



SCOIL CARMEL JNS
Managing Behaviours Of Concern Policy

www.scoilcarmeljns.com

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1. Introductory Statement

Scoil Carmel JNS is an inclusive mixed Junior National School catering for boys and girls from Junior Infants to Second class. We have 16 mainstream classes and a newly established class for children with ASD. This policy stems from Scoil Carmel JNS commitment to providing a happy and safe teaching and learning environments for all our pupils. We understand that children need a safe and secure environment, both at home and in school. This policy is designed to ensure that the rights of all pupils, their peers and the staff who support them, are protected and upheld so that everyone can learn, work and develop socially and academically in an environment that is respectful, happy, safe and inclusive.

Promoting positive behaviour, managing challenging behaviour and managing behaviours of concern is necessary to ensure that all children can attend school in an environment that is conducive to learning and to socialising. As a school, we are committed to promoting and modelling positive behaviour management practices. Our school community is treated with respect and dignity and great emphasis is placed on building positive relationships with pupils and parents/guardians alike. At Scoil Carmel JNS, we are proud of the positive relationships and partnerships that exist between home and school.

2. Definition of Behaviours of Concern

Behaviours of concern are often defined 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).

In Scoil Carmel JNS, behaviours of concern are viewed as those behaviours that interfere with the child’s learning and/or that of others and threaten the safety of the child and/or of those around them. We understand that these behaviours can be triggered by a myriad of factors such as major transitions in a child’s life, sensory processing difficulties, trauma, anxiety and diagnoses including but not limited to ASD/SEBD/ADHD. External factors such as adverse childhood experiences may also influence a child’s behaviour.

Some children will display behaviours of concern arising from distress or anxiety due to their inability to cope with what they perceive to be the overwhelming experience of being in a classroom. In such cases, it is important that both parents/guardians and the school recognise children in such situations can respond by displaying behaviours of concern as a coping mechanism. Parents/guardians should be aware that such behaviours, where they are aggressive or violent, can often be a cause of distress to the pupil themselves and may frighten other pupils.

At Scoil Carmel JNS, we have a skilled and committed teaching team, SNA team and Ancillary staff. When a pattern of behaviour of concerns is noted, the class teacher will:

- Liaise with the parents/guardians of the pupil and with the principal/deputy principal
- Consult with the Behaviour Management Team



- Work alongside the SET/SNA to seek advice, guidance and support in identifying triggers and implementing appropriate interventions.
- Seek support from Outside Agencies such as NEPs, the NCSE/SENO and members of Multi-Disciplinary Teams etc.

The principal is committed to facilitating professional development at individual and whole-school level which relates to behaviour or any interventions which may support the child in regulating their behaviour. Positive parent/guardian input is necessary for ensuring that pupils are supported and encouraged to respect (and in so far as is practicable) uphold the values and expectations of our school. These expectations are communicated to pupils in ways that are appropriate to their learning styles, intellectual and emotional ages.

3. Behaviours of Concern

The following are some examples of behaviours of concern, which when occur frequently and with high intensity have an adverse and often irreparable impact on the child themselves, their peers and the staff who support them. This is a non-exhaustive list:

- **Aggressive behaviour:** pinching, biting, scratching, punching, slapping, pushing, pulling, kicking, head butting, pulling hair, using objects against people and themselves
- **Non-compliance:** lying down, hiding under the table, refusing to follow instructions, resistance to teaching, refusing to do things
- **Disruptive or threatening behaviour:** shouting, screaming, swearing, repetitive vocalisation, verbal abuse, remarks/discrimination, curses, gestures or threats to harm, teasing, arguing, interrupting
- **Flight risk:** wandering outside the classroom when it is not safe to do so, running away or trying to run away with an attempt to leave the school building
- **Sexually inappropriate behaviour:** inappropriate sexual language or sexual gestures including inappropriate comments about the sexuality of others
- **Destruction of property:** intentional damage to property belonging to self, other children or adults, intentional damage to school property
- **Socially-inappropriate behaviour:** spitting, swearing
- **Self-injurious behaviour:** head banging, scratching, biting and poking

4. Strategies for Promoting Positive Behaviour for SEN Pupils

The following are some of the strategies used in Scoil Carmel JNS to support pupils with SEN to understand their behaviour and to promote positive behaviour. The need for consistent approaches in identifying triggers and managing behaviours of concern is recognised by all staff members. This is a non-exhaustive list:

- Regular communication with parents – home/school notebook (positive news only), email, phone calls, informal and formal meetings (with the class teacher, SET, SNA, principal, deputy principal, and where deemed necessary the Chairperson of BoM)
- Developing and implementing Individual Behaviour Support Plans in consultation with parents/guardians (These may range from sticker charts



focusing on one behaviour, behaviour contracts or more detailed individual behaviour plans).

- Reinforce positive behaviour through praise, good news notes, rewards, visits to the principal/other teachers to celebrate successes etc.
- Differentiating learning activities so that tasks are matched to pupils' abilities
- Differentiating learning activities so that tasks are aligned with pupils' area of special interest
- Looking at the classroom's physical environment with a view to identifying potential triggers (NEPs BESD checklist)
- Rearranging the layout of the classroom and adapting classroom management practices accordingly
- Engaging with members of the pupil's Multi-Disciplinary Teams
- Modelling positive language and problem-solving skills
- Supporting the pupil to regulate by using the wide range of sensory equipment available in the school (chair socks, weighted blankets, weighted neck pads, move-n-sit cushions, writing slants, fidget toys, ear defenders, setting up a dark den etc.)
- Developing the language and communication skills of the pupil using approaches such as Lámh, Gestalt Language Learning Approach, PECS, Assistive Technology etc.
- Using visual cues to reinforce verbal instructions
- Giving clear and simple instructions using the First/Next/Then or Now/Then approach
- Giving the pupil as many opportunities to regulate throughout the day- proprioceptive input breaks, emotional regulation breaks, vestibular input breaks, calming breaks (meditation, breathing, blowing bubbles through a straw etc.)
- Providing opportunities to use the Sensory Room before the pupil becomes dysregulated
- Providing opportunities for the pupil to go to a quiet dark space in the classroom (tent, table with blanket over it etc.)
- Providing the pupil with opportunities to use a Break Station in the classroom
- Using timers to plan for transitions
- Using visuals to break down tasks
- Using visual schedules to support the pupils in following classroom routines
- Implementing reward systems (token economies)
- Using Circle Time
- Developing Buddy/Social Groups
- Using Choice boards with visuals for tasks and regulation breaks
- Writing tailored Social Stories (Carol Gray)

5. Methods of Communicating with Parents/Guardians

Communicating with parents/guardians is central to maintaining a positive approach to working with pupils. A high level of cooperation and open communication is seen as an integral factor in encouraging positive behaviour in the school. Structures and channels designed to maintain a high level of communication among staff and between staff, pupils and parents/guardians are currently being revised.



6. School Behaviour Management Team

The school has established a Behaviour Management Team whose function is to advise and assist those directly involved in a behaviour of concern situation when it arises. The Behaviour Management Team will consist of those staff members who have special training or experience in Behaviour Management, currently comprising of the:

- Principal Ms Irene Quinn
- Deputy Principal Ms Maria Jones
- Assistant Principal 1 Ms Carol Fitzmaurice

7. Staff Training in Behaviour Management

In Scoil Carmel JNS, engagement with professional learning is encouraged and is facilitated to support staff in developing their skills and confidence in promoting positive behaviour management practices, and to appropriately identify and record triggers and to implement appropriate interventions to manage the behaviours of concern.

Professional Development Facilitated for Staff in Scoil Carmel 2022-2023

- Sensory Regulation for Behaviour Management and Learning-Atlas Occupational Therapy
Behaviour Management 101- Edel Horan NCSE
- Positive Handling Techniques — Optima Training & Consulting (**Handling/Physical Intervention will only be used when a child poses a serious threat to themselves, or others and staff are acting in loco parentis**)
- Aspects of TEEACH training -Maria Jones/Carol Fitzmaurice & Niall Switzer NCSE
- Developing a Revised Code of Behaviour in Line with NEWB Guidelines-Maria Jones
- Emotional Regulation Break Training (October 2023) Rebecca Duff OT HSE

Professional Development Attended by the Principal and Deputy Principal in Scoil Carmel 2022-2023

- Behaviours of Concern - Limiting your school's liability- ESCI
- The Big Legal Challenges Facing Schools for 2023- Mason, Hayes & Curran LLP
- Behaviours of Concern - NABMSE in Conjunction with Millet & Matthews LLP
- Key Legal Concerns for School Boards of Management, Hayes & Curran (Injury to staff and pupils-accommodating the complex needs of students v the health and safety of students and staff)

8. Responsibilities for Behaviour Management

Teachers are responsible for:



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- Implementing positive behaviour classroom management practices so as to ensure a safe and supportive classroom environment (emphasis on prevention rather than intervention)
- Informing the principal/deputy principal when a child is displaying behaviours of concern
- Using the Low Arousal Approach when dealing with behaviours of concern to ensure that the child feels safe
- Opening a School Support File for the pupil if required
- Developing an Individual Behaviour Support Plan in consultation with parents/guardians if required
- Engaging in professional development which supports their understanding of behaviour
- Documenting incidences of behaviours of concern in the Log of Actions in the pupil's School Support File
- Recording serious incidents on the Scoil Carmel Incident Report form and giving a copy of the principal to the principal and to parents/guardians
- Engaging with and following advice/guidance from Outside Agencies
- Implementing any strategies/interventions outlined in professional report

SNAs will be responsible for:

- Yard supervision, in addition to teacher supervision, for pupils who require support on account of a significant physical disability, medical condition or those who are displaying behaviours of concern
- Supervision in class and during transitions for pupils displaying significant behaviours of concern
- Assisting with the identification of triggers (which may be leading to behaviours of concern) whilst doing so under the direction/guidance of the class teacher /SET
- Assisting with the implementation of an Individual Behaviour Support Plan in cases where all other interventions have been unsuccessful
- Supporting the use of recommendations outlined by Outside Agencies which support the pupils primary care needs
- Following the guidance/direction of the class teacher when supporting a dysregulated pupil e.g. using none or minimal language and giving the child space etc.
- Assisting with Braille, Lámh, Sign Language, PECS and alternative communication systems etc. if required to do so
- Engaging in CPD relevant to the needs of pupils on their caseload at whole school and individual level
- Providing additional supervision in class, for transitions and on yard, as required
- Withdrawal of the pupil from the class/setting if necessary to complete an appropriate movement break as outlined in the pupils Support/Care Plan(s)
- Supporting the development of an environment which reduces stimulus for students displaying significant behaviours of concern



Parents/Guardians will be responsible for:

- Communicating with the child's teacher (in the first instance) and or the principal/deputy principal in relation to concerns about their child's behaviour
- Providing input in the development of a School Support Plan if one is required
- Providing input in the development of an Individual Behaviour Support Plan if one is required
- Cooperating with interventions and behavioural strategies that are proposed by the pupil's teacher/SET and or the principal/deputy principal
- Attending initial and review meetings to discuss the behaviours of concern and appropriate interventions and plans etc.
- Cooperating with advice, interventions and behavioural strategies that are proposed by Outside Agencies such as NEPs and the NCSE/SENO etc.
- Collaboratively engaging with the school and Outside Agencies in the best interest of the child

The Principal will be responsible for:

- Facilitating the development of a supportive school environment which promotes positive behaviour management
- Implementing the 'Behaviours of Concern' Policy within the school
- Scheduling initial and review meetings with parents/guardians, class teacher/SET to discuss the behaviours of concern
- Leading the school in relation to the management of pupils displaying behaviours of concern
- Facilitating access of all staff to professional learning in relation to behaviours of concern
- Seeking support and advice from Outside Agencies, such as support NEPS and the NCSE/SENO
- Reporting serious incidences of behaviours of concern to the Chairperson of BoM
- Liaising with the BoM in deciding on a course of action (reduced day, period of longer suspension and expulsion as a last resort) when all interventions (Individual Behaviour Support Plans, varied interventions, support from Outside Agencies etc.) have been exhausted

9. The School's Capacity to meet the needs of Pupils Exhibiting Behaviours of Concern

The school will discuss with parents/guardians:

- The learning or social needs the pupil may have in relation to attending school
- The school will seek and receive full cooperation from the parents in relation to how the school will work with them and their child to meet his/her needs.
- Relevant staff members will analyse all information pertaining to the pupil's behavioural issues so that the school can begin to identify triggers for the pupil's behaviour
- The school will make the parents aware of the role of Outside Agencies such as the NEPs and the NCSE/SENO etc.
- The principal will request all relevant paperwork which might assist them in seeking the required resources from Outside Agencies or the DE in relation to



their child

10. Consequences for Repeated Incidences and Very Serious Incidences of Behaviours of Concern

For repeated incidences or very serious incidences of behaviours of concern a shortened day or suspension may be considered by the school. Expulsion, as a last resort may also be considered by the school. Aggressive, threatening or violent behaviour towards other pupils and members of staff and serious damage to another person's or school property may lead to the below outlined consequences.

11. The Use of a Reduced School Day

Circular 0047/2021 was issued to schools, as Guidelines for the use of Reduced School Days in Schools, which came into effect from January 1st 2022. They can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/63545-the-use-of-reduced-school-days>

In the context of very challenging behaviour and behaviours of concern, reduced school days should only ever be considered in very limited and time-bound circumstances. It is acknowledged that a reduced school day may be helpful in exceptional circumstances as part of a transition or reintegration intervention, based on the needs of individual pupils. Any such arrangement should be short-term and transitional, and designed to assist the pupil to attend for the full school day. Where in exceptional circumstances schools are placing a pupil on a reduced school day, the school:

- Must have previously engaged with the relevant support services and professionals, including the SENO where appropriate, and have developed and implemented a Student Support Plan and or an Individual Behaviour Support Plan for an appropriate period of time
- Have clear evidence-based reasons for considering a reduced school day as a relevant and appropriate intervention with the best interests of the pupil at the core of the decision
- Have the written consent of the parents/guardians of the student, and must also document if parental consent is subsequently withdrawn
- Shall notify TESS of the decision to place a student on a reduced school day no later than the first day of the commencement of each episode of a reduced school day Should notify the NCSE/SENO of the decision to place the student on a reduced school day where the student has special educational needs
- Should formulate and agree a plan for the reduced school day intervention which will specify the following: start, review and end dates; any educational supports or interventions to be provided for the pupil during the period of the reduced school day; the actions required to support the student's return to school and reintegration to a full-time school day
- The plan with respect to the reduced school day intervention and return to school will have regard to any relevant medical reports or other relevant information held in the student's support file. The intervention and return to school plan must be discussed and agreed in collaboration with the



parents/guardians.

- Ideally, the period for which the pupil is on a reduced school day, should not exceed six school weeks. A reduced school day cannot be carried forward from one academic year to the next
- Must include in the plan of action outlined above, the name of a contact person in the school with whom the parents/guardians may communicate with, and, where appropriate, any work plan for the time during which the pupil will not be in attendance at the school
- Shall provide the parents/guardians with a copy of the agreed plan, signed by parents/guardians and the school principal, and retain a copy which must be given to the EWO or a member of the DE Inspectorate if requested. A copy should also be retained on the student support file.
- Should consider a graduated regime of school attendance which increases steadily and incrementally towards full attendance
- Shall submit a new notification form to TESS when the period during which the student has been on a reduced school day is extended no later than the first day of renewal of the plan
- Shall keep a record of all instances of students being placed on a reduced school day and access to this list should be made available to TESS/EWO and the DE Inspectorate if requested
- Shall inform the parents/guardians of their right to withdraw consent at any time.
- Should inform the parents/guardians that TESS/EWO can provide assistance and advice if required. TESS will provide support and guidance to both parents and schools in relation to the use of a reduced school day.

12. Suspension

https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/guidelines_school_codes_eng.pdf

(see pages 70-78 Section 11 NEWB Guidelines)

The BoM confirms the authority of the principal to suspend/expel a child. The BoM shall notify the Education Welfare Board in writing and in accordance with Section 24 of Education Welfare Act 2000. When suspension is considered and sanctioned, the following steps will be taken:

Immediate Suspension

In exceptional circumstances, the principal may consider an immediate suspension necessary where the pupil's continued presence in the school at the time would represent a serious threat to the safety of pupils or staff of the school, or any other person:

- In the case of an immediate suspension, parents will be notified, and arrangements will be made with them for the pupil to be collected
- Initial periods of suspension will be to a maximum of **three school days**
- A suspension of five days will be imposed on the recommendation of the principal and on approval of the Chairperson of the BoM
- If a suspension longer than five days and up to ten days is being proposed by the principal, the matter will be referred to the BoM for consideration and



approval, giving the circumstances and the expected outcomes.

Automatic Suspension

Any behaviour that is persistently disruptive to learning or potentially dangerous is considered a serious matter.

Written Notification for Suspension: (This covers both Immediate and Automatic Suspension). The principal will notify the parents in writing of the decision to suspend. The Letter will confirm:

- The period of the suspension
- The dates on which the suspension will begin and end
- The reasons for the suspension
- Any programme of work to be followed by the child
- The arrangements for returning to school, including any commitments to be entered into by the pupil and the parents (for example, parents might be asked to reaffirm their commitment to the Code of Behaviour)

Appeals

Where the total number of days for which the student has been suspended in the current school year reaches twenty days, the parents/guardians have the **right to Appeal to the Secretary General of the DE (Education Act 1998, Section 29)**.

Removal of Suspension (Reinstatement)

Following or during a period of suspension, the parent/guardians may apply to have the pupil reinstated to the school. The principal must be satisfied that the pupil's reinstatement will not constitute a risk to the pupil's own safety or to that of the other pupils or staff. The principal will facilitate the preparation of an Individual Behaviour Plan for the pupil if required and readmit the pupil formally to the class.

13. Expulsion

https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/guidelines_school_codes_eng.pdf
(see pages 80-87 Section 12 NEWB Guidelines)

Expulsion may be considered in an extreme case, in accordance with the Education Welfare Act 2000. Continuous disruptions and/or aggressive behaviour, serious damage to school property may result in the expulsion of the pupil. This will be considered where the pupil's behaviour is causing persistent and significant disruption to the learning, safety and well-being of themselves or others. If a decision is made in relation to expulsion, the parents/guardians will be informed of their rights according to Section 29 of the Education Act 1988 and a copy of the application form to appeal the decision will be forwarded to the parents/guardians.

Expulsion will only be considered when the BoM has tried a series of other interventions and believes all possibilities for supporting the pupil's behaviour have been exhausted. There may be exceptional circumstances where the BoM forms the



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opinion that a pupil should be expelled for a first offence (for instance, a serious threat of violence against another pupil or member of staff, actual violence or physical assault). When expulsion is considered, the following steps will be taken:

- A detailed investigation is carried out under the direction of the principal
- A recommendation to the BoM is made by the principal
- Consideration by the BoM of the principal's recommendation, and the holding of a hearing
- The BoM deliberations and actions following the hearing
- Consultations arranged by the EWO
- Confirmation of the decision to expel
- The decision to expel will take effect 20 days after the NEWB has received notification in writing from the school
- Where the school has expelled a pupil and all appeals process both internal and external have been exhausted, the pupil's expulsion will be reported on the student absence report form.

14. Limitations

This document is not designed to list all the possible situations that may arise, nor state all the possible strategies to address very challenging behaviour and behaviours of concern but to serve as a general guide to parents/guardians, pupils, teaching staff, SNAs and the Principal.

15. Roles and Responsibilities

All staff members of Scoil Carmel JNS have an individual and collective responsibility to follow and support the 'Behaviours of Concern' Policy. The principal is responsible for ensuring that this policy is brought to the attention of staff at formal and informal times throughout the year.

16. Policy Review/Ratification

Ongoing evaluation and new approaches to managing behaviours of concern as guided by the DE and NCSE policy advice and guidelines will require that this policy be reviewed at regular intervals. Policy ratified in September 2023, to be reviewed in June 2024.

Chairperson of the Board Of Management

Date: 23/09/2023

Acting Principal

Date: 23/09/2023



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List of Acronyms Used Throughout Policy

BoM	Board of Management
DE	Department of Education
SET	Special Education Teacher
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
SENO	Special Education Needs Organiser
NEPs	National Educational Psychological Services
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
EWO	Education Welfare Officer
NEWB	National Education Welfare Board
TESS	Tusla Education Support Service