

Pobalscoil Neasáin



Suspension Policy DRAFT Revised Nov 2015

Suspension as a Sanction

Suspension may be used as a sanction under the Code of Behaviour. Suspension in Pobalscoil Neasáin is used as a proportionate response to a behaviour that has caused concern. It is used as a last resort when it is felt that no other sanction is appropriate and is normally only applied after other forms of intervention have been employed.

Suspension is viewed as a formal stage in the Code of Behaviour where the unacceptable behavior(s) are discussed with the student and parent(s) and where supports designed to change behaviour are explored. Suspension allows students time to reflect on their behaviour, to acknowledge and accept responsibility for the behaviour which led to the suspension and to accept responsibility for changing their behaviour to meet the school's expectations in the future.

Suspension is not used in isolation but is accompanied by support actions. Such support actions may include a meeting or support by the following; Principal, Deputy Principal, Year Head, Chaplain, Guidance Counsellor, further meeting with Parents(s) etc. Outside agencies such as NEPS may also be used to support the student.

Decision to Suspend

The decision to suspend a student will be based on serious grounds:

- The student's behaviour has had a seriously detrimental effect on the education of other students
- The student's continued presence in the school at this time constitutes a threat to safety
- The student is responsible for damages to persons or property
- Repeated incidences of indiscipline in spite of warnings and other interventions
- Failure to recognise and submit to legitimate authority
- Any serious misbehaviour that cannot be dealt with appropriately through less serious sanctions
- A single incident of serious misconduct

In Pobalscoil Neasáin the following are examples of "Cross the Line " behaviours and are therefore considered as serious misconduct (this is not intended as an exhaustive list):

- Refusal to obey/follow the explicit instruction of teacher/sna/other staff member
- A physical altercation
- Use of abusive or threatening language to a member of staff or a fellow student

- Non attendance at formal detention without prior permission of the school management

Considerations before Suspension

The following will be considered before suspending a student:

(i) The nature and seriousness of the behaviour

- What is the precise description of the behaviour?
- How persistent has the unacceptable behaviour been?
- Has the problem behaviour escalated, in spite of the interventions tried?

(ii) The context of the behaviour

- What are the circumstances of the incidents of serious misbehaviour (e.g. in class, in a particular teacher's class, in the yard, in a group)?
- What factors may have triggered incidents of serious misbehaviour (e.g. bullying, cultural or family factors)?
- What is the age, stage of development and cognitive ability of the student?
- Are there any factors that may be associated with the behaviour (e.g. particular home circumstances, special educational needs)?

(iii) The impact of the behaviour

- How are other students and staff affected by the student's behaviour?
- What is the impact of the behaviour on the teaching and learning of the class?
- Does the behaviour have a particular or greater impact on some students or teachers?
- Does the student understand the impact of their behaviour on others?

(iv) The interventions tried to date

- What interventions have been tried? Over what period?
- How have the interventions been recorded and monitored?
- What has been the result of those interventions?
- Have the parents been involved in finding a solution to the problem behaviour?
- Has the intervention of NEPS or other psychological assessment or counselling been sought, where appropriate?
- Are any other interventions such as peer mediation, restorative justice approaches or family conferencing available?
- Is the student or parent involved with any support service and has this agency or support service been asked for help in solving this problem?
- Has any other agency been asked for assistance (e.g. Child Guidance Clinic, Child and Adolescent services)?

(v) Whether the suspension is a proportionate response

- Does the student's behaviour warrant suspension?
- Is the standard being applied to judging the behaviour the same as the standard applied to the behaviour of any other student?

(vi) The possible impact of suspension

- Will suspension allow additional or alternative interventions to be made?
- Will suspension help the student to change the inappropriate behaviour?
- How will suspension help teachers or other students affected by the behaviour?
- Will suspension exacerbate any educational vulnerability of the student?

Forms of suspension

- Suspension as a sanction arising from breaches of the discipline policy
- Immediate suspension arising from a single incident of serious misbehaviour which necessitates the immediate removal of the student from school
- Suspension during a State Examination

Procedures in respect of suspension:

(1) Suspension as a sanction

The parents will be contacted, normally by telephone, and informed of the situation. The student and parents will be invited to attend a meeting with Year Head/Deputy Principal/Principal to be informed about the complaint.

Parents and student will be given an opportunity to respond. A decision regarding suspension will be made.

A notice of suspension will be given to the parents in writing, informing them of their right to appeal the suspension to the Board of Management.

In certain circumstances a suspension may be completed by phone, with the agreement of the parent.

In the event that a student and his/her parents fail to attend a meeting or cannot be contacted, the Principal will advise the parents in writing of the gravity of the matter, the importance of attending a re-scheduled meeting and, failing that, the duty of the school management to make a decision to respond to the negative behaviour.

(2) Suspension in the case of very serious misbehaviour warranting immediate removal of a student

In the case where an immediate suspension is considered by the Principal to be warranted for the reasons of the safety of the student, staff or others, a preliminary investigation will be conducted to establish the case for the imposition of the suspension.

The Principal will authorise the use of immediate suspension as a sanction.

The Parents will be informed and arrangements will be made for the student to return home.

The student and parents will be invited to attend a meeting with Year Head/Deputy Principal/Principal to be informed about the complaint. In the event that a student and his/her parents fail to attend a meeting, the Principal will advise the parents in writing of the

gravity of the matter, the importance of attending a re-scheduled meeting and, failing that, the duty of the school management to make a decision to respond to the negative behaviour.

Parents and student will be given an opportunity to respond.

A notice of suspension will be given to the parents in writing, informing them of their right to appeal the suspension to the Board of Management.

(3) Suspension during a State examination

This sanction must be approved by the Chairperson of the Board of Management in consultation with the principal and would be only used where there is:

- a threat to good order in the conduct of the examination
- a threat to the safety of the other students and personnel
- a threat to the right of others to do their examination in a calm atmosphere
- serious misconduct prior to the start of the examinations

Notice of Suspension

The notice of suspension will detail (i) the reason for the suspension (ii) the period of suspension (iii) recommendation as to how the period of suspension should be used (iv) the arrangements for returning to school (v) the right to appeal the suspension to the Board of Management and if the number of days suspension exceeds twenty days in a school year, then an appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science.

Requirements, which need to be in place when student returns (e.g. written apology, completed assignments etc.) may also be included as appropriate. A statement that the Education Welfare Board has been informed (If the suspension is longer than 5 days, or the student has been suspended for more than 20 days during the school year to date)

Length of Suspension

The Board of Management of Pobalscoil Neasáin has delegated to the Principal the authority to suspend up to a maximum of five days without referral to the Board. All suspension will be reported at the first Board meeting following the suspension.

Grounds for Removing a Suspension

On the letter of suspension parents will be informed of their right to appeal the suspension to the Board of Management, or under a Section 29 Appeal where the number of days suspension exceeds twenty.

The grounds for the removal of a suspension from a student's record may include:

- The Principal / Board may agree that another sanction be applied after discussion with the parents
- Successful appeal to the Board of Management
- Successful appeal under Section 29 of the Education Act
- New circumstances come to light

Reviewed and amended by Board of Management 8th December 2015