

Section 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

In conformity with paragraph 47 (d) of the Education Act (CAP. 327)¹ the Ministry of Education established a Committee in late 2000 to formulate policy guidelines on behaviour and discipline in schools. The document revokes the *Regoli tad-Dixxiplina għall-Iskejjel tal-Gvern* published in 1980.

1.2 Scope

The document provides schools with broad guidelines that would enable school communities to develop their own Code of Behaviour and Discipline so that:

- a school environment is created that is conducive to achieving the aims of the school with the minimum of conflict;
- clearly defined parameters are provided that are easily understood by students, staff, and parents;
- staff are guided in the management of pupil behaviour;
- a spirit of mutual understanding and co-operation is fostered;
- very high standards of behaviour are developed and maintained;
- students are empowered to assume responsibilities for their life.

1.3 Important Elements

Important elements of a school Code of Behaviour and Discipline include the following:

- Its context is the school community where mutual respect, co-operation and the practice of humanistic values should be integral features.
- It is in consonance with the rights and responsibilities of all the parties concerned - management, teachers, students and their parents, and support staff.
- It acknowledges the unique circumstances that exist in every school and respects the fact that only those intimately involved with a particular school can draw up a code appropriate for that school.
- Its standards permeate all the activities of the school and create a sense of social cohesion within it.
- It acknowledges that the management style of the Head of School is crucial in encouraging a sense of collective responsibility among staff and a sense of commitment to the school among students and their parents.

1.4 Responsibilities

Managerial responsibility: The management of each school is responsible for ensuring that a fair and effective Code of Behaviour and Discipline that includes rules, ways of encouraging and affirming student efforts, rewards, sanctions, and implementation procedures, be developed and implemented with the participation of staff, students, and

¹ “to determine ... any other functioning and administration of State schools and to the discipline that is to be kept therein;”

parents. It is the responsibility of the Head of School to create the right climate within which individuals in the school community can fulfil their responsibilities and to ensure that the school's Code is administered in a manner which is consistent and fair to all. The Senior Management Team is to ensure a participatory evaluation of the impact of the school Code.

Staff responsibility: School personnel should consider themselves responsible at all times for the behaviour of students within sight or sound of them and should respond promptly and firmly to any instances of unacceptable behaviour. It is an established fact that the quality of teaching has a direct influence on the quality of students' behaviour and vice-versa. Lively and stimulating teaching methods, with work well-matched to student's abilities, are those most likely to receive a positive response from students.

School staff should, moreover, never lose sight of the fact that their own behaviour and actions influence those of the students they teach and that they have a crucial role to play in fostering an environment that nurtures and supports good behaviour and mutual respect among all the members of the school community – the school management team, teachers, support staff, students, parents, students' Council, School Council, and other persons and professionals who provide a service to the school.

While being firm and consistent, any response to disruptive behaviour should avoid threats, ambiguous statements, reprimands or punishment directed at the person rather than the action. Sarcastic remarks which invariably hurt, antagonise, and win the sympathy of disgruntled fellow students must be avoided at all times. Habitual use of language and actions aimed at demotivating students and crushing their spirit may constitute emotional abuse. Humour has the potential of defusing tense situations.

Parental responsibility: Parents and a supportive home environment play a crucial role in shaping attitudes that produce good behaviour in schools. It is therefore important that parents not only be made aware of the aims, values and the nature of expected behaviour of the school but that they be actively encouraged to become involved in the process of the drawing up of the school Code.

Student responsibility: Students should apply themselves to the learning and application of such life enhancing skills as self-control, conflict management, problem-solving, decision-making, and effective intra-/inter-personal communication. They should also learn to appreciate that negative behaviour has its consequences and that good behaviour shapes the desired community environment. Students are also expected to become actively involved in class meetings, student councils, and in the development of the school Code as well as to take up leadership roles through the system of class prefects.

Students are encouraged and expected to report all forms of bullying, vandalism, and other abusive acts to a trusted member of staff.

1.5 Principles of Good Practice

Adherence by schools to the following principles will go a long way in ensuring success in the complex and difficult task of achieving and maintaining high standards of behaviour and discipline.

Policy: A school policy on behaviour and discipline is carefully developed by and agreed upon by all stakeholders including parents. It establishes clear and defensible principles, sets the boundaries of acceptable behaviour, provides guidelines for action, and is firmly and consistently applied. Such a policy is made explicit to all members of the school community as well as to the parents.

Positive climate: The focus of such a policy is the development of a positive climate for the whole school. Such a climate is based on a calm yet firm insistence on high standards of behaviour at all times. Within this framework, it is likely that a small and challenging number of students will make extra demands on the time and professional expertise of teachers. Such demands will be met without jeopardising the overriding principles by which the school community abides.

Contributors to a positive climate: This positive climate is affected by all the school's activities. Within a well planned curriculum, there is a high quality of teaching and learning in which purposes are clear to all involved. Besides being intellectually challenged, students have opportunities for taking initiatives and for accepting responsibility for their progress. Such learning is supported by a range of activities outside the classroom which also contribute to students' personal and social development.

Incentives for Good Behaviour: Within such a policy, a range of methods are promoted that encourage and affirm students' efforts and responsibility taking as well as reward achievement. The use of merited praise outweighs that of the sanctions available. Sanctions should be reasonable and proportionate to the nature of the incident. In using them to improve students' behaviour, schools should offer teachers support and the opportunity to improve their expertise.

Leadership: The school's leadership sets a good example, with clear aims and high expectations that are matched by constant vigilance and a willingness to provide support, to identify and meet in-service training needs, and to encourage the professional development necessary for the maintenance of high standards.

Relationships: The ethos of the school is grounded in the quality of relationships at all levels: between senior management and teachers, between teachers, between teachers and parents, between teachers and students, between teachers and external support professionals, and between students. Such relationships are characterised by mutual respect, by transmitting a clear message to students that they are of worth, by a willingness to listen and understand, and by a positive view of teachers as professionals and students as learners. Through good models of adult behaviour, there is constant encouragement to develop self-esteem, self-discipline and autonomous adherence to high standards.

Wider partnerships: The school makes full use of the strengths available to it through partnerships with parents, with the local community and with the various supporting agencies. Such relationships are all used to enhance the quality of the school as community, and to help maintain high expectations. Schools should strive to network for ideas of good practice.

Section 2: Standards of Students' Behaviour

2.1 Introduction

The cornerstones of standards of students' behaviour are respect for oneself, respect for others, respect for the school and local community, and respect for the environment.

2.2 Standards of Students' Behaviour

2.2.1 Unacceptable behaviour

Given that students have a right to be in an orderly and safe learning environment, they are expected to behave, both inside the school premises as well as on school buses, in a friendly and orderly manner and to show respect for all persons and property. Unacceptable behaviour in such contexts includes repeatedly disrupting the class, shouting, leaving the class without authorisation, showing disrespect for teachers and other students, lingering, failure to do work to the best of one's ability, fighting, using inappropriate language, playing rough, behaving disrespectfully with others, throwing objects at others, bullying someone and indulging in acts of vandalism.

Assemblies

Assemblies are an essential communication tool. The goal of a successful assembly is to contribute to the development and maintenance of a quality environment for all students that will enable them to enjoy their daily collective experience.

Travel on School Buses

While travelling on a school bus, students must behave in an orderly and respectful manner. School discipline policies apply to bus boarding and travel as well.

Dress Code

Students as well as teachers² are expected to maintain high standards in their personal appearance. This is part of being proud of themselves and of their School. It is also a vital part of preparing students for the world of work, where personal presentation can matter a great deal in achieving their ambitions. Students are expected to wear the full school uniform, relevant prescribed sportswear, or other indicated attire for school outings. Students should be informed of the school's in-house and out-of-school regulations regarding jewelry and hairstyles.

Punctuality

Punctuality is essential. All students are expected to be punctual in arriving at school, to lessons, and at any other school function. Students should moreover have all the necessary materials and equipment at hand before the commencement of lessons.

School work

Students must work to the best of their ability. Failure to demonstrate effort, interest, and pride in one's work results in unacceptable standards. Students should expect to have any shabbily completed assignment to be corrected and returned to them without a grade.

² *Dress Code*. Circular OPS/6/2000 dated 3rd March 2000.

Assignments and homework should be completed on time. If, for any valid reason, such work is not presented on time, students are expected to produce a note from their parents and to make the necessary arrangements with the teachers for extra help or extra time, if absolutely necessary.

Changing Classes between Lessons

When it is necessary to move between lessons this should be done quickly and quietly. No lingering should be allowed. Where a system of student-based classes is in use, teachers and class leaders or prefects should ensure that the class group is not left unsupervised for an unreasonable length of time. Students are expected to abide by school rules.

Attendance and Absences³

In accordance with the education legislation, it is compulsory parents to regularly send their school-age children to school. Established procedures should be followed. Secondary schools should consider recording lesson attendance.

Students can only leave the premises when the parent or guardian calling for them (a) presents a personal identity card, and (b) has obtained the permission of the Head of School or a designate.

Organised Excursions

Educational visits, field trips and seminars are authorised and may be taken as an extension of the classroom to contribute to the achievement of the educational goals of the school. Students are expected to attend these activities. While on such excursions, students are to consider themselves as guests and ambassadors of their school. Students must treat teachers, helpers and guides with respect and courtesy. Schools are required to notify parents and to obtain their written consent in advance.

Property

Students are expected to respect such school property as furniture, buildings, books, materials and equipment. Students have an important role to play in ensuring that the physical environment is kept clean and attractive.

Whenever possible, textbooks are issued at the beginning of the scholastic year. Students are to sign for books received and returned. Students are responsible for school books and other educational materials and equipment in their possession and are not to deface or damage them. Fines will be charged for any damage or loss.

In case of intentional damage to school or personal property of others, such behaviour renders parents or guardians liable for restitution. Fines equivalent to the minimum cost of the item damaged or destroyed will be charged. Incidents of pilfering will be dealt with in a similar manner.

Lunch Time Break

Students are expected to have their lunch in school. Only on rare occasions are students allowed to go home for lunch. In such a case, students are to have a written request from

³ *Reports of Absences*. Circular SILC/56/00 dated 4th November 2000.

their parents. Students who have obtained permission to leave the school at lunchtime must sign out and in at a designated office and be picked up by their parents.

Lockers

Where lockers are available, they are the property of the school. Students should use the lockers assigned to them solely for storing their school materials and personal items necessary for school attendance. It shall be the responsibility of each student to keep the assigned locker clean and undamaged. The expenses to repair damage done to lockers are charged to the students who are responsible for the damage.

A student's locker can be searched whenever the school administration deems fit.

Items found in students' lockers in violation of school policies, rules and regulations are to be confiscated. Illegal items found, such as substances or weapons, are to be drawn to the attention of the police. In this connection as well as in case of suspicion of substance abuse, the School management is advised to consult the official substance abuse policy⁴ of the Division of Education.

Locker maintenance inspections are to be conducted periodically throughout the school year. Such inspections are generally for the purpose of ensuring that lockers are clean and well kept.

Students are not to keep valuables or money in their lockers. The school is not responsible for items stolen from lockers.

Students may not put up posters in their lockers. Teachers have the authority to confiscate the posters and to hand them in at the office of the Head of School.

Behaviour in Common Areas

While in the library, in the laboratories, lunch areas such as canteens, grounds and other common areas, students are expected to behave well as they would in class. Standards of behaviour and hygiene in toilets must be ensured.

Prohibited items

Any object that can cause physical or moral harm is absolutely prohibited.

Valuable items: Students are responsible for their own property and should not bring valuables or excessive amounts of cash to school.

Mobile phones: these are prohibited⁵.

Glass items: Students should be encouraged to use re-usable containers and discouraged from taking with them to school or carrying away from the canteen any glass bottles or containers.

Smoking⁶ and Alcohol Use: Students are absolutely prohibited from smoking, consuming alcoholic drinks, and using substances prohibited by law. Under no circumstances should

⁴ *Tackling abuse of illegal substances: procedures for schools.* Malta: Ministry of Education, December 2000.

⁵ *Use of Mobile Phones.* Letter Circular OPS/11/2001 dated 7th March 2001.

school personnel imbibe alcoholic drinks or smoke on the school premises in the presence of students.

Pornographic materials⁷: Such materials are absolutely prohibited by law and sanctions will be applied against any student responsible for their possession, dissemination and sale.

Weapons: Sharp objects, knives and other weapons which can be used to threaten, bully or harm others are absolutely prohibited from the school premises, during travel to and from school, and during school excursions. Sanctions will be applied.

2.3 Developing Class Standards

At the classroom level, teachers can engage students in a participatory process of developing classroom standards while ensuring that they are in conformity with the school rules. The process involves:

- the formulation of a set of basic rules for the class,
- the formulation of a list of consequences for inappropriate behaviours,
- a discussion between the Class or Form Teachers, students and the school administration about these lists that make up the Teacher-Student Contract,
- displaying the Contract in the classroom,
- implementation of the Contract, and
- a periodic review of the Contract that enables the teacher and students to integrate experience into a modified contract.

⁶ “...nor shall any person smoke any such item in any classroom, corridor, yard or appurtenance of a school, day home or similar premises used by children under sixteen years of age. For the purposes of this subsection "school" includes a kindergarten, nursery school or similar premises.” - Section 14 of *The Tobacco (Smoking Control) Act, 1986*.

⁷ The *Child Protection Procedures for Schools* recognises the dissemination of pornographic materials as a form of sexual abuse. Schools can, in such cases, follow referral procedures as outlined in this document.

Section 3: Encouragement, Affirmation, Rewards and Sanctions

3.1 Introduction

The task of considering discipline in schools is a complex one. It is complex because discipline in the school setting is determined not only by what happens *within* the school but, to a very large extent, by what occurs *outside* of it.

School disciplinary processes that rely on sanctions will end up promoting submission and manipulation rather than the considered development of individual and group behaviour. Discipline in an educational context must transcend issues of control. Ideally, it should focus on themes of school organisation, curriculum, pedagogy, respect and on how these can combine to establish and create an orderly environment in which quality teaching and learning can occur. The overall aspiration would be to stimulate the development an internalised self-discipline code, not an externally manipulated control mechanism.

To achieve this, it is worth concentrating on concepts of school ethos and school partnerships. Therefore, the implementation of a School Behaviour and Discipline Policy will not by itself solve all behavioural problems at school. It is only one of several initiatives that schools undertake as part of a systematic approach that embraces a broad understanding of the needs of the whole school community.

3.2 Encouragement, Affirmation and Rewards

A system of positive reinforcement should be the main feature of any School Code of Behaviour and Discipline. Students should be encouraged to act responsibly towards all members of the whole school community. Teachers should record and celebrate such behaviour to ensure that achievement in this regard is clearly recognised and differentiated from academic performance. The main aims of such an approach are to create and nurture a climate in which all students, irrespective of their academic abilities, act positively, and to create an ethos where positive and considerate behaviour becomes the norm.

Any system of sanctions that is in operation should be matched by a very strong and frequently used positive encouragement and affirmation structure. Reinforcement of good behaviour takes place when it is recognised, acknowledged and supported. Such a system is not just a matter of issuing merits. It is a question of sensible use of language in one's everyday interactions with students and of communicating the value one attaches to good behaviour. Such an approach has the potential of reducing insecure students seeking attention by joining disaffected others.

The operation of a system that combines encouragement, affirmation and rewards with sanctions has to be constant and consistent. The most crucial phase of any scholastic year are the first few weeks at which point it is made clear to students what is expected of them and how behaviour can be rewarded or sanctioned.

The following is a list of examples of positive reinforcements:

- a prompt personal word of praise from the teacher, Form Teacher, Assistant Head, and Head of School: this is one of the simplest and perhaps the most effective ways of recognising and affirming students' good efforts and achievements;
- announcements and celebrations during assemblies regarding in-school or out-of-school achievements;
- the school community's written recognition of the personal qualities of the students; members of the school community include class prefects, school prefects, bus prefects, library helpers, members of the Students' Council;
- a positive written communication about the student to parents from the Class or Form Teacher;
- a written affirmation of students' positive efforts recorded in the students' individual School Diary;
- effort grades which are allocated to each pupil for all subjects in their curriculum and which are recorded in the pupil's portfolio. Such grades are given periodically and recognised during Prize Day;
- a Record-of-Achievement system that records credits, certificates, effort grades that acknowledge effort, good behaviour, progress in attainment as well as other outstanding achievements. Such records are collected in individual files that are presented to students on their Graduation Day at the end of their secondary school years together with their School Leaving Certificate; they become an integral part of students' portfolios.
- a display of students' work in the classroom or in prominent places on the school premises such as just outside the classroom;
- class points for positive class-based behaviour as part of a Class Points Accumulation System;
- School Leaving Certificates that record good behaviour;
- recognition and celebration of whole class efforts;
- recognition of personal qualities by staff and peer group through the system of school prefects, bus prefects, school librarian, school council representatives, as well as students' council;
- letters of appreciation and congratulation from the Head of School for outstanding achievement or for service to the school during formal occasions;
- commendations that are recorded in the student's portfolio and transmitted to the School Management Team;
- portfolios.

3.3 Sanctions

Good conduct in class and around the school is of paramount importance. It reflects the attempt by the whole school community to present a positive image of itself as a caring, learning community. Conduct that is not conducive to this aim is deemed unacceptable. It is accepted that there is a need for sanctions to register disapproval of unacceptable behaviour in class and around the school. The application of sanctions cultivates a purposeful atmosphere and drives the message home that offences will be dealt with in support of the majority of the school community who conduct themselves well.

Each school should devise a constructive system of sanctions that:

- is founded on respect for the fundamental principle of certainty;
- is imposed equitably and on the basis of respect for the human rights of the persons concerned;
- suits the particular needs and context of the school;
- is flexible enough to take account of individual circumstances;
- attempts to stem misbehaviour as soon as it occurs;
- rather than determining a set of sanctions for specific misbehaviour, it distinguishes between minor, serious and very serious acts;
- requires that a clear explanation be given to students about the rationale for and nature of sanctions;
- provides school personnel with an opportunity to vary and negotiate both upwards and downwards, reflecting a commitment to deal with students as individuals;
- does not punish the whole group (class), unless the whole group was involved in the incident; and
- is in itself a learning opportunity that reinforces good behaviour.

Parents should be kept fully informed from the outset of instances of serious or very serious misbehaviour on the part of their children and their co-operation in tackling the problem requested. It is advisable to involve the parents at an early stage rather than as a last resort measure.

The following levels of unacceptable behaviour will be used to facilitate disciplinary procedures:

Level 1 sanctions for minor offences that are one-off or infrequent;

Level 2 sanctions for more serious offences imposed on level 1 persistent offenders;

Level 3 sanctions for very serious offences.

3.3.1 Level 1 sanctions for minor offences

One should never lose sight of the importance of low level sanctions such as reminders of school rules and of classroom standards and expectations. A quiet word, aside from other students, a verbal rebuke, or a reprimand for failing to meet standards are all valid low level sanctions. Another sanction that enables teachers to cope with low level routine incidents is that of keeping students back at the end of the lesson, break or lunch time to do some additional work.

3.3.2 Level 2 sanctions for serious offences

To deal with more serious types of incidents or an accumulation of incidents of misbehaviour, the pupil may need to be moved within the classroom, or taken off task. At this level of sanction application, the Form Teacher or the Assistant Head should be involved, especially if no improvement has been observed after applying low-level sanctions. Other disciplinary measures include:

- *extra work* assigned to students that avoids work of little or no educational value;
- *time-out*: students removed from class for a cooling-off period should not be left in an unsupervised situation. It is advisable to provide such students with a meaningful task such as cleaning up one's own mess;

- *written report* submitted to the Form Teacher;
- *written note to parents* on the Personal School Diary;
- *signed note by parents* that indicates their child's misbehaviour;
- *after-school detention*: when this rare form of sanction is being considered, parents should be informed in advance of such detention and given the necessary details. It should be the school administration which sanctions this type of disciplinary measure. Parents are responsible for transport.

3.3.3 Level 3 sanctions for very serious offences

Sanctions at this level include the following:

- sending students to the Assistant Head or the Head of School;
- suspension from the rest of the day's lessons;
- temporary change of class;
- suspension for a few days: such a sanction can only be authorised and applied by the Head of School after the student's parent or guardian has been informed.
- expulsion: this should be resorted to only in the most extreme cases of indiscipline and only after every effort at rehabilitation by the Pastoral Care Team has failed and every other sanction exhausted. The National Board for School Behaviour should be consulted.

Corporal punishment is strictly forbidden.

Section 4: Guidelines for Special Circumstances

4.1 Guidelines for Special Circumstances

Dismissals

In order for the student to be released, parents or guardians need to call for their children themselves and present their personal identity card before the official dismissal time. A senior member of staff will sign out the student and record the reason given by the parent.

Evacuation Procedure Due to Threatening Situation

In the event that the school receives a threat⁸, the school will follow police instructions according to established procedures and ensure that the work of the police is not hindered. If evacuation is necessary everyone should leave the building. Students will be evacuated to a safe location. If parents arrive at an evacuation site, an invitation may be extended to the parent to join their child, but children will not be released from the evacuation site.

Students with special needs will have individual evacuation procedures designed for them. Facilitators who work with each student will be notified of the individualized evacuation plan by the school management team. Evacuation procedures should be practised regularly according to instructions given by the Safety Teacher.

Habitual Absenteeism

Persistent absenteeism, even if covered by a medical certificate, will be reported to the Education Welfare Section of the Student Services Department. In the case of habitual absenteeism, the reason behind the absenteeism should be identified and remedied. Cases of truancy will be dealt with by the school administration.

Excused Absences of a Special Nature

Overseas Travel: Absences from school for the purpose of going abroad require a temporary exemption that may be authorised by the school if the length of absence does not exceed three weeks⁹. In case of longer duration procedures as stated in the circular are to be followed.

Medical Appointments: It is best to make medical appointments outside school hours. If a student must leave school during the day, the parents are to notify a member of the senior management team who in turn will sign the student out. Parents or guardians who pick up a student from school for such a purpose should present their personal identity card.

Illness and Accidents: Whenever students fall ill or an accident occurs in school, students must inform one of the teachers straight away. The Head of School or her or his assistant will immediately see to the needs of the student. The parents of students who are taken

⁸ *Bomb Threat Plan.* Letter Circular OPS/59/98 dated 18th September 1998.

⁹ Circular No. 134/79 dated 30 December 1979.

ill at school or for whom hospital treatment is indicated have to be informed and the necessary arrangements made. In cases where parents neglect their responsibility to call for the child, the student should be accompanied to the Health Centre or hospital. The Child Safety Services should be subsequently informed.

Cheating during Exams

During examinations, students are expected to work their paper on their own effort. Cheating by looking at another student's work, copying from other sources or similar cheating should not be tolerated. Disciplinary measures, such as loss of marks, will be taken.

Cases of Suspected Child Abuse

Abuse of minors disrupts the growth and development of children and their capacity to grow, learn and to be happy. It affects children negatively and can harm them for life. It is an obligation on the part of teachers and educators to refer suspected or actual child abuse cases to the appropriate services and through the proper channels.

When abuse is suspected the case should be referred according to the Child Protection Procedures established by the Division of Education. Should a school require consultation, the Protect Unit should be contacted:

The Protect Unit, Education Division, The Mall, Floriana.

Tel: 226361; Fax: 228092

Schools are to refer to the policy on child protection¹⁰ of the Ministry of Education that outlines the procedures to be followed by school personnel in cases of suspected child abuse.

Cases of Suspected or known Substance Abuse

Substance abuse harms students, threatens the safety of the environment, and disrupts the educational process. It is the duty and obligation of school staff to take all necessary measures to prevent, curb and eradicate substance abuse in schools.

When a student on the school premises is found in possession of an illegal substance or substance-related paraphernalia, the designated Schools Contact Person at the Police Drugs Squad should be immediately informed and the student kept under strict supervision. The Head of school shall immediately notify parents about the incident. School management personnel are requested to consult the official policy document of the Division of Education on illegal substance abuse¹¹.

Bullying

All forms of verbal and physical behaviour that is meant to hurt, intimidate or jeopardise the integrity and the dignity of a person, such as name calling, ridiculing, taunting, threatening and use of physical violence are all forms of bullying. Bullying of any kind is strictly forbidden in Schools and the necessary measures to prevent and stop such acts shall be taken by the school immediately.

¹⁰ *Child Protection Procedures for Schools*. Floriana, Malta: Division of Education, Ministry of Education, November 1999.

¹¹ *Tackling substance abuse: procedures for schools*. Malta: Ministry of Education, September 2001.

School personnel are requested to consult the official anti-bullying policy document¹² of the Division of Education.

Cases of bullying that are found to be beyond the executive power of the school and other cases of persistent bullying where the school has exhausted all the means and provision available, should be referred to the proposed National Board for School Behaviour.

Pornography and Corruption of Minors

Taking pornographic materials to school and indulging in the simulation of sexual acts in the school compound are strictly forbidden and action will be taken immediately. Sanctions are to be even more severe when the pornographic materials found have been distributed or sold to other members of the school community. Schools should refer to part of the Child Protection Procedures for schools that specifically deals with non-contact sexual abuse.

School Visitors

All parents and other visitors must first call at the office of the Head of School or that of a delegate and present their personal identity card.

Individuals with legitimate business to conduct will be treated as guests and helped to fulfil the purpose of their visit.

The school is not a meeting place for non-custodial parents.

¹² *L-Imgiba Tajba fl-Iskejjel: Politika Nazzjonali u Pjan t'Azzjoni dwar l-Ibbuljar*. Floriana, Malta: Ministry of Education, November 1999.

Section 5: Desired Parent Behaviour

5.1 Introduction

For the smooth running of the school and for good behaviour and effective discipline to be properly exercised, the school should enlist parents as partners. Parents must be helped to feel that they are important stakeholders in their children's education. For this purpose, home-school links should be established through a variety of means such as frequent activities that involve parents in educational matters. On their part, parents need to regard the establishment of home-school collaboration as a parental responsibility.

5.2 What Schools should expect from Parents

1. Detailed information of parents' home and office addresses and contact telephone number/s. All changes in addresses, home and office telephone numbers, as well as emergency contact numbers must be immediately communicated to the school office to ensure that information is at all times correct. It is important that every parent provides the school with contact details for emergencies.
2. Information about the child's medical history that would enable the school to safeguard the health and safety of the child. Such information should include should not be done in case of accidents.
3. Presentation of a personal identity card whenever they intend to call for their child before dismissal time.
4. Active participation in social, educational and curricular planning activities that support, promote and nurture the school ethos, such as:
 - membership of the School Council or of its sub-committees;
 - voluntary work in connection with the organisation of fundraising and social activities;
 - identification of the educational needs of other parents and planning and organising activities to meet such needs;
 - provision of support to students with special needs according to guidelines established by the Senior Management Team.
5. Parents who sincerely wish to practice positive discipline with their own children must endeavour to become a positive role model in their children's life. Such role modelling extends to their behaviour on or near the school premises. For this reason the school expects parents to:
 - show respect towards teaching staff, administration and other staff working in the school;
 - request an appointment from the Head of School to speak to members of staff when such a meeting is necessary;
 - refrain from speaking to teachers before or after school hours, in school or outside school without such a permission;
 - discuss specific complaints with the Head of School strictly not in the presence of students;

- use a respectable tone when addressing teaching staff, administrative or other personnel;
 - refrain from smoking both while accompanying children to school as well as in the school premises;
 - be decently dressed when visiting the school;
 - co-operate with the school in policies regarding:
 - nutritious food,
 - school bags,
 - dress code: uniforms for summer and winters, attire for physical exercises, outings and social occasions,
 - regular attendance - with parents responsible for informing school of sickness or temporary absences and for producing medical certificates in cases of illness
 - punctuality,
 - money or jewellery,
 - respect for school and other students' property,
 - responsibility for text books, library books & any other school material or loan;
6. Non-threatening behaviour. Threatening behaviour by parents will be considered unacceptable. Police protection can be sought in circumstances requiring such intervention.
7. Non-custodial parents should not press the school for visitation access at the school.

The support provided by parents should be acknowledged and celebrated.

Every school shall consult its School Council in order to prepare a user-friendly document regarding what parents and students should expect from their school.

Appendices:

- i. Documents consulted
- ii. Composition of Ministerial Committee
- iii. Glossary

Appendix i: Documents Consulted

1. Association of Secondary School Teachers of Ireland: *School Discipline – Advice for Teachers and School Authorities*. Ireland: ASTI. 55 pages.
2. *Attendance and Punctuality Policy Document*. St. Thomas the Apostle School (UK).
3. *Behaviour and Discipline – policy and practice guidelines*. Halifax, Canada: Halifax Catholic High School.
4. *Behaviour and Discipline – policy adopted by the Governors*. London, UK: Twyford Church of England High School, June 1995.
5. *Code of Conduct*. San Andrea School. In: *Welcome Back to School*, Scholastic Year 1999/2000. Middle and Senior School.
6. *Code of Conduct*. St. Thomas the Apostle College, 1995.
7. *Code of Student Conduct and Discipline*. http://www.unt.edu/student/code_of_student.htm
8. Council of School Attorneys: *Student Dress Code in the 1990's*. Texas, USA: National School Boards Association, 1995.
9. *Discipline Framework*. Pembroke: Sir Adrian Dingli Girls' Junior Lyceum.
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Appendix ii: Composition of Ministerial Committee

The Ministerial Committee that formulated the Code of Behaviour and Discipline was composed as follows:

Ms Georgina Cachia	Assistant Director (Operations)	Chairperson
Ms Nora Macelli	Policy Co-ordinator (Education)	Vice-Chairperson
Mr Anthony Micallef Debono	Guidance Teacher	MUT Representative
Ms Marilyn Sciortino	Head of School	MUT Representative
Ms Louissette Pace	Head of School	Member/Secretary
Mr Emmanuel Chetcuti	Head of School	Member
Ms Muriel Bonnici	Assistant Head of School	Member

Appendix iii: Glossary

Child: All students who attend school from age of 3 to 16.

Designated member of staff: That member of staff who, by virtue of being so designated or due to the current grade occupied, is responsible for a particular task or role.

Expulsion: The expelling of a student for an indefinite period after all other measures have failed.

Guardian: The person who is legally appointed to care for a child; any person who has custody of the Child; an adoptive parent; a person who is fostering the child.

Parent: The natural mother and the natural father of the child/student.

Moreover, at law, personnel of school establishments such as Heads of School and teachers, are considered to have the role of *loco parentis* – persons who have the responsibility for the children in their care. The Head of School, as the Head of the educational establishment, assumes the overall responsibility for teachers' actions regarding the well being of students in their class.

Moreover, at law, School Bus Drivers are also considered as having a *loco parentis* role while driving students to or from school. Whenever a school bus driver reports to a Head of School any unacceptable behaviour and actions performed by any students on the bus, then, after such a report has been made, it is the Head of School who, for the purpose of such student behaviour, assumes the *loco parentis* responsibility.

Sanctions: A coercive course of action which is intended to ensure that students improve their behaviour and to abide by school rules. A form of punishment.

Senior Management Team (SMT): The SMT is composed of the Head of School, the Assistant Head of School, subject Co-ordinators and any other member of staff delegated by the Head. The SMT is normally composed of those members of school staff who, by virtue of their status or through delegation, are in charge of the management of the school.

Staff: All personnel who work at the school.

Suspension: Stopping a student from coming to school for a limited time or until a decision is taken about the type of sanction that should be applied.

Time-out: A short break from class activity in order to calm down.

