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**Behaviours of Concern Policy**

The Board of Management of St Laurence O’Toole’s recognises that at times, in our school, there are behaviours that interfere with a child’s learning and/or that of others. These behaviours of concern have been described as *“Culturally abnormal behaviour(s)’ of such intensity, frequency or duration that the physical safety of the person or others is placed in serious jeopardy, or behaviour which is likely to seriously limit or deny access to the use of ordinary community facilities”* (Emerson, 1995).

Behaviour is defined as the manner of conducting oneself. It also reflects one’s response to one's environment or stimuli. Behaviour can be triggered by a wide variety of factors and influences. It can be conscious or unconscious. Factors can be internal or external and interpersonal.

***Internal factors include*** age, stage of development, personality, temperament, personal history, physical, sensory or medical factors, ability to learn, beliefs about self and others, resilience)

***External and interpersonal factors include*** parental and family patterns and relationships, social networks, neighbourhood and community factors, school factors, time, opportunities and support for personal and social development, emotional trauma, student group dynamics, such as, bullying or cliques, environmental factors, such as classroom noise or seating arrangements and classroom factors, such as inconsistent routines, or teacher behaviour.

Whatever the factors and influences leading to behaviours of concern, there is always a reason for, or purpose to, behaviours of concern, such as:

* Anxiety and stress
* Communication difficulties
* Sensory issues
* Social understanding
* Inflexible thinking

**Procedures for dealing with pupils displaying behaviours of concern**

St Laurence O’Toole’s NS acknowledges that behaviours of concern within pupils are complex and often multifaceted and have set out procedures to follow to deal with pupils who are displaying behaviours of concern. Our aim at all times is to ensure that children are enabled to learn and develop in a safe and nurturing environment.

The school uses the NEPS (National Educational Psychological Service) approach to dealing with behaviours of concern. This is a problem-solving approach and assesses the needs of children and consequently the support given. Support is provided on a continuum basis. This approach is one of assessment, intervention and review. At all times, the following questions are asked:

* What is the concern?
* Why is it happening?
* How can we help?
* Did it work?

**Step 1: Develop Relationships**

* Initial meetings are held between parents and the school when it becomes initially clear that a pupil is presenting with behaviours of concern. These initial meetings will be information gathering sessions whereby parents can share information, reports, understanding and background information on their child.
* Class teachers and others involved will begin to know and understand what is going on in that child’s life, what likes/dislikes they have, anxieties present and the child's home and background.
* Good relationships between parents and the school are vital to ensure the best possible outcome for all pupils.
* Strategies used: Active listening to develop relationships with children. See Advice sheet 1 (SESS)
* Mentors or ‘buddies’ may be assigned to a child - this will be an adult-child relationship created to give the child a sense of belonging and can be used as a significant other to link in with, apart from class teacher. See Advice sheet 8 (SESS)

**Step 2: Audit the environment**

* Aspects of the physical environment may provide potential triggers for inappropriate behaviour. Therefore, the classroom environment is checked to remove/change anything which might impact negatively on behaviour. See Advice sheets 10 and 27 (SESS)
* The following are looked at: use of space, displays, respect for property and personal space, seating arrangements quiet area, noise, light, air/heat, safety
* Use of sensory breaks, movement breaks, comfort areas established where necessary.

**Step 3: Recording of Behaviours of Concern**:

In all instances, the following steps are taken when a pupil displays behaviours of concern:

* Ensure safety of the child, other children and staff
* Document the behaviour for later analysis
* Consult with parents to ascertain if anything has changed at home to cause the behaviour and to enlist their assistance at the earliest opportunity

All concerning behaviour must be recorded and analysed in accordance with the ABC model.

* A: Antecedent Events
* B: Behaviour
* C: Consequences

Recording of behaviour is concise, comprehensive and clear and will be used to inform decision making in relation to a pupil. See attached template for recording behaviour A,B,C (Advice Sheet 22, SESS).

**Step 4: Analysing Behaviours of Concern:**

* When behaviours of concern persist, the procedures are to continue documenting and analysing.
* Behaviours recorded are analysed to help discern patterns of behaviour and to understand the triggers and conditions which cause behaviours. Understanding the triggers will assist in better managing situations cueing the behaviours and helping the child to better regulate his/her behaviour.

**Step 5: Consultation and Liaison**:

Where a pupil is displaying Behaviours of Concern in a school context, there will be input from many different sources within the school.

* **Class teacher**: records behaviours, liaises with other staff members, draws up plans, links with parents, implements appropriate strategies to contain and modify behaviours of concern (see appendix for strategies used in classrooms). Current and previous class teachers will share expertise/experience.
* **Special Education Teacher (SET)**: A child with behaviours of concern may be assigned to a SET and provided with additional support. SET will also assist in recording and analysing behaviours of concern.
* **SNAs**: SNAs may be deployed to work with pupils exhibiting behaviours of concern. They will work in cooperation and under the direction of the class teacher at all times. They will provide support to the child or may act as a mentor to the child.
* **Principal**: The principal will liaise with class teachers, SET, SNAs, SENCO, parents and external agencies, if necessary, to ensure appropriate support is in place for a pupil displaying behaviours of concern. The principal will link with relevant agencies such as the NCSE, SESS, NEWB, NEPS, DES and other professional services to ensure that relevant support is provided and resourced.
* **SENCO** (Special Educational Needs Coordinator): The principal and the SENCO will liaise and assign resources as necessary for a child exhibiting behaviours of concern.
* Ancillary Staff / Other teachers: All staff will be made aware of the identity of children whose behaviours of concern. This is especially important for pupils who may be a flight risk.

**Step 6: If situation escalates**

Once “small changes” are put in place, a child may revert back to their “normal” behaviour, however, if the situation escalates, the following steps must be considered:

* Inform Principal and SENCO
* Document and analyse - continue to document and analyse behaviours
* Risk assessment - assess the risk of behaviours to the child and other children / adults
* Meeting - meeting with parents, principal, class teacher and/or SET/SNA, depending on the situation. This meeting will set out a clear description of the behaviour that needs to be targeted. It will detail how the behaviour is affecting the child’s education and others' education (if relevant). Steps on how the school would like to proceed to manage behaviour will be explained and parents will be asked for their assistance in the matter. Parents will be made aware of the entire process that will be followed should the behaviours escalate. At all times, it is parents and school working together which will yield more positive outcomes.

**Step 7: Individualised Behaviour Plan**

* An Individualised Behaviour Plan will be devised to manage a child displaying behaviours of concern. It will be drawn up by the classroom teacher, SET and in consultation with the pupils and parents. Short term strategies are agreed and implemented. All adults working with the child will be made aware of strategies to use with children, how to deal with situations and language to use when there are incidents. See Advice Sheet 22 (SESS)
* Recording and analysing will continue
* Referral will be made to NEPS and other appropriate agencies if it is felt that the issue will not be solved in the short-term.
* Steps to draw up Individualised Behaviour Plan

1. Identify problem behaviours
2. Observe and record behaviour (what is happening? / when is it happening? How often?)
3. Analyse data gathered (what does this tell / what can we do?)
4. Implement intervention strategy (identify triggers / identify skills and behaviours we wish child to use / types of rewards and incentives / types of sanctions and consequences to be used) See Advice Sheet 22 (SESS)
5. Evaluate the Intervention (assessment after one day/week/month whether plan is working or not.
6. Review (new targets may be devised following evaluation)

**Step 8: Possible options when behaviours of concern are consistent and not improving**

The school will endeavour with all its resources to ensure that a particular pupil with behaviours of concern can achieve their potential while also allowing everyone else in the school to do likewise. Every case is different but when the behaviour of one pupil is seriously affecting their own education and that of the other pupils, then further actions would be taken. This may include the following:

**Interventions**

* More specialised interventions through external agency for additional support if a child is not already on this pathway.

**Placement**

* Considering if placement is appropriate for the needs of the pupil - reaching such a conclusion is predicated on evidence-based records and frequent meetings between parents and the school staff involved. This can only be put in place when all available resources to facilitate the child overcoming his/her behaviours of concern. Interventions must be given adequate time for success and diligently recorded. All actions taken by the school will be examined to ensure that everything possible has been done to ensure the wellbeing and safety of all children and staff in the school.

**Shortened school day**

* This will be in line with Circular 047/2021

**Suspension**

* All pupils are subject to the Code of Behaviour and in cases of serious/gross misbehaviour involving harm to others or serious damage to property, the BoM may have no option but to resort to suspension.
* The decision to suspend a pupil must be justified on serious grounds such as:
* Pupil’s continued presence in the school at this time constitutes a threat to his/her own safety and safety of others in the school community
* Pupil’s behaviour has had a seriously detrimental effect on his/her own education and education of other pupils
* Pupil is responsible for serious damage to school property
* A single incident of serious/gross misbehaviour may be grounds for suspension
* Suspension procedures will be in line with the Tusla (NEWB), Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools.
* The school will accurately account for:
* The behaviours which have led to the BoM considering suspension
* The measures which have been taken by the school to assist the pupil overcome these behaviours
* The assistance sought from outside agencies - NEPS, SESS, NBSS, etc
* Where NEPS have been involved, they will be made aware of any impending suspension

**Expulsion**

* The decision to expel a pupil must be justified on serious grounds. Such a determination by the principal/BoM that:
* Pupil’s continued presence in the school at this time constitutes a threat to his/her own safety and safety of others in the school community
* Pupil’s behaviour has had a seriously detrimental effect on his/her own education and education of other pupils
* Pupil is responsible for serious damage to school property
* A single incident of serious/gross misbehaviour may be grounds for suspension
* Expulsion procedures will be in line with the Tusla (NEWB), Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools.
* The school will accurately account for:
* The behaviours which have led to the BoM considering expulsion
* The measures which have been taken by the school to assist the pupil overcome these behaviours
* The assistance sought from outside agencies - NEPS, SESS, NBSS, etc
* Where NEPS have been involved, they will be made aware of any impending expulsion
* Expulsion is a very serious step and will only be taken by the BoM is extreme cases of unacceptable behaviour. Significant steps to address the misbehaviour and to avoid expulsion of a student including, as appropriate, meeting with parents and pupil to try to find ways of helping the pupil to change their behaviour:
* Making sure the pupil understands the possible consequence of their behaviour if it should persist
* Ensuring that all other possible options have been tried
* Seeking the assistance of support agencies (NEPS, HSE Community Services, NBSS, CAMHS, NCSE)

**Review**

This policy is a working document and will be reviewed on a regular basis, when necessary or as advice from the DES and other agencies directs.

Signed:

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson of the BoM