualised BSPs that identify the function and reason behind each behaviour of concern, and how to respond. Each BSP should also contain preventative strategies.

Individual token economies (either interval or response based), which specify behavioural expectations for students working 1:1 with SNA's and teachers.

Group token economies, which specify behavioural expectations within the group.

Individual reinforcement schedules (Differential Reinforcement of alternative/other/incompatible/low rates of behaviour), which specify behavioural expectations targeting one specific behaviour.

Reinforcement schedules and visual schedules are clearly displayed.

General reinforcement for appropriate behaviours.

Non-contingent access to reinforcing items or activities

Social Stories

4.3 Strategies for responding to problem and inappropriate behaviour

A large part of supporting our students and families involves the reduction of problem behaviours. We have an obligation to our students, families, and staff members to make the focus on reducing inappropriate behaviours as a priority. We also have an obligation to implement behavioural interventions that are ethical and effective that start from the least restrictive alternative, and that are based on scientific research.

Everything we do within the school is data-based, and it is our obligation to make changes to behaviour interventions based on solid data that we take daily.

BSPs shall emphasise the development of appropriate behaviours rather than the suppression or reduction of inappropriate and/or problem behaviours.

All staff of Saplings Special School shall frequently review each student's behaviours with other staff members.

The school Behaviour Analyst shall conduct training on the implementation of BSPs with all staff. The training will include role play, video modelling and meetings.

All staff members of Saplings Special School shall be trained in CPI.

All staff members of Saplings Special School shall request the assistance of others, if needed, when students exhibit severe problematic behaviour.

4.4 Guidelines for Managing Behaviours of Concern

This Code of Behaviour has been put in place to fully achieve these obligations and priorities, and to keep true to our ethos as above. More specifically, these general guidelines below have been written and put in place to help in this endeavour.

General Guidelines:

Our first strategy is to use preventative methods as outlined in our CPI training. These include the promotion of positive feelings, productive behaviours, rational thinking and relaxed physiology.

If the above strategies are not successful, we progress onto de-escalation mode. Whereby we manage non-continuous behaviours that are disruptive, challenging or self-injurious.

4.5 Intense Crisis Behaviours

When Saplings staff can predict that imminent break down will occur staff will prompt the student to the quiet room or the nearest open safe space. Use of this room/space will be dependent on our capacity to de-escalate the crisis and how we can best contain the situation. Naturally all environmental manipulations to contain the situation will be made first. This is not to be seen as a behavioural intervention, but as a safety measure.

What the room looks like:

The quiet room is used to provide rest, relaxation and reduce tension for those pupils who are stressed or agitated.

When can our students use this room?

This room can be used throughout the day for students.

However, if a student is in a crisis, they will get precedence over others in its use.

The quiet room can be used in any situation where it's determined to be the safest space at that moment. If there is a likelihood that students or staff will be injured or if there is a likelihood that furniture will be destroyed, the student will be prompted from their classroom to the quiet room.

The staff will use their best judgement if a student remains off-task and exhibiting intense self-injury while in the quiet room. If an intervention by staff is not safe, as injury or imminent breakdown will/may occur staff will not intervene however, at this point every opportunity to maintain safety and student well-being will be taken until the period of post crisis occurs.

After a crisis

Once the individual is back on task if appropriate, we begin a reintegration of the individual into existing teaching systems, we may also de-brief with the student and other staff.

Prohibited

The use of mechanical restraints, chemical restraints, or positive punishment (which is defined as the presentation of aversive stimuli, such as taste, smell, noise, touch) procedures are prohibited.

4.6 Involving Parents/Guardians in Management of a Behaviour of Concern

Parents/Guardians will be alerted to serious behaviours of concern immediately through verbal or written communication from the class teacher, Principal and/or Behaviour Analyst.

Parent approval and signature is required for all BSPs in which behaviours of concern are targeted for reduction. In the event of non-signing of BSP the school will commence the procedure as detailed in section 2.4.1 of this document.

Parents/Guardians are invited in on a termly, or as needed, basis to meet with the school Behaviour Analyst to discuss behavioural progress or lack thereof and to discuss any behavioural problems seen at home.

Parents/Guardians will be kept informed of any changes made to their child's BSP at school.

Parents/Guardians will be consulted if part of the school BSP implementation requires home support.

Any intentional negative behaviour, as indicated above, that occurs at home should be reported to the school immediately.

4.7 Managing challenging Behaviour in public.

If one of our students is showing any pre-crisis behaviour, or there are any other biological factors that may affect their behaviour on a given day, the community outing will not go ahead for that student.

4.8 Reduced School Days

Reduced school days are defined as:

A reduced day in school where, by arrangement with the school authorities, a student arrives to school after the usual starting time or leaves before the end of the school day, and/or:

A reduced week where, by arrangement with the school authorities, a student may not attend the full five days each week.

Reduced school days are not used as a sanction, offered as an alternative to a sanction, or used as a behavioural management tool. Reduced school days will only ever be considered in very specific circumstances such as, supporting a student to return to school after a period of absence, or as part of a transition or reintegration intervention, based on the needs of individual students or due to a medical or mental health-related condition or due to other exceptional circumstances.

Saplings Special School will have clear evidence-based reasons for considering a reduced school day as a relevant and appropriate intervention with the best interests of the student at the core of the decision.

All relevant parties would be notified of a student being placed on a reduced day (N.C.S.E, TUSLA) as well as being given written consent from the student's parents/Guardians to place the student on a reduced school day.

A plan for the reduced school day intervention which will specify the following: start, end and review dates; any educational supports or interventions to be provided for the student during the period of the reduced school day; the actions required to support the student's return to school and reintegration to a full-time school day.

The school's reduced school day plan will outline a criterion for the student to return to full school day attendance. This will be based on progression criterion being met by the student.

Saplings Special School will employ a graduated regime of school attendance which increases steadily and incrementally towards full attendance, but this will be dependent on the student meeting his Criteria to progress in school time duration.

Saplings Special School will also employ a graduated regime of steadily and incrementally decreasing school attendance if the student is continuously exhibiting behaviours of concern to go against the criterion for the student to return to full school days.

If a student does not meet their criteria for a return to a full school day, a review will take place with Saplings senior school staff, and a new plan will be introduced with both the N.C.S.E and TUSLA being notified. The new plan will be monitored by Saplings, and the student will progress through the plan according to the criteria outlined within the time frame but dependent of achieving the criteria for their day to increase.

4.9 Placement Review

Occasionally, concerns regarding the suitability of a child continued attendance at the school may arise. In such circumstances, a review of the school's ability to continue to meet the child's needs, safety, and the safety of others may be necessary. Any such review will be undertaken by a committee appointed by the Board of Management, in conjunction with the Principal, Behaviour Analyst and other relevant staff members. Parents/guardians should be kept informed of any concerns that might arise in relation to their child's continued attendance at the school at the earliest opportunity. Parents/guardians will also be given an opportunity to engage in the discussion surrounding the placement and concerns that arise from the case itself. In the event that it is determined that the child is not suitably placed in the school, having regard for the realistic service options available at the time, the BOM may request a multi-disciplinary team assessment be carried out to determine the best options for the specific child.

We will also be reviewing a child's needs academically and socially when they have met all their needs in this setting and need to transition into a more 'mainstream' school setting. A review will be undertaken by a committee appointed by the principal, in conjunction with the Behaviour Analyst and other relevant staff members. The Board of management will be kept updated on this. Parents/Guardians will be given the opportunity to engage in the discussion surrounding the transition to another setting. The school will engage with the transition process with the other school with all the necessary documentation and support to best support the students transition to the new school setting.

5. Suspension / Expulsion

Schools are required, under section 23(2) of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, to include their procedures for suspension and expulsion in their code of behaviour. Saplings Special School, in drafting their suspension and expulsion policy referred to Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools, NEWB, 2008(Ch. 10 Suspensions and expulsions: legal and procedural requirements, Ch. 11 Suspension, Ch. 12 Expulsion). The entitlement to education is protected in a range of constitutional and legal provisions and in human rights Conventions. These legal protections for the individual student's right to education mean that decisions to suspend or expel a student are open to appeal and may be subject to judicial review by the High Court (Section 29 of the Education Act 1998)

Saplings Special School has a successful record of education of its students.

This is attributable to:

Appropriate programmes and methodologies used in school. BSPs and SSPs are developed for the students and progress monitored carefully

The expertise and dedication of the staff.

The close involvement of the Parents/Guardians and outside agencies with the school; in the implementation of the programmes and the management/ modification of behaviour problems

The quality of communication with the Parents/Guardians on a very frequent basis, in particular, how they are promptly advised of any problems

However, despite these strategies, serious incidents may occur which may result in suspension and expulsion. The Board has a duty of care to students and staff to provide a safe working environment.

5.1 Suspension

The Board of Management has the authority to suspend a student.

The Board of Saplings has delegated this function to the principal, and this delegation was done formally and in writing when the code of behaviour was adopted.

The decision to suspend a student requires serious grounds.

- a. possession of any dangerous or illegal substances, such as carrying an item which could be construed as a weapon or an actual weapon (hammer, knife, gun etc.) and possession or handling of illegal drugs.
- b. If there is a health and safety risk to the student or other students and staff because of a parent/guardian's refusal to sign off on an element within the BSP/IBP. (See section 2.4.1 Protocol for Non signing of BSP By a Parent/Guardian.
- c. Parents/Guardians continually refusing to administer psychotropic medication or seizure medication prescribed to their child resulting in the endangerment of staff and/or students (note: that Saplings enrolment policy requires Parents/Guardians to inform the school when their child is on medication and thereafter whenever there are changes to dosage).
- d. If the behaviour of a particular student is continually having a negative effect on the education of others in their class, the school will instigate a notification to home, and after three consecutive incidents over a period of three weeks or one serious incident the student may be suspended. After all resources and expertise in the school have been exhausted, and the student continues to or has had a seriously detrimental effect on the education or well-being of other students. If the student's continued presence in the school at this time constitutes a threat to his/her/other's safety or the student is responsible for continuous and consistent serious damage to property.
- e. If a student uses a tangible object/body part with force towards another student or staff member which causes severe injury, and whereby it is considered best in the interest of all students the student will be suspended for a period agreed by the Board of Management (1-10 days).

- f. The student sexually assaults another student or staff member. For these purposes sexual assault is defined as ‘an act of physical, psychological and emotional violation, in the form of a sexual act, which is inflicted on someone without consent’.

Please note that after a serious incident in school whereby there has been significant damage to property or staff injuries the student may be asked to remain at home the following day or for up to three days to allow staff to de-brief, recover and to ensure the classroom environment is ready when he/she returns. The student may be asked to remain at home beyond the three days if the classroom environment is not yet modified and parents will be informed of the projected timeframe for modifications. *This is not deemed to be a suspension, more a regrouping.

Implementing the Suspension

The principal will inform the Parents/Guardians and the student in writing of the decision to suspend.

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

any study programme to be followed

The arrangements for returning to school, including any commitments to be entered into by the student and the Parents/Guardians (for example, Parents/Guardians might be asked to reaffirm their commitment to the code of behaviour)

The provision for an appeal to the Board of Management

The right to appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science (*Education Act, 1998*, section 29).

A student should not be suspended for more than three days, except in exceptional circumstances, where the principal considers that it is warranted to achieve a particular objective. Where a suspension longer than three days is being proposed by the principal, the matter should be referred to the board. A Board of Management may wish to authorize 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. The board should normally place a ceiling of 10 days on any one period of suspension imposed by it. Pupils should not be suspended for an indefinite period.

When the suspension ends, a plan should be made to reintegrate the student into the class, and pupils should be given the opportunity and support for a fresh start.

However, it is emphasized that suspension and expulsion is a last resort measure, to be used in extreme situations where all other measures have failed and there is a serious risk to other students or staff.

5.2 Expulsion

The board of management of Saplings Special School has the authority to expel a student once fair procedures detailed below have been followed. As a matter of best practice, this authority is not delegated.

Expulsion should be invoked only in the following circumstances following a significant incident:

- a. Following three suspensions and the student meets the criteria for fourth suspension.
And or if
- b. The student presents themselves to the school with illegal weapons and threatens to or attempts to use them on staff or other students e.g. guns, hammer, bombs etc.
- c. The student presents themselves to school in possession of illegal substances such as drugs and ingests them on the school premises or in the care of school staff during school hours or travelling to/from school also while on an official school outing or gives them to other students on the school premises.
- d. Agreement to sign off on a BSP/IBP cannot be reached and the school assesses that the presence of the student in the school, without being able to implement the procedure/intervention in question, constitutes a serious risk to the safety of the student themselves, staff or other students.

- e. Following a significant incident whereby behaviour continues to have a negative effect on the education of others in their class having exhausted all avenues and resources. After all resources and expertise in the school have been exhausted, and the student continues to or has had a seriously detrimental effect on the education or well-being of other students. If the student's continued presence in the school at this time constitutes a threat to his/her/other's safety or the student is responsible for continuous and consistent serious damage to property.

Decisions to expel should follow fair procedures including:

1. A detailed investigation carried out under the direction of the principal.
2. A recommendation to the board of management by the principal.
3. Consideration by the Board of Management of the Principal's recommendation; and the holding of a hearing.
4. Board of Management deliberations and actions following the hearing, including informing the Education Welfare Board of its opinion. (the student cannot be expelled before the passage of 20 days from the date that Tusla receives this written notification)
5. Consultations arranged by the Educational Welfare Officer.
6. Confirmation of the decision to expel.

5.3 Appeals

Under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998, Parents/Guardians (or pupils who have reached the age of 18) are entitled to appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills against some decisions of the Board of Management, including (1) permanent exclusion from a school and (2) suspension for a period which would bring the cumulative period of suspension to 20 school days or longer in any one school year.

6. Keeping records

Data on all SSP and BSP goals for each student is taken throughout the day and plotted graphically. This data is analysed daily, weekly, and bi-weekly by the SNA(s), teacher(s), and Behaviour Analyst(s). Incident reports are filled out for any harm done to staff members or students or any disruptions to other students teaching and learning. These reports are reviewed by the class teacher and, if needed, by the principal and/or Behaviour Analyst.

Please see Data Protection Policy for more details.

7. Procedures for notification of pupil absences from school

Refer to the school's policy on student attendance.

The school attempts to implement several strategies to encourage school attendance

Creating a stimulating and attractive school environment

Pairing the school and staff members with reinforcement for the students.

Consistently running each student's BSP, with an emphasis on reinforcing appropriate behaviour.

Having the appropriate token economy and reinforcement schedules in each student's BSP, that is data-based, to allow for breaks from work, as needed, and to prevent challenging behaviours.

Having fun and stimulating data-based goals within each student's SSP that are at the correct level for each student, so as not to create boredom or frustration.

Moving SSP goals on or changing SSP goals very frequently, depending on the data collected, so as not to create boredom or frustration.

Making Parents/Guardians aware of the terms of the Education Welfare Act and its implications.

When children are absent Parents/Guardians must contact the school via phone or email to let them know of the absence.

The parent must also send in a note as to the child's absence and this is to be kept on file by the class teacher. The school uses the standard forms to report on pupil absences, and an accumulative role list is submitted to TUSLA.

8. Reference to other Policies

List of other school policies that have a bearing on the code of behaviour:

- SPHE plan

- Anti-bullying
- Administration of Medication Policy
- Substance Use /Misuse
- Admissions Policy
- Enrolment
- Data Protection
- Home / School links
- Health & Safety
- Special Educational Needs
- Positive Handling

Ratification date:

Signature:

Chairperson

Joe Sullivan

Date:

30 Sept 2015

Principal:

Stephen Buckley

Date:

30-9-25

Review Annually