

SCHEME FOR THE SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION OF PUPILS

PREAMBLE

The Board of Governors considers that the following fundamental principles underlie the whole question of discipline in St. Patrick's Academy.

1. Parents have a duty to ensure that their children receive suitable, efficient, full-time education by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
2. Every child is entitled to be educated and is expected to attend school regularly and to accept and agree to follow school routines.
3. Every student is expected to be tolerant, and to show understanding of others and to accept responsibility for his/her own actions.
4. No student is entitled to be educated at the expense of, or to the detriment of, the education of other students.
5. When a student fails to meet the minimum required standards of behaviour, the school is entitled to impose such sanctions as are outlined in the school discipline policy which may include suspension and, if necessary, expulsion.
6. All matters of a disciplinary nature should be imbued at all times with the moral precepts which form and maintain the ethos of Catholic education.

SUSPENSION

(1) Normal Circumstances:

- (i) In normal circumstances suspension will only be considered after all reasonable attempts to integrate the student into the school have been made. Suspension is a severe sanction and will only be imposed by the Principal in situations where the student's behaviour is presenting serious difficulties to the school. In such cases where there are indications that a student may have to be suspended the Principal will take the following steps:
 - (a) Make reasonable efforts to ensure that the relevant background information is available.
 - (b) Invite the parent(s) /guardian(s) to the school to discuss the problem and enlist their support for the school's efforts to resolve the difficulty presented by the student.
 - (c) Inform the Chairman of the Board of Governors.
 - (d) Ensure that a full record of relevant information is kept.
- (ii) The Principal may suspend the student for an initial period of not more than five school days in any one term. Written notification of the suspension must be given to the parent/guardian at the beginning of the period of suspension.

(2) Exceptional Circumstances:

Where a situation arises in the school which causes very grave concern to the Principal because of the unacceptable behaviour of a student, the Principal will suspend the student immediately for a period of not more than 5 school days and the parent(s)/guardian(s) will be informed.

General Procedure:

1. A student may be suspended from the school only by the Principal.
2. An initial period of suspension will not exceed five school days.
3. Where a student is suspended from school, whether initially or by way of extension to an existing suspension, the Principal will immediately:
 - (i) give written notification of the reasons for and the duration of the suspension to the parent/guardian of the student, to the Chairman of the Board of Governors, and to the Southern Education and Library Board;
 - (ii) inform the parent/guardian that their child shall be regarded by the school as being in their care from the end of the school day in which suspension takes place;
 - (iii) the parent/guardian will be informed that during the period of suspension work for the student will be available for collection at the school.
 - (iv) invite the parent/guardian to visit the school to discuss the student's behaviour.
4. The Principal will not extend an agreed period of suspension except with the prior approval of the Chairman of the Board of Governors and will in every case give written notification of the reason for the extension and the period of the extension to the parent/guardian, and to the Southern Education and Library Board.
5. Acceptable reasons for extending a period of suspension would include:-
 - (i) parents have failed to enter into proper consultation with the school;
 - (ii) discussion with psychologists and/or other agencies would be facilitated;
 - (iii) expulsion was being considered;
 - (iv) where the return of the pupil concerned would pose serious problems of organisation and discipline within the school.
6. Board of Governors and the SELB must be informed where a pupil does not return to school at the end of a period of suspension.
7. A pupil may be suspended from school for not more than 45 school days in any school year.

EXPULSION

1. No student shall be expelled from the school unless s/he has first served a period of suspension.
2. Only the Board of Governors has the authority to expel a pupil.
3. A student may be expelled from school only after consultation about his/her expulsion has taken place between the Principal, the parent/guardian of the student, the Chairman of the Board of Governors of the school and an officer from the Southern Education and Library Board. These consultations shall include consideration of the future provision of suitable education for the student concerned. A refusal on the part of the student's parent/guardian to take part in such consultations shall not prevent a student from being expelled.
 - (a) The parent(s) must be informed in writing of the date of consultation meeting and its purpose.
 - (b) Written confirmation of the arrangements for the consultation meeting must also be sent to the other parties required to attend the meeting.
 - (c) The Principal must keep notes of the consultation meeting.
4.
 - (a) The Parent(s) must be invited to make written and / or oral submissions, on behalf of the pupil, to the Board of Governors at the meeting at which expulsion is to be discussed. Written submissions and written notification of intent to make an oral submission must be made available by the parent(s) to the Secretary to the Board of Governors no later than eight days before the meeting unless the parent(s) receive notice in writing that a different time interval is appropriate.
 - (b) If a parent has indicated in writing an intention to make an oral submission, the parent(s) must be advised in writing of the time at which to attend the meeting of the Board of Governors and must be afforded an opportunity, at that meeting, to make an oral submission.
5. The Board of Governors shall convene a special meeting to consider
 - (a) the report from the Chairman of the Board of Governors
 - (b) the submission from the parents/guardians who have been invited to the meeting and who have been informed in advance of the purpose of the meeting.
6.
 - (a) The designated officer of the SELB will attend this meeting.
 - (b) following discussion, by the full Board of Governors, of all the available evidence, including the outcome of all consultations, the minutes of the meeting must record any decision taken regarding the pupil including, if appropriate, a decision to expel, and the reasons for it.

Following consideration of all the evidence available to it and after the parents/guardians have left the meeting, the Board of Governors shall make its decision.

7. If the Board of Governors has decided to expel a student, the Principal, on its behalf, shall notify in writing, particulars of the expulsion to the parents/guardians of the student or to the student himself / herself if s/he has attained the age of eighteen and to the designated officer of the SELB.
8. Where a pupil has been expelled from the school the Principal shall immediately give written notice to the parents of that pupil, or the pupil himself . herself if he / she has reached the age of eighteen, of:
 1. the decision and the date of expulsion;
 2. the right to appeal the decision;
 3. the time limit of ten days from the date of expulsion to lodge an appeal;
 4. the requirement for the appeal to be lodged with the Clerk to the Tribunal (Expulsion of Pupils (Appeal Tribunals) of the Southern Education and Library Board, 3 Charlemont Place, Armagh, BT61 9AX.

3. INTERPRETATION

In this Scheme –

‘The Chairperson of the Board of Governors’ includes, where the Chairperson is absent or otherwise unavailable, the member of the Board of Governors for the time being performing the duties of the Chairperson;

‘Principal’ includes, where the Principal is absent or otherwise unavailable, the Vice Principal or other person for the time being performing the duties of the Principal;

‘Parent’, in relation to a child or young person, includes a guardian or the person who has parental responsibility of the child or young person.