St. Paul's Secondary School

OUGHTERARD, COUNTY GALWAY.

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POLICY ON SUSPENSION

Ceist Charter values have informed this Policy on Suspension

Suspension is defined as:

Requiring the student to absent himself/herself from the School for a specified, limited period of School days.

The Board of Management of St. Paul's Secondary School has delegated the authority to suspend to the Principal. The Principal reports suspensions on an on-going basis to the Board of Management at Board meetings. The reasons for and the duration of each suspension is reported – NEWB.

Grounds for Suspension

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 constitutes a threat to safety.**
- **The student is responsible for serious damage to property.**
- **A single incident of serious misconduct may be the grounds for suspension.**

Factors to be considered before suspending a student (refer to Page 72 of Guidelines for Schools):-

- **The nature and seriousness of the behaviour.**
- **The context of the behaviour.**
- **The impact of the behaviour.**
- **The interventions tried to date.**
- **Whether suspension is a proportionate response.**
- **The possible impact of suspension.**

Suspension as part of a Behaviour Management Plan.

Suspension should be part of an agreed plan to address the student's behaviour. The suspension should:-

- **enable the School to set behavioural goals with the students and their parents/guardians.**
- **Give School staff an opportunity to plan interventions.**
- **Impress on a student and his/her parents/guardians the seriousness of the behaviour.**

Forms of Suspension

Immediate Suspension

In exceptional circumstances, the Principal may consider an immediate suspension to be necessary where the continued presence of the student in the School at the time would represent a serious threat to the safety of students or staff of the School or any other person. Fair procedures must still be applied.

Suspension during a State Examination

This sanction should normally be approved by the Board of Management and should only be used where there is:-

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

Fair procedures must still be applied.

"Automatic" Suspension

Suspension will be considered an appropriate sanction for the following:-

- **Failure to attend after School detention on two occasions without communication to the School.**
- **Verbal abuse of teachers.**
- **Serious or persistent damage to property.**
- **Persistent bullying behaviour.**
- **Persistent disruption of class.**
- **Under the influence of or in the possession of alcohol**
- **Under the influence of or in the possession of drugs/legal substances that can cause highs. Note that suspension may be an initial sanction and other sanctions up to and including expulsion may be considered depending on the incident.**
- **Leaving the School or its grounds without any prior consent.**
- **Accumulation of 15 Report Cards/3 automatic detentions/combination of either - as per Discipline Code .**
- **Serious incident of misconduct**
- **Serious disruption / misuse of online learning platform**

- **Unsupervised and / or unauthorised use of the PE equipment in the PE Hall as this may pose a safety risk to oneself or another individual**
- **Exiting the school premises via the designated Fire Gate to the rear of the school**

Procedures in respect of Suspension
Where preliminary assessment of the facts confirms serious misbehaviour that could warrant suspension, the following should be observed:-

- **Inform student and their parents/guardians about the complaint.**
- **Give parents/guardians and the student an opportunity to respond.**

In the case of an immediate suspension, parents/guardians must be notified and arrangements made with them for the student to be collected.

Fair procedures will apply to the investigation and the process of decision making as to:-

(a) whether the student did engage in the misbehaviour; and
(b) what sanction to impose.

Period of Suspension
A student should not be suspended for more than three days, except in exceptional circumstances. The matter is then referred to the Board of Management for consideration and approval. The Board may authorise the Principal, with the approval of the Chairperson of the Board, to impose a suspension of up to 5 days where the Board are unable to meet. Any proposal to suspend a pupil 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 should be formally reviewed by the Board of Management. Any such suspension is subject to appeal under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998.

Appeals
The Board of Management should offer an opportunity to appeal a Principal's decision to suspend a student. A patron may provide a process to appeal a decision by the Board.

Section 29 Appeal
Where the total number of days for which a student has been suspended in the current school year reaches 20 days, the parents/guardians or a student aged over 18 years may appeal the suspension under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998 as amended by the Education Act, 2007. They should be made aware of this and given information on how to appeal.

Implementing the Suspension
The Principal should notify the parents/guardians and the student in writing of the decision to suspend. The letter should confirm:-

- **the period of suspension**

- **the dates on which the suspension begins and ends**
- **the reasons for the suspension**
- **the arrangements for returning to school (a Contract of Behaviour to be signed reaffirming commitment to the code of behaviour)**
- **the provision of an appeal to the Board of Management.**
- **The right to appeal to the Secretary General of the DES (Education Act, 1998, Section 29).**

The Principal or a member of staff should meet with the parents/guardians emphasising their responsibility in helping the student to behave well on his/her return and to offer help and guidance with this.

Grounds for Removing a Suspension

A suspension may be removed if the Board of Management decides to do so or if the Secretary General of the DES directs so following an appeal under Section 29 of the Education Act.

The Principal or Year Head should meet with the student on his/her return. A student should be given the opportunity for a fresh start.

Records

Formal written records should be kept of:-

- **the investigation**
- **the decision making process**
- **the decision and the rationale for the decision**
- **the duration of the suspension**
- **any condition attached to the suspension.**

The Principal should report all suspensions to the Board of Management, with the reasons for and the duration of each suspension. The Principal should report all suspensions to the NEWB.

The Board of Management should review the use of suspension in the School at regular intervals.

Signed: _____

Date: 18 April 2025