

**Ministry of Education and Human Resources,
Tertiary Education and Scientific Research**

Student Behaviour Policy

December 2015

Introduction

Providing a safe, secure and supportive environment where there is responsible social behaviour is a key priority of the school and discipline is a necessity for the proper functioning of a school.

***Good schools start with Good Behaviour** and discipline is essential for effective student learning and achievement. In order to enable effective learning and teaching to take place the highest standards of behaviour in all aspects of school life are expected.*

The term discipline refers in fact to training given to produce a specific character or pattern of behaviour, especially training that produces moral or mental improvement. In other words, discipline is the product of learning and it has to be taught. The ultimate aim is to inculcate self-discipline that reflects positive attitudes and intrinsic values internalised through the process of a holistic education.

It is generally acknowledged that the school is the mirror of the wider society and that student indiscipline is revelatory of deeper social ills. The education system therefore has to provide the right response to address this societal problem and measures have to be taken to deal with a wide variety of contributory factors ranging from parental responsibility, school leadership and management to teacher personality and style, pedagogical efficiency, teacher-pupil relationship and school culture.

This policy document provides guidelines on the systems to be implemented at the level of schools to promote and encourage students to behave well, work hard and be successful (rewards and incentives) and also explains the actions to be taken in case of non-adherence (consequences) to such guidelines.

1. AIMS OF THIS POLICY

1. To have a common, workable policy for the management of student behaviour;
2. To ensure a consistent approach across all schools in the management of indiscipline;
3. To provide a general framework for schools to elaborate their specific behaviour policies;
4. To support measures towards the promotion of high behaviour standards among students;
5. To reinforce the authority of schools in acting against indiscipline; and
6. To set down responsibilities at all levels for the controlling and monitoring of student behaviour

2. PRINCIPLES OF THIS POLICY

1. Each student has the right to learn and to be respected by others;
2. Every teacher has the right to teach without untoward disruption;
3. Children and adolescents cannot be expected to behave like mature adults;
4. Maintaining appropriate student behaviour is an essential condition for teaching and learning;
5. Behaviour is learned and teaching good behaviour is an integral part of the school curriculum;
6. Emphasis must constantly be on self-discipline and responsibility;
7. Sanctions are effective only when used sparingly but consistently;
8. Child protection principles and safeguarding of child rights must remain at all times central to behaviour policies;
9. Students learn constructively from their mistakes and every incident of misbehaviour has to be seen as educative;
10. An approach focused on positive encouragement and praise towards students is likely to develop a sense of well-being and a feeling of belonging for all;

11. The foremost contributor to good student behaviour is a positive, stimulating, encouraging, supportive, friendly and rewarding atmosphere;
12. High quality delivery of teaching is central to positive student behaviour;
13. Heads of Schools have primary and direct responsibility for maintaining the orderly functioning of their institutions and individual safety within the school; and
14. All members of the school community share responsibility for the promotion of high standards of student behaviour.

3. ESSENTIAL ASPECTS OF GOOD DISCIPLINE.

1. All members of the school community should be made aware of expected standards of acceptable behaviour;
2. Approach dealing with several aspects of indiscipline should be consistent, as should be the case of praise for good behaviour;
3. There should be clearly defined guidelines at the school level to maintain high standards;
4. Courtesy at all levels should be encouraged; and
5. The entire school community has a key role to play including, teachers, non-teaching staff, parents and children.

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Maintaining discipline is a responsibility conferred upon Rectors, Deputy Rectors, Senior Educators, Educators and School Superintendents as per their Schemes of Service. It is also the direct responsibility of the school administration to put in place effective control mechanisms that allow the institution to run smoothly.

4.1. SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

Heads of schools have prime and direct responsibility for discipline within their institution. They are required to

1. Stimulate a school-wide approach in preventing and/or tackling indiscipline;
2. Lead by example, be regular in attendance and punctual and be role models for the students;
3. Develop strategies in terms of the organisation, systems and school curriculum towards supporting the development of students' social and emotional skills;
4. Work in partnership with parents to develop and support the social and emotional skills that pupils need within their school community and within the wider community outside school;
5. Promote a positive school culture and well-ordered environment;
6. Put in place effective monitoring and control mechanisms for the orderly running of their institutions;
7. Act promptly against all forms of student indiscipline by way of both preventive actions and restorative justice practices where students assume responsibility for their actions;
8. Work in partnership with parents and ensure that they are involved in discussions before any situation is allowed to deteriorate;
9. Develop the sense of belonging to the school among their students and staff;
10. Provide all necessary support to teachers in their endeavours to sustain high standards of behaviour;
11. Identify performance gaps of staff and create conditions for improvement;
12. Arrange for in-house sharing of experiences and good practices; and
13. Organise and facilitate training of staff to enhance their capacity to manage challenging behaviour.

4.2. STAFF

While Educators are expected to demonstrate high professional standards in the management of their individual classes, they and other staff are also expected to:

1. Lead by example, be regular in attendance and punctual and be role models for the students;
 2. Ensure constant supervision of students and ascertain that they understand the meaning of acceptable behaviour;
 3. Collaborate in maintaining discipline during morning assembly and other events and activities;
 4. Strive for high standards of courtesy and behaviour in every aspect of relationships within the school;
 5. Intervene promptly and firmly when encountering unacceptable behaviour and be consistent in their responses to same;
 6. Support the implementation of the school behaviour programmes in a spirit of corporate responsibility;
 7. Draw the attention of the Head of School on any student whose behaviour is worthy of notice (praiseworthy or negative);
 8. Be supportive of students and colleagues and demonstrate good team spirit;
 9. Treat all students fairly and equally seeking to raise their self-esteem and develop their full potential;
 10. Take every opportunity to promote and reward good behaviour, achievement and effort; and
 11. Be the positive representatives of their institution through their professionalism at all times.
- Teachers Unions are called upon to collaborate in continually sensitising their members on their responsibility as role models and in promoting the ethics of their profession by way of a Code of Conduct.

4.3. STUDENTS

Every student is responsible for his own behaviour and to act in a manner that demonstrates self-discipline and a sense of responsibility. They are expected to

1. Abide by their School Behaviour Policy rules;
2. Have a positive approach to their school life;
3. Show courtesy and respect at all times towards others;
4. Be regular in attendance and punctual;
5. Co-operate with their peers and staff;
6. Recognise that no poor standards of behaviour will be accepted;
7. Develop a sense of community and of caring for each other and for the environment;
8. Accept responsibility for a well-ordered community at school and take a positive role in the running of the school; and
9. Demonstrate a positive image of their school through their exemplary behaviour at and outside school.

4.4. PARENTS

It is recognized that parental involvement and responsibility are essential and parents are accountable for their children and their behaviour. They have the essential role to strive for their children demonstrating good and acceptable behaviour at all times, recognising that this has a profound effect upon their attitudes at school. They are expected to:

1. Abide by and endorse the Rules and Regulations and any other policies of the school;
2. Encourage an attitude of respect for the environment, and for one another among their children;
3. Fully collaborate with the school in the elaboration and implementation of behaviour resolution measures for their wards;

4. Share discussions with teachers and the Head of School concerning their child's education, welfare and behaviour and any concerns, difficulties or anxieties;
5. Encourage their child to project a positive image of the school at all times; and
6. Ensure the regular attendance (minimum 90% attendance rate) and punctuality of their child.

5. BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT AT SCHOOL LEVEL

It is the direct responsibility of the school administration to put in place effective mechanisms for maintaining the orderly functioning of the institution.

- ★ Rectors are empowered under Section 34 of the Education Regulations, reproduced hereunder, to "*make such rules for the administration and discipline of the school as he may deem fit.*"
- ★ These Regulations also provide for the Head of Schools to "*require his staff to perform such duties in the execution of these rules as he may deem fit, and he may authorise them to inflict such punishments, other than corporal punishment, as he may deem fit for any misconduct or breach of the rules of which a pupil may be found guilty at any time and in any place.*"
- ★ Article 19 of the **Convention on the Rights of the Child**, however, stipulates that children be protected from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any person who has the care of the child.
- ★ Similarly, Article 28 (2) requires that school discipline be "*administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the Convention.*"

6. KEY PRINCIPLES OF BEST PRACTICE

The following are some key principles of best practice to which full commitment is required in the prevention and tackling of behaviour problems:

1. A positive school culture and climate which
 - is welcoming of difference and diversity, supportive and is based on inclusivity;
 - is free from any form of violence, coercion and discrimination or other causes of stress and tension; and
 - promotes respectful interpersonal relationships across the school community.
2. Strong and effective leadership for stimulating a school-wide approach and preventing and tackling indiscipline with support and commitment of the whole school community;
3. Well-planned behaviour programmes for the implementation of preventive strategies (including awareness raising measures);
4. Effective supervision and monitoring of students;
5. Empowerment of students and active student participation in school policies;
6. Support and advice services for students;
7. Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of undisciplined behaviour; and
8. On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the school's behaviour policy and behaviour programmes.

7. SCHOOL BEHAVIOUR POLICY

The approach of the school to behaviour management should be encapsulated within a School Behaviour Policy, a formal document elaborated in consultation with the school community and setting the expected behaviour standards.

A Students' Charter and a Teachers' Charter may also be elaborated and annexed to the School Behaviour Policy.

Key elements constituting the School Behaviour Policy are as follows:

- The School's Vision and Mission statements and values it wants to see upheld
- Rights, roles and responsibilities of each component of the school community for maintaining high behaviour standards
- Rules, procedures and protocols setting boundaries and expectations
- Rewards and incentive schemes
- Breaches, consequences and sanctions
- Mechanisms for control, monitoring, follow-up and support
- Restorative justice practices and programmes for behaviour problem resolution.

8. DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

It is essential for schools to have a range of disciplinary actions in place to provide firm responses to disruptive behaviour. Such actions shall aim at helping the student to develop a sense of right and wrong and shall not be directed against the student as a person.

8.1. MINOR OFFENCES

These will be dealt with using available means such that management and teaching staff can act in a firm and consistent manner in all such cases that disturb the smooth running of school activities or threaten the rule of order.

Examples are

- Immediate checking of misbehaviour;
- Verbal reprimand;
- Repeated or extra work where work is of an unacceptable standard;
- Note to parents in the Student Journal; and
- Issue of a warning

Teachers will consider a sending out only when there is no other way to defuse a potentially very difficult situation in class or when it is exceptionally impossible to continue the lesson because of the behaviour of a particular student.

The following may be used as deterrents in case of repetition of misbehaviour

- Temporary suspension of privileges
- Temporary suspension from activities e.g. school trips and sports activities
- Issue of a written warning

In very occasional circumstances if the above does not prove successful, the case will be referred to the school administration for further disciplinary procedures.

8.2. SERIOUS OFFENCES

More serious offences or gross misbehaviour in breach of the School Rules and Regulations shall be addressed through disciplinary actions escalated as hereunder:

- **Detentions - Afternoon detentions and Saturday detentions**

provided

- i). The offence is serious enough as to warrant this action;
- ii). Prior official written warning has been issued;
- iii). Parents have been informed in advance;
- iv). Arrangements have been made for the supervision of the student during the detention class; and
- v). Tasks given for the detention are meaningful and help towards behaviour resolution

- **Temporary suspension**

To be applied only in cases of gross or persistent serious misbehaviour provided

- i). The suspension has been recommended by the School Disciplinary Committee

Disciplinary Committees in schools

It is common practice in schools to set up their Disciplinary Committee to support the school administration in maintaining discipline.

It is usually called upon to enquire into cases of gross misbehaviour, serious incidents and persistent misconduct and make recommendations for action to the Head of School.

This body also assumes an important role in constantly monitoring problem areas and proposing preventive and corrective measures.

Both staff and students are represented within the Disciplinary Committee.

- ii). The suspension period does not exceed 5 days
- iii). Provision is made for enabling a considered, positive resolution process and re-entry plan.
- iv). Parents are informed in writing of the reasons for the suspension as well as conditions attached to the period of suspension and those to be met prior to the student's re-entry to school.

- **Official final warning**

In case of persistent breach or serious discipline incidents even after three periods of temporary suspension

Provided the case is fully supported by objective evidence of involvement in past discipline incidents and failure of behaviour resolution measures.

Any serious recurrence would entail a permanent expulsion from the school.

- **Expulsion from the school**

Where there is persistent breach or serious discipline incident after an official final warning has been issued

Parents will be notified and the case will be examined by a School Discipline Advisory Panel at the level of the Zone /PSSA which will facilitate the admission to another school, especially in the case of students below compulsory schooling age.

A student will be able to benefit of this opportunity only once during his secondary schooling.

- **Permanent Expulsion**

The ultimate sanction to be considered when serious acts of indiscipline are reported after expulsion from one school and admission to another.

In accordance with the Education Regulations and the PSSA Regulations no student should be expelled from any school without the authorisation of the Minister.

8.3. CRIMINAL OFFENCES

Criminal offences shall be reported to the Police to be dealt with under the relevant section of the law. The responsibility for conducting criminal investigation shall rest upon the Police and the school shall provide its full collaboration.

9. BULLYING

Bullying is a form of behaviour where an individual or group deliberately uses power to hurt or intimidate over a period of time, or in an isolated incident. It is important to recognize that bullying could occur between individual or group of students but also between staff and students.

Bullying, whether verbal, physical or psychological, is a behaviour which is deliberately hurtful. It involves aggression and unequal power relationship resulting in pain and distress which are often persistent. Bullying should not be tolerated in any of its forms and should be considered as being a very serious offence to be dealt with accordingly and with all required severity.

Preventive approaches should be adopted to make the school a bully free zone for all. Victims and other students should be encouraged to come forward and disclose any averred or suspected cases which should be addressed very cautiously to avoid repercussions from the bully.

While support should be provided to the child victim as a first priority, the school should consider productive ways of working with bullies towards changing their aggressive attitudes as well as other constructive responses aiming at avoiding repetition.

10. CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

- In accordance with Section 13 (4) of the **Education Regulations 1957** it is unlawful to inflict any form of **physical or corporal punishment on any student.**

The following is the definition of corporal punishment provided by the **Ombudsperson for Children** in the **Annual Report 2011**:

“Any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light. Most involves hitting (“smacking”, “slapping”, “spanking”) children with the hand or with an implement (a whip, stick, belt, shoe, wooden spoon etc.). But it can involve, for example, kicking, shaking or throwing children, scratching, pinching, biting, pulling hair or boxing ears, caning, forcing children to stay in uncomfortable positions, burning, scalding or forced ingestion.”

- The **Child Protection Act 1994** explicitly states that *“Any person who ill-treats a child or otherwise exposes a child to harm shall commit an offence.”*

All cases of reported corporal punishment shall be subject to enquiry and dealt with under the relevant sections of the legislations.

11. THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

In its role as the regulator and facilitator, the Ministry endeavours to assume responsibility in respect of the following:

1. Enabling policy and/or legal frameworks as may be required;
2. A National Curriculum that promotes Values Education and fosters the development of social and emotional skills;
3. Collaborative, synergistic networking and exchange of information with relevant partners to support schools in addressing behaviour-related issues;
4. Counselling and other support services;
5. Provision of human and other resources as may be required by schools; and
6. Training and continuous professional development of school staff.

Indiscipline – Protocol for Schools

I PRELIMINARY ACTIONS (AT THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR)

1. Set up a behaviour management team¹

- 1.1. Identify major indiscipline issues to be tackled
- 1.2. Work out the School Behaviour Management Programme that includes, *inter alia*
 - 1.2.1. Information, sensitisation and awareness raising programmes
 - 1.2.2. Activities that integrate behaviour-related issues within the school curriculum
 - 1.2.3. School-based training for staff and members of school bodies
 - 1.2.4. Promotion of a positive school climate and enhancement of quality of life at school
- 1.3. Review existing control and monitoring systems for greater effectiveness
- 1.4. Plan the strategies for information and communication

2. Set up the Disciplinary Committee, Pastoral Care Committee, Student Care and Counselling Desk and other help desks

3. Set up and empower Student Bodies

4. Brief students, staff, Form Teachers and members of the various school bodies on their roles and responsibilities

5. Communicate to whole school on help desks and available lines of communication

¹ In addition to planning the Behaviour Management Programme, the team will be fully involved in its implementation, periodic assessment and review.

II REPORTED SERIOUS INDISCIPLINE INCIDENT

A Immediate actions

A.1 Carry out a first enquiry to obtain preliminary details

A.1.1 In case of injury,

A.1.1.1 *Provide First Aid and/or refer case to medical centre*

A.1.2 In case of suspected possession/consumption of illicit substances

A.1.2.1 *Isolate student and place under supervision*

A.1.2.2 *Inform ADSU*

A.1.3 In case of violent physical assault

A.1.3.1 *Inform Police and BPM*

A.2 Inform parents by phone

A.3 Inform Zone and Ministry by phone

A.4 Report incident by fax to Zone and Ministry

A.4.1 In case of suspected child abuse

A.4.1.1 *Report to CDU*

A.4.2 In case of cyber offence

A.4.2.1 *Report to ICTA*

A.4.2.2 *Report to CERT² if necessary*

B Follow-up actions

B.1 Meet parents of perpetrators and victims

B.2 Obtain latest information on victim's health status

B.3 If required,

B.3.1 *Seek parental consent for psychological back-up support to victim*

B.3.2 *Refer case to NECS for Psychological back-up and counselling*

C Enquiry

C.1 Conduct further enquiry to establish facts and responsibilities

C.2 Send follow-up report to Zone/Ministry

C.3 Report updates to Zone/Ministry on a daily basis

D Disciplinary proceedings

D.1 Retrieve disciplinary records of perpetrators

- D.1.1 Take disciplinary action depending on nature and seriousness of offence
- D.1.2 In case of very serious and/or recurrent offence
 - D.1.2.1 Refer to Disciplinary Committee*
 - D.1.2.2 Take disciplinary action based on recommendations of Disciplinary Committee*
- D.1.3 Inform parents of disciplinary actions
- D.1.4 Update disciplinary records of students
- D.1.5 Inform Zone/Ministry

E Behaviour resolution

E.1 Monitor closely behaviour of offenders

- E.1.1 In case of a recurrent offender
 - E.1.1.1 Meet parents and teachers*
 - E.1.1.2 Work out and agree on a Behaviour Improvement Plan, including pastoral care and counselling for student*
 - E.1.1.3 Implement plan and monitor progress*
 - E.1.1.4 Evaluate periodically and review if necessary until resolution of behaviour problem*

E.2 Reward/recognise behaviour improvement

² CERT: Computer Emergency Response Team to remove defamatory clip or obscene materials