

St. Columba's College Stranorlar



Code of Behaviour

September 2025

This Code of Behaviour Policy should be read in conjunction with the Acceptable Use, Substance Abuse and Anti-Bullying Policy.

St. Columba's College Mission Statement

St. Columba's College is a Mercy Catholic Voluntary Secondary School within CEIST and is committed to 'The pursuit of excellence in a caring environment'.

Code of Behaviour Policy

This policy was drawn up in consultation with all the school partners, including Board of Management, staff, parents and students and relates to all school activities both during and outside of normal school hours. Students are expected to observe the Code of Behaviour at all times while on school property, travelling to or from school and while participating in any school related activity. The Code of Behaviour stems from the mission statement of the Mercy Order, which highlights the importance of striving to reach your potential in a setting in which everyone feels secure; 'The pursuit of excellence in a caring environment.'

The aims of our Code of Behaviour are:

- to maintain a safe learning environment for students, encouraging mutual respect among all members of the school community.
- to recognise and reward the achievements and potential of each individual: spiritual, and physical as well as academic.
- to allow for the effective day to day running of the school and meet demands of current legislation.
- to acknowledge that everyone has a shared responsibility in the growth of the school community.
- to promote good behaviour and self-discipline, allowing each student to benefit from his/her education in an atmosphere that encourages learning.
- to outline the strategies used to respond to behaviour that falls short of expectations. The aim of any sanction is to bring about a change in behaviour.

Regular attendance

Students are expected to attend school as per the school calendar and be present for all classes: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday from 09.05-16:05 and Wednesday 09.05 – 13.25.

Assemblies are used as an opportunity to acknowledge achievements and to foster a sense of community. Each year group should attend their assembly once a week at 09.00.

1st Year, 2nd Year and 3rd Year students should attend tutor time at 09.00.

Attendance at school is essential for learning and personal development, enhances each student's ability to achieve his/her full academic potential and to benefit from all school activities and support initiatives.

If a student is absent, a note of explanation from the parent/guardian is required on the student's return to school in accordance with the Education Act 1998.

A teacher's permission is required for any absence from class.

Students must register daily attendance using the 'Anseo' swipe card system before school starts at 09.05 and before the end of lunch at 14.05. Each new student is issued with a swipe card. There is a cost of €10 per new card per student. Current students should use their existing cards. **New students will be advised in September regarding payment for and issue of the cards.**

Failure to swipe in impedes record-keeping and health and safety procedures. Students who repeatedly fail to swipe in on three occasions will be placed on lunchtime detention with the Year Head. Failure to attend lunchtime detention will result in the student being placed on Wednesday evening detention. Failure to attend Wednesday Detention may result in suspension.

Any student arriving after 9.05 a.m. must report to a Deputy Principal's office before going to class.

Parents and students are reminded that the record of attendance is generated from the swipe card system. Students are required to swipe in to help ensure that their attendance record is accurate. The school is obliged to record a reason for every absence. Section 18 of the Education Welfare Act 2000, states:

*"where a child is absent from the school...during part of a school day, or for a school day or more than a school day, **the parent of such child, shall in accordance with procedures specified in the Code of Behaviour...notify the Principal of the school of the reasons for the child's absence.**"*

General Conduct

Respect

Every person deserves respect. It is expected that students treat fellow students, staff and visitors with respect. Students are expected to take direction and instruction from all staff members and from those in a position of leadership, while at school, outside school, while in uniform and during school related activities, including work experience, tours, trips and visits.

The school upholds the Equal Status Act, promoting equality of opportunity for all and prohibiting discrimination. Students are encouraged to recognise the dignity of every human being and the right to an inclusive learning environment.

Appropriate and respectful behaviour should be displayed during announcements and assemblies.

Respect for school property is expected at all times. Everyone in the school is responsible for the care of the school premises. Graffiti or any other defacement of the school premises will not be tolerated. Damage to property must be made good by the student responsible.

Deliberate misuse of the fire alarm system is strictly forbidden.

At St Columba's, we strive to create the best environment for learning and for the growth and development of each student. As a caring school community, we hold all cruel and abusive behaviour as unacceptable and in contradiction with the ethos of the school.

Bullying is the ultimate breach of respect.

Bullying is repeated aggression; verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against others and has no place in this school. Any student who feels that he/she or any other student is being bullied in any way should speak to their class teacher or any member of staff.

Bullying behaviour may cause personal psychological harm and damage to the educational process. St Columba's is a place where everyone should feel safe. Bullying of any form will not be tolerated. A student who bullies another student will be subject to sanction/suspension. **Please refer to the Anti-Bullying Policy.**

Bullying is not acceptable.

We don't tolerate it.

You shouldn't endure it.

Report it!

Punctuality

Students are expected to be punctual for school and for classes. In addition to being essential for the efficient running of the school, learning to be punctual is an essential life-skill and is expected in the workplace.

Lockers should only be accessed before school, during break, at lunch-time and after school. Adhering to these times should assist students in arriving punctually for class.

Late-coming is inconvenient for all members of the school community and disrupts learning. Late slips will be issued to students, who arrive late for class. A letter will be sent home to parents if four late notes have been accumulated. Two additional late notes will result in Wednesday afternoon detention. Failure to attend Wednesday detention may lead to suspension.

Any student arriving after 9.05 a.m. must report to the Deputy Principal's office before going to class.

Work Habits

It is essential that students be adequately prepared for each class: having the correct course material, textbook and having any assigned homework completed prior to the class. Students should ensure all books are kept in good condition, especially books from the Book Rental Scheme, which are to be used in time by other students.

Academic honesty is central to the work ethic of the school. Students are expected to submit work which is their own composition.

Homework

Learning to complete homework tasks satisfactorily is an extremely important part of school life. It allows the class as a whole to make progress. It maximises personal academic potential and is a vital element of personal development. In future educational and work settings, learning to complete projects and adhere to deadlines is essential.

Students are expected to complete all homework (written, aural, oral, or practical) on time and to the best of their ability.

If a student cannot meet homework deadlines due to exceptional circumstances, then a note from home should be brought in to the subject teacher. An extension of the deadline for submission of the homework may be granted after consultation with the subject teacher.

Students absent from class due to extra-curricular activities or an appointment must find out what homework was given in his/her absence and complete this work.

If a student does not submit homework three times for a class, it will result in detention.

School Journal

Each student must have a school journal from the beginning of the school year. It is a means of day-to-day communication between the school and home and is an essential part of the implementation of our Code of Behaviour.

The school journal should be treated with respect and should be available for inspection every day.

Each student must have it with him/her on their desk in each class and may use it to record school-related business only such as timetable and subject teachers, homework given: written, aural, oral or practical and due date, any noteworthy school events.

The journal is needed to have permission signed to go to the toilet or attend the infirmary.

Parents should use the relevant pages of the journal to notify the school about unavoidable appointments, to explain absences or lateness. Parents may also use the parent-teacher communication pages to send a brief message to a teacher and **should check the journal on a daily basis**, signing any notes from teachers to confirm that they have seen them.

Teachers may use the journal to send a brief message to a parent/guardian, or to record a positive comment. Teachers may also put a note to parents in the journal as a form of sanction when an infringement of the Code of Behaviour occurs.

Notes and comments by parents or teachers in the journal must not be interfered with or altered in any way by a student.

Lost journals or those containing non-school-related/personal messages must be replaced by the student.

Use of Technology

Students are expected to behave with integrity when working with technological devices in the school. Use of school technology is intended for training and research purposes only and students are prohibited from using school technology for personal recreational use or from tampering with computer software in any way. Use of information technology in bullying or defaming any member of the school community will incur sanctions, as will any misuse of technology that brings the school into disrepute. Students must comply fully with the school's Acceptable Use Policy.

Absences

Absence from school should be for genuine reasons only. Parents are strongly urged, insofar as possible, to make routine medical and dental appointments for their son/daughter outside school hours.

If you wish your son/daughter to leave school early for an appointment etc. they must present a note in the morning to a Deputy Principal. Otherwise, parents must collect the student in person and sign a release form. This procedure will be implemented very strictly in the interests of health & safety. It is not possible to release students at short notice as student's names cannot be called out over the intercom during class time.

The student will be expected to return to school as soon as possible after an appointment. Notes received after a student has left school without permission will not be accepted. Students leaving school without advance permission will be deemed to be mitching and will be subject to sanction.

In the event of a student becoming ill at lunchtime, and not returning to school, once again, parents should contact the Deputy Principal as soon as possible.

To explain absenteeism for a day or days, a written explanation should be given to the Year Head giving a reason for the student's absence on return to school.

All notes must have the name of the student, the class, date and telephone number and signature of the parent/guardian.

If a student becomes ill during the school day, he/she should inform the Principal or Deputy Principal who will make contact with the parent/guardian to make any necessary arrangements.

Part-time work, study for tests, term-time holidays, attendance at concerts/ graduation dances, etc. are not acceptable reasons for absence.

The Education (Welfare) Act 2000 stipulates that the name of a student, who is absent in aggregate for 20 days or more during the school year or whose pattern of attendance is irregular, should be referred to Tusla Education Support Service. It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that their son/daughter attends school regularly.

A student may not absent himself/herself from class without the consent of the teacher of that class. The student should request this permission in person. Any student leaving class for any reason must have their journal signed by the teacher and countersigned by the Deputy Principal/ Principal. Students who absent themselves without permission from school for a day, part of a day or even for one class, are deemed to be mitching and will be subject to the sanctions of the school.

Students may leave the school grounds for lunchtime but must be back in the college by 2pm to swipe in, go to their locker and make their way to class. Students are only permitted to leave the main school campus at the morning break to make their way to classrooms in St. Mary's NS (temporary accommodation). Students are not allowed to leave the college grounds for any other reason without prior permission.

Parents will be contacted by the Year Head in the first instance if there are any concerns about attendance or punctuality.

Health and Safety

It is essential that students take very seriously their responsibility for their own safety and for the safety of others. Students must not behave in any way which results in discomfort or upset for those around them and basic concern for the wellbeing of others should be shown at all times.

No hot take-away food or "to-go" drinks are allowed in school buildings.

Students must eat their lunches in the school canteen.

No eating or drinking is permitted in the toilets, on the stairs or any specialist area such as labs, practical rooms, computer suites etc.

Students may not have food or drinks in class, except a small bottle of water.

School books and equipment, when not in use, must be kept in school bags or in the student's locker and not piled on/under desks or on top of lockers.

Chewing-gum causes considerable damage to clothing, furniture and floor surfaces, especially carpeted areas and is not allowed in school.

Parents should not bring cars into the school grounds in the morning, at lunchtime or at 4.05p.m. as this adds to traffic congestion and increases the risk of an accident occurring.

For health and safety reasons, students are not allowed to park their cars, motorbikes or scooters, tractors or any other type of vehicle in the school car park due to the limited car parking spaces and to risk of an accident occurring.

Students involved in horseplay, boisterous behaviour and activities likely to cause injuries or accidents will be subject to sanction.

Fighting is strictly prohibited during the school day or on the journey to or from school. It places the safety of students at risk and impacts negatively on the reputation of both students and the college. Fighting will result in a suspension of up to three days at the discretion of the Principal. Serious incidents of violent conduct may be referred to the Board of Management for consideration.

Students must not run on the stairs or corridors.

Students must comply fully with safety procedures and instructions in subjects, which have specific safety requirements.

No items should be placed on, under, behind or near a radiator.

No items should be placed on top of the locker units as this is a safety hazard. Any materials left on top of lockers for more than five days may be removed.

Doorways and passageways must be kept clear of all obstacles.

Fire alarm

Strict compliance with the following emergency procedures is required when the fire alarm sounds:

Students must leave their classroom immediately through the designated exit and walk in an orderly manner to their assembly point on the school grounds. They must bring no possessions with them.

A strict silence must be observed from the moment they leave the classroom until they return to their classroom.

They must listen attentively for all instructions and comply with them immediately.

Students must remain with their class teacher/ tutor at their designated assembly point.

Students may not remain in classrooms once school ends unless under the direct supervision of a teacher. If they need to wait in school, they must immediately report to the office.

Students must never interfere with the fire-alarm system, with fire extinguishers or any other safety or security equipment. Students interfering with such will be suspended.

Smoking, Alcohol and Banned Substances

Smoking, vaping, possession of/ use of alcohol or any illegal and/or dangerous substance are prohibited on the school premises, when students are involved in school related activities or while wearing the school uniform. Alcohol intake and abuse of drugs is detrimental to health and to academic success. Use of, possession of and trafficking in illicit drugs is prohibited by law.

In the interests of student safety and wellbeing, the college reserves the right to investigate thoroughly suspicions of possession of, and/or use of substances (including alcohol and/or other drugs), in school or at school events/outings. A student found to be in possession of, and/or under the influence of any such substances will be subject to immediate suspension. For a very serious breach of the Code of Behaviour regarding the possession, sale or consumption of an illicit drug in the college, the matter may be referred to the Board of Management to consider sanctions up to and including expulsion.

No student may give any form of medication to another student. (A student who needs to take any form of medication in school or while on any school-related activity or who develops an allergy to any substance must inform the school authorities of this). **Please refer to our policy on the Administration of Medicines.**

No spray-on deodorants or aerosols may be brought into school or used by students in school or on any school activity.

Students may not bring into school any item which may cause injury or damage.
Please refer to the St Columba's College Substance Abuse Policy

Uniform and Appearance

The school uniform helps promote a sense of belonging to the school community and is a visual symbol of St Columba's College. It is important that students maintain a high standard of personal appearance when wearing the school uniform. Students are encouraged to take pride in their school, its traditions and values, and should be conscious that when wearing the school uniform, they are representatives of the school and their behaviour should reflect this. Students are expected to wear their uniform to and from school.

The St Columba's uniform consists of a grey crested jumper, black trousers or maroon skirt to the knee, a grey shirt / blouse and black ankle or knee-high socks/ tights. For health and safety reasons, shoes must be plain black and low-heeled. Students are not permitted to wear clogs, platforms, sling backs, sandals, canvas shoes or runners.

Runners or sports shoes must only be worn during P.E and sports unless a certified medical reason is given in a note from parents/guardian to be countersigned by the Principal/Deputy Principal.

Students may wear one pair of small earrings and one discreet nose stud. No other jewelry or badges may be worn.

Students should see to it each night that their uniform is in a fit condition to be worn to school the next day. PE gear is not an acceptable alternative.

In exceptional circumstances, when a student is out of uniform for a valid reason, a note must be given to the Principal/ Deputy Principal.

Students should mark their name clearly on all uniform items.

Persistent disregard for the rules governing dress and appearance will result in a sanction. Students may be refused entry to class if they do not comply with uniform regulation.

Mobile Phones, Digital Media Players, Cameras and Other Electronic Devices

The use of mobile phones is not allowed in the school buildings/grounds during the school day (including break times, and lunchtime) and all school activities/events unless permission is given for an educational/medical purpose. Any student wishing to contact home may do so through the Principal or Deputy Principal.

Students who bring a mobile phone to school must place it in a designated pouch/container as directed by their teacher at the beginning of each class. All mobile phone must be switched off before class. Students must collect their phones at the end of class and leave them switched off for the duration of the school day.

The Department of Education issued a Circular Letter to all post primary schools in June 2025 directing them to put policies and procedures in place that would restrict the use of mobile phone by students for the duration of the school day. These policies and procedures are currently under review.

A breach of the current school rule will warrant confiscation of the mobile phone, and retention of the phone by the Principal or a Deputy Principal until written communication is received from the parent/guardian of the student to the Principal or Deputy-Principal requesting the return of the phone and giving an undertaking that the student will adhere to the school rules regarding mobile phones.

A repeated breach of this rule may lead to suspension. Regrettably mobile phones can become a medium for bullying. This is a serious offence and is in breach of the College Code of Behaviour.

The school's policy regarding online teaching & learning and the appropriate behaviour that students must adopt can be found in the **St. Columba's Remote Learning Policy**.

In certain classroom situations, and for the purpose of an approved educational activity, a teacher may allow students to use their mobile devices for a portion of the class period. Phones must be switched off again at the end of the activity.

Mobile phones, smart watches or any other electronic devices which connect to the internet are not permitted in State Examination Centres and must not be used during in-house exams or in class time without expressed permission. A wall clock is made available in each room to ascertain the time.

The use of media players and the wearing of head-phones/ earbuds within the school are not permitted, except for the purpose of an approved educational activity where a teacher may allow students to use their media player/headphones for a portion of the class period. In all other instances, such equipment will be confiscated and the same procedures as in the case of mobile phones will apply to the return of this equipment to students.

The taking of photographs without the express permission of the subject and the inappropriate distribution, broadcasting and publishing of photographs will be subject to sanction at the discretion of the Principal.

Please refer to the Anti-Bullying Policy, Data Protection Policy and The Acceptable Use Policy.

Parents/guardians should not ring or text their son/daughter when an urgent message needs to be conveyed to him/her as this will result in a sanction being imposed on the student. Likewise, students may not use their mobile phone to contact a parent for any purpose during school hours. In exceptional circumstances for the convenience of parents and students, any urgent message will always be conveyed through the school office.

In exceptional circumstances students may contact parents/guardians through the Principal/Deputy Principal's Office.

Personal Property

Students must take proper care of their own belongings. The school authorities are not responsible for any items, which are lost, mislaid or stolen.

Students must have their name clearly written/marked on all possessions including all uniform items, text books, copybooks, folders, gear bags and school bags.

Small sums of money should be kept in the student's possession at all times and never be left unattended e.g. in jackets, sacks or gear bags.

A locker is available for rent to each student and each student should ensure that it is securely locked at all times.

Large sums of money or valuable items should not be brought to school but if on occasion this is necessary, they should be handed in at the school office for safekeeping and be collected by the student before leaving school.

Promotion of Good Behaviour

The quality of relationships between teachers and students is one of the most powerful influences on student behaviour. At St Columba's College we aim to forge mutually respectful relationships, based on warmth and empathy, objectivity, professional detachment and fairness. The quality of daily interactions both inside and outside the classroom is central to our efforts to promote good behaviour. The following structure is in place to help students adhere to the Code of Behaviour:

- Subject teachers
- Tutors/ Class teachers
- Year Heads
- Deputy Principals
- Principal

In addition, the school has in place, a variety of rewards to recognise and mark achievements and efforts across the full range of school activities.

Rewards may include:

- a quiet word of acknowledgement for a student by a teacher
- praise for effort, participation or achievement in class
- a positive note in the student's journal to be signed by a parent or guardian or midterm report posted home
- certificates to recognise excellent punctuality
- a special mention by the Year Head at weekly assembly
- special mention of an individual or a group on the daily intercom announcements or the interactive whiteboard
- the award of prizes for outstanding achievement or contribution to school life at the annual prize-giving day
- students' achievements, academic or otherwise, are recognised. Rewards are accessible to all students.
- examples of students' work and contributions are displayed in the classrooms and around the school.

Parents

Parents have a vital role in promoting good behaviour in school and so effective home/school liaison is very important. The school has a right to expect that parents will give their full support in dealing with their child's behaviour.

We expect parents to keep us informed of behavioural difficulties they may be experiencing at home, inform us of any trauma which may affect their child's performance or behaviour at school and about their child's ill health and any absences connected with it.

The school will endeavour to achieve good home/school liaison by:

- promoting a welcoming environment within the school
- encouraging parents to come into school on occasions other than parents' evenings
- keeping parents informed of school activities by letter, social media, website, etc
- involving parents at an early stage in any disciplinary problems.

The College Pastoral Care and Wellbeing Policy also provides additional support structures for pupils through the College Guidance Counsellors, Home School Liaison Teacher and Principal/Deputy Principals, and is an integral component of the College Code of Behaviour, along with the wider Pastoral Structure which includes Class Teachers and Year Head Teachers.

Staff

All staff have the right to work in an environment that is free from emotional, physical and social abuse.

All college staff should be treated with dignity, respect and fairness by students and parents and this behaviour should be reciprocated at all times.

Teachers have a vital role to play in the implementation of the Code of Behaviour.

Sanctions

In the real world of school, on occasion, students will fall short of what is expected of them in terms of behaviour. A system of sanctions is in place. The aim of any sanction is, firstly, to bring about a change in behaviour. The sanction may also reinforce the boundaries set out in the Code of Behaviour and may reassure students and staff that their well-being is being protected. Sanctions may include:

- Reasoning with the pupil
- Verbal reprimand
- Loss of privileges
- Discipline slip
- Use of the ladder of referral, ie to the Year Head, to the Deputy Principal, to the Principal who decide on an appropriate sanction
- Short detention for a period during the lunch break
- Communication with parents
- Detention at lunchtime on Tuesday or Thursday
- Wednesday evening detention
- For serious misconduct or disrespect, suspension/expulsion will be considered/imposed.

Suspension and Expulsion Policy and Procedures

The Board of Management of the college acknowledges its duty to publish their policy concerning admission and participation in the school, including the policy of the school relating to the expulsion and suspension of students pursuant to Section 15(d) of the

Education Act 1998 and Section 23 of the Education Welfare Act 2000. The Code of Behaviour in St. Columba's College specifies:

- The standards of behaviour that shall be observed by each student attending the school
- The measures that may be taken when a student fails or refuses to observe those standards
- The procedures to be followed before a student may be suspended or expelled from a school
- The grounds for removing a suspension imposed in relation to a student
- The procedures to be followed relating to notification of a child's absence from school.

The Suspension and Expulsion Policy and Procedures are outlined in Appendix 1 of this policy.

Other Agencies

The College will liaise with and utilise such agencies as the Educational Welfare Officers, Social Services, Health Services and Educational Psychological Services, to support students with behavioural issues where appropriate.

Links to other Policies

Parents and students are advised that all other school policies are an integral part of the Code of Behaviour.

By enrolling their child at this school, parents are acknowledging acceptance of the Code of Behaviour.

REVIEW

This Code of Behaviour was ratified by the Board of Management of St Columba's College on 3rd September 2025.

The policy will be reviewed after the review of the Mobile Phone Policy and other related policies.

Signed: P. J. McGowan

Date: 3/9/25

(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: Jan Rowen

Date: 03/09/2025

(Principal)

Appendix 1: Suspension and Expulsion Policy and Procedures

The Suspensions and Expulsions Policy and procedure are an integral part of the Code of Behaviour.

Legal framework

The Board of Management of the college acknowledges its duty to publish their policy concerning admission and participation in the school, including the policy of the school relating to the expulsion and suspension of students pursuant to Section 15(d) of the Education Act 1998 and Section 23 of the Education Welfare Act 2000. The Code of Behaviour in St. Columba's College specifies:

- The standards of behaviour that shall be observed by each student attending the school
- The measures that may be taken when a student fails or refuses to observe those standards
- The procedures to be followed before a student may be suspended or expelled from a school
- The grounds for removing a suspension imposed in relation to a student
- The procedures to be followed relating to notification of a child's absence from school.

St. Columba's College affirms that its Code of Behaviour is prepared in accordance with the Guidelines issued by the Education Welfare Board 2008. The Code of Behaviour addresses:

- The standards of behaviour expected in the school
- The plan for promoting good behaviour
- The ways in which a school responds to unacceptable behaviour
- The plan for implementing the code of behaviour
- School procedures for the use of suspension and expulsion

St. Columba's College recognises the Right to Appeal pursuant to Section 29 of the Education Act.

In regard to informing the Education Welfare Board, St. Columba's College affirms its statutory obligation pursuant to section 21 (4)(a) of the Education Welfare Act.

St. Columba's College affirms that data collected in relation to students and parents is in compliance with the Data Protection Acts 1988 to 2018.

Suspensions

The Board of Management of St. Columba's College holds the authority to suspend a student for inappropriate/unacceptable behaviour.

The Boards of Management may delegate this authority to the Principal.

St. Columba's College recognises that suspension is only one strategy within the college Code of Behaviour in response to inappropriate behaviour.

The college recognises that when all other strategies have been exhausted, suspension affords a student time to reflect on their behaviour, to acknowledge and accept responsibility for their behaviour and to accept the need for the behaviour to change. The college works closely with parents to assist a suspended student to re-join the school community successfully.

St. Columba's College acknowledges that suspension should be a proportionate response to the behaviour that is causing concern. The decision to suspend a student requires serious grounds such as that:

- The student's behaviour has had a seriously detrimental effect on the education of other students.
- The student's continued presence in the school at this time constitutes a threat to safety.
- The student is responsible for serious damage to property.
- The student breaches the Code of Behaviour. (At the discretion of the Principal)

St. Columba's College affirms that all suspensions must be notified to the Board of Management.

St. Columba's College also affirms that the Education Welfare Services of the Child and Family (Tusla) should be informed of suspensions in the following circumstances:

- Where the period of suspension is for 6 or more consecutive school days.
- Where the aggregate number of days on which a student has been suspended /absent in any school year is 20 or more days.

A suspension may occur after the following factors have been considered:

- The nature and seriousness of the behaviour
- The impact and context of the behaviour
- The interventions tried to date
- That all discipline options under the college Code of Behaviour have been applied and documented
- That all actions /decisions taken are recorded and all correspondence copied.
- Discussion has occurred with the student and parent(s) regarding the specific behaviour which the school considers unacceptable, and which may lead to suspension.

The Board of Management of St. Columba's affirms that students attending the college may be suspended as follows pending investigation and /or discussion with parents. The following list is not exhaustive:

- For serious misbehaviour
- For an unacceptable level of repeated misbehaviour
- For bullying, insulting, aggressive or violent behaviour towards others whether in person, by mobile phone or via social media or other electronic means; in the school, or when identifiable with the school
- For the supply/possession /use of alcohol and /or illegal drugs
- For the supply /possession /use of weapons/ hazardous materials
- For behaviour that may be a danger to self or others
- For racist behaviour /supply of racist material/use of racist material
- For behaviour that is contrary to the terms of the Equal Status Act 2000

- For sexual harassment and/or the possession/supply/use of pornographic material.

St. Columba's College acknowledges that a single incident of serious misconduct may be grounds for suspension. Such grounds may include where the continued presence of the student in the school at the time would represent a serious threat to the safety or welfare of students, staff of the school or any other person.

A student may be suspended during a state examination and such suspension should normally be approved by the Board of Management. This type of suspension should only be used where there is:

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

Inappropriate use of Suspension

- **Rolling suspension.** A student should not be suspended again shortly after they return to St. Columba's College unless they engage in serious misbehaviour that warrants suspension, that fair procedures are observed in full and the standard applied to judging the behaviour is the same as that standard applied to the behaviour of any other student.
- **Informal/unacknowledged suspension.** Exclusion of a student for part of the school day as a sanction is a suspension.
- **Open-ended suspension.** Students should not be suspended for an indefinite period. Any such suspension would be regarded as a de- facto expulsion.

Procedures in respect of Suspension.

St. Columba's College is required to follow fair procedures when proposing to suspend a student. The school should observe the following procedures

- The student and parent(s)/guardian(s) will be informed about the complaint
- The student and parent(s)/guardians will be given the opportunity to respond
- In the case of 'immediate' suspension, a preliminary investigation should be conducted to establish the case for the imposition of the suspension. Parents must be notified, and arrangement made for the student to be collected from the school. The school must have due regard for its duty of care for the student.

A student should not be suspended for more than 3 days except in exceptional circumstances. The Board of Management provides guidance to the Principal concerning the kinds of circumstances under which suspensions of longer than 3 days might be approved. If a suspension of longer than 3 days is being proposed the Board may wish to authorise the Principal, with the approval of the Chairperson of the Board of Management, to impose a suspension of up to 5 days in circumstances where a meeting of the Board cannot be convened in a timely fashion. Such authorisation must be recorded in the minutes of meeting of the Board of Management and reviewed on an annual basis.

The Boards of Management will formally review any proposal to suspend a student where the suspension would bring the number of days for which the student has been suspended in the current school year to 20 days or more. Any such suspension is subject to appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

Implementing the suspension

The Principal should notify the Parent(s) 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.
- The provision for an appeal to the Department of Education, in the case of a suspension which would bring the days suspended in one academic over 20 days.

In the case where parents do not agree to meet with the Principal, the Board confirms that written notice will serve as notice to impose a suspension.

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

Section 29 Appeal against Suspension

Where the total number of days for which the student has been suspended in the current school year reaches 20 days, the parent(s) or a student aged over 18 years, may appeal the suspension under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998 to the Minister for Education.

An appeal may be made by the parent of the student concerned, or by the student concerned where the student has reached the age of 18 years. In accordance with section 26 of the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) may appoint a person, independent of that Agency, to appeal a decision of a board of management or person acting on behalf of the board of management to permanently exclude a student from a school.

An appeal must be made within 42 calendar days from the date of the decision of the board of management or a person acting on behalf of the board of management.

Appeals must be made in writing on the Section 29 Appeal Form and submitted to the Section 29 Appeals Administration Unit which has been established within the Department of Education to provide administrative support to enable appeals committees perform their functions. The Section 29 Appeal Form may be downloaded from the Department's website or obtained directly from the Section 29 Appeals Administration Unit. Contact details for the Unit are available on the Department's website www.education.ie.

Expulsion

The Board of Management has the authority to expel a student. Expulsion should be a proportionate response to the student's behaviour. St. Columba's College acknowledges that

expulsion of a student is a very serious step and one that should only be taken by the Board of Management in extreme cases of unacceptable behaviour.

The Board of Management affirms that the college needs to have taken significant steps to address the misbehaviour and to avoid expulsion.

Such measures may include:

- Meeting with parents and students to try and find ways of helping the student to change their behaviour.
- Making sure that the student understands the possible consequences of their behaviour should it persist
- Ensuring that all possible options have been tried.
- Seeking the assistance of relevant support agencies, e.g. Child and Family Agency (Tusla) Education Welfare Services, HSE Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. National Behavioural Support Service JLO, NEPS, NCSE.

A proposal to expel a student requires serious grounds such as that:

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

Before expulsion is considered, school authorities must satisfy themselves that all possibilities have been exhausted for changing the student's behaviour.

Expulsion for first or once-off offence

There may be exceptional circumstances where the Board of Management decides that a student should be expelled for a first offence. The kinds of behaviour that may result in a proposal to expel on the basis of a single breach of the Code of Behaviour include the following:

- Serious threat of violence against another student or member of staff, either in person, by written correspondence or threats made online
- Actual violence or physical assault
- Supplying illegal drugs to students in the school
- Sexual assault

Factors to Consider before proposing to expel a student

The Board of Management will take the following factors into consideration before considering expelling a student:

- The nature and seriousness of the behaviour
- The context of the behaviour
- The impact of the behaviour
- The interventions already tried to change the student's behaviour
- Whether expulsion is a proportionate response
- The possible impact of expulsion

Expulsion will not be considered appropriate for the following:

- Poor academic performance
- Poor attendance or lateness
- Minor breaches of the Code of Behaviour

However, any behaviour that is persistently disruptive to learning or dangerous can be a serious matter. Behaviour must be examined in context to understand both the behaviour itself and the response or sanction that is most appropriate.

Procedures in respect of expulsion

A detailed investigation will be carried out under the direction of the Principal. The Principal should ensure that no party who has had any involvement with the circumstances of the case is part of the investigation.

The Principal should inform the student and his/her parents about the specific details of the alleged breach of behaviour, how it will be investigated and that it could result in expulsion. The Principal must ensure that the student and parents are given every opportunity to respond to the complaint of serious misbehaviour. The Principal should communicate this in writing to ensure that parents have a permanent record of having been informed.

A meeting should be arranged between the student and their parents and the Principal before a sanction is imposed.

Should a student and their parent(s) fail to attend a meeting the Principal should write advising:

- the seriousness of the matter
- the importance of attending a re-scheduled meeting
- Failing that, the duty of the school authorities to make a decision to respond to the inappropriate behaviour
- Record all correspondence

Where the Principal forms a view, based on the investigation of the alleged misbehaviour, that expulsion may be warranted, the Principal shall make a recommendation to the Board to consider expulsion.

In such instances, the Principal should:

- Inform the student and parents in writing that the Board of Management is being asked to consider expulsion.
- Ensure that parents have written records of (a) the allegation, (b) the investigation, (c) written notice of the grounds on which the Board of Management is being asked to consider expulsion.
- Provide the Board with the same comprehensive records as are given to the student and the parents.
- Notify the parents in good time of the date of the hearing with the
- Board of management and invite them to that hearing.
- Advise the parents that they can make a written and oral submission to the Board of Management.
- Ensure parents are given enough notice to allow them to prepare for the meeting.

It is the responsibility of the Board of Management to review the initial investigation and satisfy itself that the investigation was properly conducted in line with fair procedures.

The Board of Management should undertake its own review of documentation and all circumstances of the case.

The Board of Management should ensure that no party who has had any involvement with the circumstances of the case is part of the Board's deliberations.

Where the Board of Management decides to expel a student it must hold a hearing and this meeting should be properly conducted in accordance with Board procedures.

Parents may be accompanied at the Board hearing but, as this is a lay forum; legal representation is not permitted. The Board Secretary should be informed in writing who shall be attending this meeting at least two days prior to the meeting taking place.

At the start of the meeting the Chairperson shall enquire whether any member has an objective bias in respect of the matter being considered by the Board. Where the Board is satisfied that an objective bias exists, the member(s) involved shall withdraw from the meeting.

At the hearing the Principal and the parents, or a student aged 18 or over, put their case to the Board in each other's presence and will be available to answer questions from Board Members. Each party should be allowed question the evidence of the other party. Questions should be directed through the Chairperson at the end of each presentation.

Once the Principal and the Parents have made their cases, they will withdraw from the meeting.

Should the Board require the professional advice of the Principal, the Principal may be invited to return to the meeting briefly for that purpose. While the Principal is present, there will be no discussion on the merits of the particular case being considered.

In the conduct of the hearing the Board must take care to ensure they are and are seen to be impartial as between the Principal and the student. Parents may wish to be accompanied at hearings and the Board should facilitate this in line with good practice and Board procedures.

When both sides have been heard the Board should ensure that the Principal and Parents are not present for the Board's deliberations.

- a) In hearing and considering a proposed expulsion the Board shall have regard to:
- b) the nature, scale and persistence of any behaviour alleged to have given rise to, or contributed to, the decision made by or on behalf of the Board,
- c) the reasonableness of any efforts made by the school to enable the student to whom the appeal relates (the 'student concerned') to participate in and benefit from education,
- d) the educational interests of the student concerned and the desirability of enabling the student as far as practicable to participate in and benefit from education with his or her peers,
- e) the educational interests of, and the effective provision of education for, other students of the school and the maintenance of a classroom and school environment

- which is supportive of learning among the students of the school and ensures continuity of instruction provided to students in any classroom concerned and the school,
- f) the safety, health and welfare of teachers, students and staff of the school, the code of behaviour under section 23 of the Education (Welfare) Act of 2000 and other relevant policies of the school and —
 - (i) in the case of that code of behaviour, the extent to which it is in compliance with that section 23 and any guidelines issued under subsection (3) of that section, and
 - (ii) in the case of those other policies, the extent to which each of them is implemented, promotes equality of access to and participation in education and is in compliance with —
 - (I) any enactment that imposes duties on schools or their boards,
 - (II) any relevant guidelines or policies of the Minister,
 - g) the duties on schools or their boards imposed by or under any enactment,
 - h) guidelines issued pursuant to section 22(7) of the Act of 2000, and
 - i) such other matters as the Board considers relevant.

Board of Management deliberations and actions following the hearing

Having heard from all the parties involved it is the responsibility of the Board to decide whether or not the allegation is substantiated and if expulsion is the appropriate sanction.

When the Board of Management having considered all the facts of the case, is of the opinion that the student should be expelled, the Board must notify the Education Welfare Officer in writing of its opinion and the reasons for this opinion pursuant to section 24 91) of the Education Welfare Act 2000. The Board should refer to the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) Education Welfare Services reporting procedures for proposed expulsions.

The student cannot be expelled before the passage of 20 school days from the date on which the EWO receives this written notification.

The Board of Management should inform the parents in writing about its conclusions and where expulsion is proposed the parents should be informed that the Board of Management will inform the Education Welfare Officer.

Consultations arranged by the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO)

Within 20 days of receipt of a notification from a Board of Management the EWO will make all reasonable attempts to hold individual consultations with the Principal, the parent and the student. The EWO will convene a meeting of those parties. These consultations will focus on alternative educational arrangements for the student.

Pending the consultations with the EWO, the Board of Management may consider it appropriate to suspend a student during this time. This should only be considered where the continued presence of the student during this time would seriously disrupt the learning of others or represent a risk to the safety and health of students or staff.

Confirmation of the decision to expel

When the 20-day period following notice to the EWO has elapsed and the Board of

Management remains of the view that the student should be expelled, the Board of Management should formally confirm the decision to expel. The Board of Management may delegate authority to the Chairperson and Secretary to review this decision of expulsion after the twenty days has expired.

Parents should be notified immediately that the expulsion will now proceed. Parents and the student must be informed of their right to appeal to the Minister for Education.

Section 29 Appeal against Expulsion

The parent(s) or a student aged over 18 years, may appeal the expulsion under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

Parents and the student should be informed about their right to appeal to the Minister for Education.

An appeal may be made by the parent of the student concerned, or by the student concerned where the student has reached the age of 18 years. In accordance with section 26 of the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) may appoint a person, independent of that Agency, to appeal a decision of a board of management or person acting on behalf of the board of management to permanently exclude a student from a school.

An appeal must be made within **42 calendar days** from the date of the decision of the board of management or a person acting on behalf of the board of management.

Appeals must be made in writing on the Section 29 Appeal Form and submitted to the Section 29 Appeals Administration Unit which has been established within the Department of Education to provide administrative support to enable appeals committees perform their functions. The Section 29 Appeal Form may be downloaded from the Department's website or obtained directly from the Section 29 Appeals Administration Unit. Contact details for the Unit are available on the Department's website www.education.ie .

Review of use of Expulsion

The Board of Management should review the use of expulsion as part of the Code of Behaviour in the college at regular intervals.

Appendix 2: Discipline Slip for recording of behavioural issues.

Discipline Slip



Student Name	
Class	
Date of incident	
Describe how the student's behaviour has breached the Code of Behaviour	
What action have you taken?	
Is there anything you wish to add?	
Signed:	
Date:	

To be given to Class Teacher/Year Head when completed
 Class Teacher/Year Head to record action taken (PTO →)

Date received:	
Action taken:	
Follow up to initial action:	
Signed:	(Class teacher)
Date:	
Signed:	(Year Head)
Date:	

Appendix 3: Referral System (Revised Sept 2023)



Referral System

1. Teacher addresses issues in the classroom
 - Teacher will communicate with parents via the school journal
2. **Problem issues**
 - Discipline Slip issued – student informed
 - Discipline Slip given to Class Teacher/Year Head
3. **Class Teacher/Year Head interviews with the student**
4. **Class Teacher passes discipline slips to the Year Head**
5. **Year Head**
 - Interviews the student
 - Detention (may impose sanction as appropriate)
 - May refer to Guidance Teacher
 - Home School Links Teacher may be informed
 - Parents may be informed at the discretion of the Year Head
6. **3 further slips on same student**
 - Refer to Year Head
7. **Year Head**
 - Interviews the student
 - Detention (at the discretion of the Year Head)
 - Letter to parents
 - Deputy Principal informed
 - Deputy Principal meets parents
8. **3 further slips on the same students**
 - Refer to Year Head
9. **Year Head**
 - Interviews the student
 - Sends file to Deputy Principal with recommendation for suspension
10. **Deputy Principal**
 - Deputy Principal informs Principal
 - Suspends student
 - Meets student with parent before or on return from suspension
11. **3 further slips**
 - Refer to Year Head
 - Refer to Principal



**St. Columba's College
Stranorlar,
Co. Donegal.**

Phone (074) 9131246 Fax (074) 9132528

(Please detach this page and return to the Class Teacher/Year Head)

In order to create the best possible teaching and learning environment and to maintain the safety and well-being of all, each student is required to uphold the spirit and the letter of the school's Code of Behaviour, which is underpinned by the full support of every parent/guardian

I agree to abide by the Code of Behaviour of the School, summarized below, and therefore I undertake

- ◆ To treat each person in school with respect
- ◆ To co-operate with my teachers and classmates
- ◆ To complete all homework- written/aural/oral/practical on time
- ◆ To have all my books and equipment for all classes
- ◆ To keep my school journal neat and tidy and use it only for school business
- ◆ To comply fully with the school's code on the wearing of uniform
- ◆ To attend school punctually on each school day
- ◆ To go directly and punctually from class to class during the school day
- ◆ To comply with all appropriate instructions issued by staff members
- ◆ To follow the school regulations on safety and health matters
- ◆ To take care of my own property and respect that of others
- ◆ To refrain from littering
- ◆ To respect the school environment
- ◆ Not to engage in boisterous behaviour
- ◆ Not to interfere with fire or safety equipment
- ◆ Not to smoke, use alcohol or any banned or illegal substances in school
- ◆ Not to engage in unseemly behaviour which would bring my family or my school into disrepute or undermine school discipline

I have read the Code of Behaviour and agree to abide by it.

Student's Signature _____

Class/Year _____

I/We have read the Code of Behaviour of the School and we agree to accept and support it.

Parent's / Guardian's Signature _____

Date _____