

Code of Behaviour

St Mary's Diocesan School is a Catholic school committed to the development of the whole person offering equal opportunities to all to achieve their full potential in a familial Christian environment. The school aspires to an education based on high ideals and a broad curriculum which will allow our students to confidently play their role in society.

Introduction

St Mary's Diocesan School is a voluntary Catholic secondary school under the auspices of the Bishop of Meath. Our objective is to provide a quality educational environment in which our students can achieve their potential. To achieve this, it is our aim to provide a safe and secure environment where the human integrity and dignity of all the staff and students are respected. We aspire to cultivate an ethos in which our students can grow spiritually, morally, emotionally, academically and physically into mature and responsible adults. We recognise the important role which parents of our students should play in supporting not only their children, but also the management and staff of the school. United by this sense of common purpose, we invite the whole school community to participate with us in the task of building an effective learning environment.

Code of Behaviour

The school's discipline policy is rooted in our Mission Statement which commits us to providing an education which develops the whole person and enables them to achieve their full potential in a familial, Christian environment. The policy seeks to provide a disciplinary procedure which is fair, consistent and proactive, based on affirmation and aimed at developing self-esteem, self-discipline and good relations.

The purpose of the policy is:

- To create a safe, orderly environment which enables effective teaching and learning and the fulfilment of each student's potential as a person.
- To foster in each student a feeling of self-worth and a sense of respect and consideration for others.
- To develop in students a sense of responsibility and good citizenship.
- To prepare our students for life after school.

Principles on which the policy is based:

- Respect for people is the basis of any good code of discipline and our fundamental premise is that respect will be shown to all persons at all times.
- Positive behaviour is best fostered in a caring atmosphere in the context of positive student/teacher relationships and close cooperation between home and school.
- Affirmation of good behaviour, praise and encouragement are utilised as incentives.
- Any sanctions set seek to be fair, consistent and transparent, while retaining a flexibility of application. This policy must be taken in conjunction with the School Rules and all relevant school policies. Our School Rules are a guide to the behaviour expected by all in St Mary's. Any conduct which is contrary to the good practices and expectations of our student body shall be deemed a breach of our Code of Behaviour.

School Rules and Our Core Principle

All our school rules are based on the core principle of RESPECT: respect for self, respect for others and respect for St Mary's Diocesan school.

Respect for Self

Attendance

In order to make the most of the abilities and talents that they have, regular and punctual attendance is required of all students. If a student is absent from school, then his parents are asked to provide a written explanation in his Journal or to record the absences on vsware.

The School Journal

This is an essential tool in helping students to achieve their goals in school. Having their journal with them for every class is essential. Students must use it to take down reminders of their homework and other information. The journal should also be used for communication between school and home. Notes regarding absences and lates and notes to and from teachers should be recorded in the journal, if not recorded on vsware under absences. Therefore, students must have their journal with them at all times. Journals are to be kept in good, neat condition throughout the year. A sanction will be put in place for defacing/ damaging the school journal or continually arriving to classes without it. Replacements can be purchased from the school office.

Classwork

In class students are required to pay attention, do as requested by the teacher, and contribute as best they can to the learning process.

Homework

The Purpose of Homework

- Consolidate the work done in class
- Encourage self-directed study
- Promote creativity
- Help students to organise their own work

We regard homework as an important part of the learning process. We expect students to take time with their work, complete tasks on time and present their work well.

Types of Homework which may be set:

- Reading
- Learning
- Written assignments
- Practical work
- Project work

All homework must be recorded in the student journal. Failure to complete homework will lead to the imposition of sanctions. These may include verbal reprimand, additional work or lunchtime detention. On- going failure to complete homework may lead to the imposition of a Blue Card or after school detention.

Mobile Phones

First Year and 2nd Year Students 2025-26

St Mary's Diocesan School recognises that technology will play an increasing part in future learning practices, and as the use of mobile phones do present several problems an opportunity to strengthen the mobile phone policy for incoming first year students from the 2024 and 2025 year groups is welcomed as these year groups will have their own managed learning device.

Therefore, for the first-year students enrolling in August 2024, and in August 202, mobile phones will be banned- powered off and in schoolbags for the duration of the school day.

All other Students 2025- 2026

Our mobile phone policy is intended to minimise distractions during school hours. All mobile phones must be switched off and kept out of sight except during break times.

Phones may be used before and after school, during small break and lunch break. They are not allowed to be used in corridors or between the break of class. Phones can be used where teachers instruct students to do so for educational purposes only.

Mobile phones used outside permitted times will be confiscated. The length of confiscation will be determined on a case-by-case basis. Another sanction may be put in place along with the confiscation if learning and teaching has been disrupted.

Taking photographs or filming is prohibited (unless instructed by a teacher to do so) and will result in serious sanctions and the phone will be confiscated immediately. Also, the misuse of mobile phones to engage in any form of bullying/ intimidation will have serious sanctions.

This includes break times, lunchtimes, during class or moving between classes.

Repeatedly confiscated phones must be collected from the office by parents/guardians.

Please see our acceptable use and mobile phone policy for further details.

Toilets/Lockers

In order to minimise disruption during the school day, students may go to toilets/lockers only at the following times:

Toilets & Lockers may be used

- before 8.45 am
- between 10.52 am – 11.07 am (small break)
- between 1.03pm- 1.13pm and 1.28pm and 1:38pm (first and last 10 minutes of lunch break)
- after last lesson has concluded

Uniform

We want our students to have pride in their appearance. Our school uniform is designed to be a symbol of their pride in being students of St Mary's. We require students to wear the correct uniform to the exclusion of all other clothing. Non-uniform items may be confiscated.

Uniform Code

- Our uniform consists of navy trousers, white shirt, school tie, black shoes and school coat or fleece with school crest. Junior students (first, second and third year) wear a wine jumper with a navy band and school crest. Senior students (transition, fifth and sixth year) wear a navy jumper with a wine band and school crest. School tie must be worn when no jumper is being worn.
- Students are obliged to wear the correct school uniform to the exclusion of all other clothing. Non-uniform items may be confiscated.
- Apart from wrist-watches, no jewellery is permitted. Body piercings of any kind are forbidden.
- Students are obliged to wear correct footwear – all black footwear.
- Students' hair must always be kept neat and tidy. Natural hair colouring only, no overly tight cuts and long hair should be tied back in practical classes.
- No non-school uniform jackets/ hoodies/hooded tops, sports team tops are to be worn or seen onsite. These may be confiscated. School Coats/Fleeces ONLY may be worn.

Health & Safety

- **CCTV**
 - CCTV is used in St. Mary's Diocesan School for the purpose of crime-prevention, the prevention of anti-social behaviour, the prevention of bullying, for the safety of our staff and students and for the protection of St. Mary's Diocesan School and its property. Please refer to our CCTV policy for further details, available upon request.
- **Student Cars, Motorised/Electric Scooters and Bikes**

- There is no parking available to students on our campus. Parking is reserved for staff, parents and visitors to the school.
- No motorised/ electric scooters/ electric bikes or bikes are to be driven on the school grounds. This is a health and safety issue and must be adhered to.

Health Promotion

St Mary's is a health promoting school. We want students to develop healthy habits and to change unhealthy ones. Therefore, we have the following rules:

- **SPORTS:** Each student is to be available when required to take part in games and other school activities.
- **SAFETY:** Student and staff safety is a priority for St Mary's. Running and/or boisterous behaviour in the corridors, the stairs or other public areas is not allowed. For comfort and safety, when walking, students are required to walk on the right-hand side of the corridor. For safety reasons, students are not allowed to leave the school grounds during the 11.05 break.
- **LUNCH TIME:** During lunch time the following rules apply:

First, Second and Third Year students must remain on site for lunch, in the allocated yards for their year group or in the canteen.

TY, 5th and 6th year Students may leave but must return on time.

Students who are afforded the privilege of being permitted to leave the school premises at lunch break should be aware that any misconduct which they might engage in could reflect adversely on the good standing and reputation of the school in the local community. For this reason, the school authority reserves the right to withdraw the privilege where it is deemed appropriate. In addition, the school reserves the right to invoke the Code of Discipline and Behaviour to deal with incidents of misbehaviour which take place outside the school premises at lunchtime and to impose the full range of sanctions, up to and including expulsion, in respect of such incidents. This is without prejudice the right of the school authority to report any matter it deems appropriate to the Garda Síochána.

- **SMOKING:** Students are not allowed to smoke in the school or while in school uniform during school hours. This includes the use of E-cigarettes/Vaping. Breaking this rule will result in sanctions, including suspension.
- **ALCOHOL AND ILLEGAL DRUGS:** Students using or in possession of alcohol or any illegal chemical substance in school, in its vicinity or on school outings face serious sanction up to and including expulsion. Please see our substance use policy for further details.
- **TRIPS, TOURS and SCHOOL ACTIVITIES:** The school rules and the Code of Behaviour apply to all trips, tours and activities. Students who fail to respect them while on trips/tours out of the school will face serious sanction.

Respect for Others

Students are expected at all times to show respect for all staff and guests both within and outside school. This includes the wider environment and outside of school hours. This extends to the use of digital technologies, social networks, email and other digital communication tools or forums. Please see our acceptable use policy for more details.

The Right to Learn

Each student must respect the rights of other students to learn within their classroom.

Bullying

In accordance with the *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* and *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour* for Post-Primary Schools bullying is defined as follows:

Bullying is targeted behaviour, online or offline that causes harm. The harm caused can be physical, social and/or emotional in nature. Bullying behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society.

It offends against the dignity of the person, and as such is incompatible with the Code of Behaviour and the Ethos of the school. Students who are involved in bullying behaviour will be subject to serious sanctions. Students who are victims of bullying are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying to the school authorities. Where bullying leads to a child protection concern Tusla may be contacted. Please see our *Bí Cineálta* Policy for more details.

Resolving Disputes

We want students to learn to resolve differences in a mature and responsible way. Aggressive behaviour by individuals or groups or incitement to such behaviour is against our core principle of Respect for others and will not be tolerated. Where there are disputes between students, the parties to the dispute are encouraged to sort their differences by talking them out, not by hitting out either physically or verbally. Staff members are available to act as mediators if requested.

Respect for St Mary's Diocesan School

- All school buildings, furniture and equipment (including IT equipment) are to be treated with the utmost care. Any pupil who damages or defaces property may be required to make good the loss.
- In classrooms, students are responsible for their desks and immediate environment. Any damage must be reported to the subject teacher.

- Chewing gum is banned from the entire school grounds.

Respect for St Mary's Diocesan School IT Resources and Equipment

- It is important that our students are responsible Digital Citizens who will benefit from learning opportunities from the school's IT resources in a safe and effective manner. The use of IT resources is a privilege and comes with rights & responsibilities for all students. The full detail is written in the school's ICT Acceptable Usage Policy (AUP) which must be read by students and parents/guardians. But it is necessary to understand that all students are expected to:
 - Take good care of all school ICT equipment and use it responsibly.
 - Take good care of your own device (1st years, starting September 2024)
 - Respect the right to privacy of all members of the school community.
 - Respect copyright and acknowledge creators when using online content & resources.
 - Not to engage in negative behaviours or misuse ICT resources, such as
 - Sending/receiving any material that is illegal, obscene, or defamatory.
 - Using any instant messaging service.
 - Engaging in any activity that will bring St Mary's DS into disrepute.
 - Sharing images, screenshots, videos, or any content online which could be deemed harmful or hurtful to another member of the school community, either inside or outside of school.
 - Engaging in any online activity with the intention of harming, harassing, or embarrassing another student or member of staff. Further details are in the schools antibullying policy.

Plan to Promote Good Behaviour

Strategies and Structures to Support a Positive Learning Environment

Positive behaviour is promoted in many different ways in our school:

Pastoral Care structure of Year Head and Class Tutor

- Subject teachers, Tutors and Year Heads praise good behaviour whenever they can by writing positive comments in students' copies, journals or recording on our administration system.
- Tutors recognise good work and behaviour during daily tutor time.
- Year Heads use weekly assemblies and visit classes to commend students on their good behaviour, participation and learning.

Green Card Merit System

The following positive behaviours are recognised:

- attending school regularly and punctually
- doing one's best in class
- taking responsibility for one's work
- following the rules

- helping to create a safe, positive environment
- respecting staff
- helping other students and their learning
- participating in school activities
- improving their grades/effort

This list is not exhaustive

- Positive contributions are recognised on our administration system where points can be accumulated. Assemblies will recognise these students which may include certificates and rewards.
- Green Cards are written by all staff to recognise positive contribution to the school. They are recorded under behaviour on vsware.
- Green Card Awards may be included in awards

Awards Ceremony

In St. Mary's achievements are celebrated in many ways including assemblies and in classes. Other special celebrations and recognitions happen during our state exams awards, our academic awards and our sports awards.

A range of awards may be presented to students in each class at ceremonies during the school year. These may include awards for Best Student, Runner-Up & Best Effort. Students who have impressed the school community in other ways e.g. full attendance, overcoming serious illness may also be recognised at the Awards Ceremony.

Student Leadership - Prefect System & Student Council

- The Prefects provide a range of supports for school activities. In particular they help First Years to settle in through a Mentoring Programme
- The Student Council provides a voice for students and involves them in school activities and policy development

Extra-curricular Programme

A wide range of extra-curricular activities are organised to involve students, help develop their potential and promote a positive school environment.

Sanctions

We use the following referral system in the school:

- The class teacher deals with most behaviour issues within classes using a range of sanctions e.g. moving seat, verbal reprimand, extra work, note in journal, lunchtime detention etc.
- Other more serious issues or ongoing issues may be referred to the Year Head. The Year Head may meet with parents and impose other sanctions where necessary.
- The Year Head may refer further to the Deputy Principal or Principal

The tutor forms an essential role in our pastoral care system and plays an important role as a link with class teachers and others, regarding individual student's needs and any concerns that may arise.

A range of sanctions are used to respond to misbehaviours:

Misconduct may be recorded on our administration system taking points from the positive rewards.

- Sanctions for late-coming and failure to complete homework

- o In a discretionary fashion and with awareness of the nature of the lateness/ failure to complete homework teachers may decide to sanction in a number of ways; verbal warning, punishment work, note in journal, record on our administration system, phone call home or lunchtime detention.
 - o If a student continues to fail to complete homework, he may be placed on lunchtime detention, receive a blue card and/or the teacher may contact the parents/guardians.
 - Sanctions for serious misbehaviour
- Blue cards or after school detentions are issued as a sanction for serious misbehaviour:
- o Blue cards may be issued by a Teacher, Tutor, Year Head, SNA, Deputy Principal, and Principal. A text will be sent home to inform parents that a blue card has been issued.
 - o Detentions are referred through the Year Head. A note is placed in the student's journal with the date of the detention, which should be signed by the parents.
 - o In cases of serious misbehaviour, a more detailed record of the incident will be recorded on our administration system.

Some examples of misbehaviour which would merit a Blue Card

- Serious disruption of class
- Open defiance /refusal to obey instructions from a teacher
- Lying to a teacher
- Abusive language to a teacher or another student
- Leaving school without permission
- Skipping classes
- Misbehaviour during exams
- Persistently not wearing correct uniform

Guidelines relating to Blue Cards

The following are guidelines, staff will be guided by context and individual cases.

On receipt of a blue card, a student may be spoken to by their year head, reminded of the code of behaviour and the expectations in this school.

If three blue cards are issued in an academic year, contact will be made with home and a meeting may be arranged, with the Year Head and/or Deputy Principal/Principal. Further sanctions may be put in place e.g. detention or suspension

Long Term Behaviour/Attendance Issues

Long term behaviour or attendance issues may result in the student being placed on report to the year head or deputy principal. Sometimes further supports may be needed e.g. counselling, student support plan, NEPS.

Suspension

St Mary's Diocesan School regards suspension as a very serious sanction.

Suspensions are imposed at the discretion of the Principal. The Board of Management delegates to the Principal the authority to suspend a student for up to 3 school days or 5 days in exceptional circumstances. Where a longer suspension is required, the permission of the BOM will be sought or in the absence of a Board meeting the Chairperson of the Board will be contacted.

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

- A student has acquired multiple Unsatisfactory Conduct Cards (Blue Cards).
- A student's behaviour has a serious detrimental effect on the education of other students.
- Continuous disruption to learning and teaching.
- A student's continued presence in the school at this time constitutes a threat to safety.
- The student is responsible for serious damage to property.

- Fighting
- A single incident of misconduct may be grounds for suspension
- Vaping
- The school is obliged to inform the Education Welfare Services if a student has been suspended for a period of not less than six days.
- In the event of an appeal against a suspension being upheld the record of such a suspension will be removed from the student's record.

Expulsion

The expulsion of a student will only be considered after all the strategies outlined in the Code of Behaviour, including suspension, have been unsuccessful in correcting a student's unacceptable behaviour or in the event of a once off extremely serious breach of discipline.

While it is impossible to foresee every eventuality, the following represent situations where expulsion might be considered:

- The student's actions pose a real and serious threat to the health and safety of others
- The student's actions constitute a continuous and serious disruption of others' learning
- Serious abusive behaviour towards any member of the school community
- Posting of offensive material online of any member of the school community
- Serious damage to school property
- Serious misbehaviour which, despite the school's best effort, fails to improve sufficiently within a reasonable timeframe, as set down by the school
- Possession/use/distribution of illegal substances

Procedure

If the Principal comes to the opinion that a student should be expelled, the Principal will communicate this recommendation to the Board of Management who have the sole right to decide on the matter. The following procedures will then apply:

- The parents/guardians of the student will be informed in writing of the situation and the reasons for considering this course of action. Copies of all documents, statements and disciplinary records pertaining to the case will be made available to them.
- Pending the outcome of any proceedings, the Principal reserves the right to suspend the student in accordance with the provisions of the Education Welfare Act 2000 Section 24 (5) if, in the Principal's opinion such an action is necessary to ensure that good order and discipline are maintained and that the safety of the students is assured.
- Parents/Guardians will be invited to attend and present their case to the Board of Management.

The Board of Management will take into consideration:

- The student's record
- The effect of the behaviour on the rights of other students and staff
- Any legal/expert advice deemed necessary

The decision of the Board of Management will be formally communicated to the parents/guardians by letter. If the decision is to expel, the parents/guardians will be informed of their right to appeal, within the stipulated time, to the Secretary General of the DES under the Education Act 1998 Section 29.

In accordance with the provisions of the Education Welfare Act 2000 Section 24, the Board of Management shall, before expelling the student, notify the Education Welfare Service of its decision and the reasons for expulsion.

In accordance with the requirements of the Education Welfare Act 2000 Section 24 (4) the student will not be expelled before the passage of 20 school days from the receipt of such notification by the Education Welfare Services.

Conclusion

The Code of Behaviour will be reviewed one year after its implementation.

Any amendments which need to be made will be in keeping with the ethos of St Mary's and the Code of Behaviour will be communicated to members of the school community in writing. Any changes made to the Code of Behaviour or to the school rules are binding.

A major review will be carried out no later than five years after the date of implementation and will involve consultation with the parents/guardians, students, staff and Board of Management.

This Code Behaviour for students was devised in consultation with staff, students, parents/guardians and the Board of Management of St Mary's Diocesan School.

Ratification & Communication

Ratified by our board of management in June 2025 with the understanding that some sections may require amendment to fall in line with health and safety guidelines. This policy, with any required health and safety amendments, will be implemented on August 21st 2025 in line with our provisional calendar.

This policy will be displayed on our website www.stmarysds.ie

Signed: _____ (Chairperson of board of management)	Date: <u>10/6/25</u>
Signed: _____ (Principal)	Date: <u>10/6/25</u>

Monitoring the implementation of the policy - Reviewing and evaluating the policy

This Policy will be monitored on an on-going basis and will be reviewed and amended as the need arise.