

Setanta School

Code of Behaviour

2009

How our code was developed

In order to meet its legal obligations under the Education Act (Welfare) 2000, the Board of Management agreed that consultations would be made with the staff and parents using “Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools (National Education Welfare Board).

A joint general meeting of teachers and parents was held on 13th October 2009. All the issues were discussed and explained. From this a sub-committee was formed consisting of 4 parents’ representatives, 2 teachers (including the principal) and 2 members of the Beechpark clinical team.

As equal partners they drew up a draft code.

This was then submitted back to parents and teachers for a response. Amendments were made and agreed and went to the Board of Management for approval.

Our vision for relationships and behaviour in the school and the ways in which the school promotes good behaviour

The school seeks to use positive behaviour guidelines and evidence based practise.

We aim to promote safe learning environment

Our school prides itself on having the flexibility to incorporate different timetables for students to create an environment where they can succeed.

Mission Statement

“We can do no great things, only small things with great love. Together, these small things will add up to monumental change”. Mother Teresa.

- Setanta is an integral part of the Beechpark Campus and has a holistic approach to the students with ASD, their parents, families and staff.
- Our school is a centre where empathy, justice, compassion and joy find expression.
- B.O.M., teachers, staff and parents are dedicated to creating an environment where:
 - Each student is an individual and will be treated with respect, dignity and kindness throughout his/her stay in the school.
 - We acknowledge that parents have a unique role to play in the education process of their children.
 - We acknowledge that there is a need for partnership between home, school, B.O.M. and the Clinical Team.
 - We strive to develop each person’s full potential.
 - We strive to develop each student’s life skills.
 - We strive to maximise each student’s quality of life.
 - We aspire to maximise each student’s potential for independent adult life.

Setanta School policy on Dignity and Respect.

Setanta is committed to the promotion of an environment for work and teaching which upholds the dignity and respect of each student.

Home - School Partnership

The B.O.M. and staff of Setanta recognise parents as full partners. Both of the Education Acts (1998, 2000) confer on them the right to active participation in their child's education. This includes their rights as individuals to be consulted and informed in all aspects of their child's educational process. Parents are welcomed and valued in the school. This is in recognition of the major role they play in the education of their children in collaboration with teachers, support staff and the B.O.M.

The expectations for students, staff and parents and how they will treat each other

Parents and staff expect to work together in a respectful, courteous and polite manner.

As partners in the student's education each acknowledges the expertise of the other.

The expectations of students will vary, depending on ability level, impact of disabilities associated with autism and specific situations.

How students, teachers and parents can help to promote a happy school

Our school maintains and nurtures channels of communication between all the partners in the student's education.

Priority is given to communication between school and home and is seen as something vital.

The participation and involvement of the parents in their child's education through the parent-teacher association is actively encouraged.

Further the school seeks to

- Maintain a safe environment by having due regard to space, noise, over-crowding and therapeutic facilities.
- Provide structure and predictability in routines
- Ensure respectful relationships with students
- Ensure adequate staff numbers and expertise/training
- Respond to individuality
- Maintain consistency in approaches

Roles and responsibilities of staff members in relation to behaviour

- Teachers are expected to inform themselves of students' current & changing needs and strengths on an ongoing basis by reading school clinical records.
- The class teacher is responsible for the implementation of the I.E.P. and any agreed specific relevant objectives of the care plan and how it is implemented by the staff in the class.
- Continuity around teaching strategy and person centred goals for each student as and individual should be maintained.
- Implementation of Studio 3 Low Arousal Approach guidelines is Setanta School Policy. (*attached*)
- Every member of staff has a duty of care to all students in school.
- Staff should seek out the purpose / reason for incidents of challenging behaviour.
- The school recognises that it is best practice to write, with or without input from clinical team, guidelines on how to interact with each student and make these available to all staff working with the students. This is particularly important for substitute teachers or S.N.A.s who would not be familiar with the students. Teachers are expected to have ongoing consultation and review regarding behaviour support plans.
- Staff are expected to work towards minimising the occurrence of challenging behaviour with the provision of a supporting environment, prevention strategies and positive behaviour strategies that promote good quality of life.
- They should follow and implement any agreed intervention guidelines for an individual student.
- Seek support from school/training/colleagues in developing understanding and coping skills.
- Staff should promote/be involved in joint working relationships.
- Staff should highlight their own training needs.

The purpose and content of school rules

The care plans and I.E.P.s for each individual student are at the heart of this code. Their drawing up and implementation seeks to provide clarity and a framework to promote a safe learning environment and a positive working atmosphere for everyone.

Systems for acknowledging good behaviour, progress and effort

Praise and acknowledgement for good effort on an informal and spontaneous basis is to be generally encouraged.

A formal system is to be contained in the care plan and I.E.P. to suit each individual student. These will contain elements of

- Praise and encouragement
- Acknowledgement of good effort
- Token economy appropriate to the student's functioning
- Star charts

Where parents and teachers can get help when problems arise

- If help is needed revising guidelines parents and teachers can seek clinical advice around individuals
- If guidelines need to be implemented or require specific knowledge, training or skill they can make a referral to the clinical team, and seek their input on it. Advice/ input may be provided if clinically relevant and in their remit.
- If parents or teachers are unhappy with the school's response they should arrange a meeting with the teacher / school principal.
- The principal is ultimately responsible for the monitoring and carrying out of agreed interventions.

The responses to unacceptable behaviour

The school follows positive behaviour support principals:

- Assessment, intervention – diffusion, skills teaching, environment accommodation etc
- Review current strategies and implement new ones
- Communicate with others – clinical staff, parents, teachers as appropriate
- Allow down time – a space for arousal to decrease
- Document incident – to help develop an understanding of behaviour
- Evaluate staff implementation of Studio 3 Low Arousal Approach guidelines.
- B.O.M to ensure that staff not exposed to excessive risk – debrief, counselling, training, supervision
- When considering the health and safety of the school community, and the interests of the pupil concerned, school management, in consultation with parents, reserves the right to reduce a pupil's attendance appropriately.

When and where behaviour will be subject to the code of behaviour

Positive behaviour guidelines will be followed wherever school staff are in contact with students under their care. It is important that all staff adhere to Studio 3 Low Arousal Approach guidelines at all times. This ensures a consistent approach in all situations to do with school, whether in the school building itself, out on trips or on the journey to and from home. The Board of Management has a duty of care to students and escorts on Bus Eireann transport to and from school.

Notifying the school about reasons for absence from school

Parents should notify the school of a student's absence.

The plan for reviewing the code

As a matter of course the code will be reviewed at every staff meeting.

The B.O.M. will hear progress on its implementation at every board meeting

The principal with the parents' association will conduct a general review with all the partners in November 2010 and afterwards every two years.

Details of who to contact about behavioural matters.

By Parents

- Teacher, clinical team, principal

By Teachers

- Parents
- School principal
- Referral to the clinical team
 - Referral to be reviewed at clinical team meeting and team members allocated. Likely to be psychology team

Note: Parents can contact the clinical team themselves. The teacher has to have written consent from parents before he/she can refer a pupil's case to the clinical team. This emphasises the importance of communication between home and school.

Note: Swimming, horse riding, outings, Learning2Learn programme, art, baking and other such activities are integral parts of the curriculum. They are there to promote the children's social skills and to encourage their independence. As such it is not consistent with this code that these be used as "treats" for "good" behaviour or as punishments for other behaviour. (*....denying a student access to a particular part of the curriculum as a general sanction would not be appropriate* cf Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools 2008)

Date approved ...28/11/2016.....

Don Mahon

Setanta School Manager

Low Arousal Approach

The Low Arousal Approach emphasizes a range of behaviour management strategies that focus on the reduction of stress, fear and frustration and seeks to prevent aggression and crisis situations. The low arousal approach seeks to understand the role of the 'situation' by identifying triggers and using low intensity strategies and solutions to avoid punitive consequences for individuals with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. Distract and redirect where possible, if this is not possible as the individual is too upset then give them some safe quiet space.

Is it giving in?

People often perceive the low arousal approach as 'giving in', it is not giving in!

In a crisis our goal is to reduce stress and not to teach a person.

The more stressed people become the less they process.

Consider the following example of a little boy called Charlie:

'Charlie is seven years old and attends a main stream school. Charlie was diagnosed with autism when he was five. He has some spoken language and he has many rituals and routines. Three to four lessons a week Charlie will begin to scream and shout and bite staff. In contrast he has many good days where none of these behaviours occur. His teaching staff have restrained him and prevented him from leaving the classroom as he *'needs to learn that his behaviour is inappropriate'*

In a low arousal approach we would stress to these staff that Charlie is in meltdown and that they should facilitate his escape from that situation. The restraint used no matter how well intentioned will only serve to 'traumatize' him (and vicariously traumatize his teaching staff).

Given that stress is an ever present part of the lives of people with autism. How should we manage crisis situations where the individuals we support may be experiencing ‘meltdown’?

1: Decreasing staff demands and requests to reduce potential points of conflict around an individual. Be aware of your tone and the level of your voice.

2: Avoidance of potentially arousing triggers e.g. direct eye contact, touch and removal of spectators to the incident.

3: Avoidance of non-verbal behaviours that may lead to conflict e.g. aggressive postures and stances, finger pointing etc.

4: Challenging staff beliefs about the short-term management of challenging behaviours.

These apparently simple behaviour management strategies often are difficult to apply in practice as they involve changing our own level of arousal and this requires Staff to reflect on their own approach. People frequently do not view their behaviour or responses as impacting on the behaviour of people with autism.

What makes this sound difficult is that we do know that many behaviours are not always willful and deliberate, but, they can feel like they are. When we are trying to manage situations it can begin to feel like a person is controlling us. This battle is at the centre of the low arousal approach.

It is important to consider how WE as individuals would like or not like people to interact with you when you are feeling anxious, sick, tired, angry, frustrated or overwhelmed by sensory issues.