

Portlaoise College



SCIENTIA POTENTIA EST

CODE OF CONDUCT

1st to 6th Year

September 2021



Introduction

This document is intended to illustrate the minimum standards of behaviour and co-operation expected of all students and to inform students, their parents and guardians on how the school will respond to both positive and negative behaviours. As part of the enrolment process, both the student and his/her parent(s)/guardian(s) will be given a copy of this Code of Conduct.

Scope of Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct deals exclusively with student behaviour while in school, on the way to and from school, on the school premises and on all school related activities while students are under the care and instruction of any member of school staff.

The following school rules apply at all times, in the school, on the school buses and on school tours and outings. By school it is meant the school building and the vicinity of the school. Students must co-operate promptly and courteously with all school staff obeying all instructions as soon as they are given. Good manners towards one another and towards the staff are required by all students.

The Code of Conduct may also apply outside of school where there is a clear connection with the school and a demonstrable impact on the work of the school.

Schools Mission Statement

Portlaoise College is committed to providing all students with a high quality holistic education that enables them to achieve their maximum potential in an engaging, challenging and student centred environment that celebrates diversity in partnership with all stakeholders.

Our school aims to provide each student with a holistic education built on respect. We have a strong commitment to the excellence required for each student to reach their full potential.

Our Code of Behaviour includes a set of practices and procedures that together promote a positive learning and teaching environment conducive to the growth and development of each person. In choosing Portlaoise College parents/guardians and students are committing themselves to accept, uphold and cooperate with our Code of Behaviour.

Charter of Expectations for Student Behaviour:

In order to create a positive, holistic, teaching and learning environment at Portlaoise College in which each student may develop to her full potential, the following Charter of Expectations must be adhered to:

- Respect for self, fellow students, all staff members and the school environment
- Courtesy, good manners and sensitivity to the needs of others
- Regular attendance, be punctual and be in full uniform
- Commitment from students to their own learning and that of their peers
- Doing one's best in class
- Taking responsibility for one's own work
- Having necessary books, copies and other equipment as required for each class and homework completed
- Taking pride in representing the school and in participating in school activities



Portlaoise College Rules

1. Conduct

Students are required to conduct themselves in a quiet and orderly manner at all times, in the school, in the vicinity of the school, on the school buses and on school tours and outings.

2. Co-operation

Students must co-operate promptly and courteously with all school staff obeying all instructions as soon as they are given. Good manners towards one another and towards the staff of Portlaoise College are required by students.

3. Bullying

Bullying of any form is totally unacceptable and will not be tolerated. If you are being bullied or if you suspect that one of your friends/classmates is being bullied, please report it immediately to your Class Tutor/Member of the Care Team or your Year Head. The matter will be dealt with in a confidential manner as per our Anti-Bullying Policy. If an incident of cyber-bullying is being investigated, Portlaoise College reserves the right to ask a student to show their phone or electronic device(s) to the Year Head/Deputy Principal/Principal. If the student refuses to cooperate with this request sanctions as per Code of Conduct will be imposed.

Portlaoise College reserves the right to apply its Anti-bullying policy in respect of:

- Bullying
- Cyber-bullying
- Sexting
- The inappropriate use of graphic material,
- The distribution of offensive material etc. that occurs at a location, activity, function or programme that is not school related.

This applies if, in the opinion of the Principal/Deputy Principal and /or Board of Management, the alleged bullying has:

- created a hostile environment at school for the victim,
- infringed on the rights of the victim
- has materially or substantially disrupted the education process
- affected the orderly operation of the school.

4. Attendance/Leaving School before the end of the day/Contact with Parents

In the unlikely event that a student needs to leave school early then the parent of that student must notify the relevant Year Head through the VShare App to gain permission to leave early. If the Year Head gives permission to the student to leave school, the Year Head will record this on VShare.

A parent/guardian (or another designated person over the age of 18 details of whom the parents must submit to the school in writing so as to be kept on the student's file), must come to the school to collect the student and sign the Sign Out Book which is held in the Attendance Office or the Main Office.

Students will not be permitted to leave school on the basis of a phone call without a parent coming to the school to collect them and signing the Sign-Out Book.

Parents are advised to use the school office number to contact their son/daughter during school hours and are asked not to communicate with their son/daughter by mobile phone during the day. (Please note that unauthorised communication with home on a mobile phone is a breach of the mobile phone policy)



5. Punctuality

School begins at 8:56am with registration at 8:56am in the 1st class from Monday to Friday. Students must arrive to school no later than 8.50am in order to allow sufficient time to prepare for the school day. Students are expected to be punctual for school and all classes. Students who are late for registration in the morning on three occasions or more will result in an automatic morning detention at 8:00a.m. In addition, students will be expected to attend a morning assembly once a week starting at 8.45a.m.

Students who arrive late to class may have this behaviour recorded on VSware by their teacher. These records will be monitored by the Class Tutor and will be brought to the attention of the Year Head where necessary.

6. Uniform

- Grey Jumper with school crest
- School Tie (optional)
- Tartan half-length green skirt or Grey straight leg school trousers. No Jeggings/leggings allowed.
- Black knee length socks, black ankle socks or plain black tights.
- 2 striped shirts/blouses.
- Black shoes (no other shoes are acceptable).
- Green school jacket with the school crest (for outdoor use).
- PE uniform is worn for all sporting events and on the day of PE classes only.
- Under Health and Safety, if students are wearing excessive jewellery (facial piercings, etc.) it may be confiscated.
- All students with long hair must tie it back in all classes. Students may wear slides or hairclips and discreet hairbands to keep hair tidy. Excessive sized hair accessories are not permitted.
- Excessive make up is not permitted (at discretion of Year Head/Deputy Principal or Principal)
- Hair must not be shaven with patterns or dyed extreme colours.
- Students must be clean shaven.
- Jackets must not be worn in school and must be stored in students' locker or base classroom.
- **Please note: students presenting to school who are not in full uniform will be required to be collected by a parent/guardian until it is corrected.**

The school management will have the final say on determining what is or is not acceptable under this code.



7. Journal

- It is to be taken out at the beginning of each class and opened at the relevant page
- Students must bring their Homework Journal to school every day.
- Homework is to be written into your journal for each subject every day.

8. School Property

The Laois/Offaly Education & Training Board or any member of the staff do not accept responsibility for loss or damage to any article left in the school by students. Students damaging school property must pay for same.

9. Lockers

DUE TO COVID-19, THE USE OF LOCKERS IS PROHIBITED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

10. Injury to Students

The Laois/Offaly Education & Training Board or any member of staff cannot be held responsible for injury to any student caused by the student's own negligence or disregard of the school rules.

11. Parents

If it is necessary for the school Principal to send for a parent/guardian in connection with continual misbehaviour by a student, such a parent is required to do all possible in cooperation with the school, to help such a student to improve his/her behaviour.

12. HSE/HSA COVID-19

All students must adhere to HSE/HSA COVID-19 recommendations and school guidelines. Specifically, physical distancing; practice good respiratory hygiene when coughing or sneezing; wash hands or use hand sanitiser. In addition, all students must wear a face mask. If any student is unable to wear a face mask for health reasons, a Doctor's letter must be provided to this effect.

If a student refuses to follow the guidelines in relation to social distancing, wearing a face mask or any other Health & Safety guideline, they may be suspended until they are willing to adhere to the school guidelines on Covid-19.

13. Suspension

A student may be suspended for repeated misbehaviour or for a single serious breach of the Code of Conduct.

14. Final Exclusion/Expulsion

If there is no improvement in a student's behaviour, after the total effort and co-operation of parents/guardian and school, such a student may be required to terminate his/her attendance at the school.

Parents/Guardians and Students should note:

Students who persistently breach school rules are liable to exclusion from school, which may be permanent. In the case of vandalism, bullying, possession of illegal substances and other grave misbehaviour, a student may be permanently excluded.



School Rules

- Have your journal with you every day. Keep it in good condition and give it to a teacher or SNA when asked. There will be a €5 charge if a journal needs to be replaced.
- Wear a full school uniform.
- Move quietly and safely around the building, always on the left hand side. No bad language.
- Eating and drinking is allowed in designated social areas only. Chewing gum is forbidden in the school.
- Mobile phones are **not permitted** in Portlaoise College. If a student brings a mobile phone to school it should be switched off at all times and left in school bag or out of sight. If students breach the rule regarding phones they must hand up the phone including the SIM card to the teacher without argument. Confiscated phones will be kept in the school office and returned at the end of the school day after class.
This will be recorded on VShare behaviour tab.

Two or more breaches of this rule may result in suspension and a meeting with the Parent

- **Tablets** must be used in accordance with the school Tablet/School Network Acceptable Use Policy. Inappropriate use of the Tablet can result in a number of sanctions including removal of Tablet for a period of one week or one month. Consistent serious breaches of the school Tablet policy may result in the permanent removal of the Tablet from a student. In the case where the Tablet has been removed from a student, a set of normal textbooks will be made available to the student.
- Dangerous objects are not allowed in the school.
- The taking and/or possession of any illegal substances is forbidden (i.e. drugs/alcohol).
- The possession or use of aerosol sprays, tippex or similar products is not permitted.
- The possession or use of cigarettes, including E cigarettes, is forbidden in school and in the school vicinity. If a student is found to be smoking/vaping in school they may be suspended and all prohibited items must be surrendered by the student. Prohibited items will not be returned to students.
- Energy drinks are not allowed to be consumed at Portlaoise College.



Class Rules

- Arrive on time, enter the classroom quietly and wait for your teacher.
- Bring what you need for class in a school bag.
- Prepare for work. Journal on desk. Sit in the seat assigned to you.
- Listen to your teacher and follow instructions.
- Hand up your journal when asked.
- Write down your homework in your journal and do it.
- Keep the classroom neat and tidy.

What happens when you follow school rules?

- You will do well in your exams.
- You will make your school a better place to learn.
- You will make your Parents/Guardians and yourself proud.
- You will get good notes in your journal.
- You will receive STAR Awards, Good News Letters and/or certificates of merit/prizes depending on your progress.

Rewards and Sanctions

All students are expected to comply with the school's Code of Conduct both inside and outside the classroom. By keeping to these standards they are ensuring that the rights of all students and staff are being respected. They are also showing that they are aware of their responsibilities and as such will be a credit to their school, parents, family, and of course, themselves.

Rewards

An important part of the school's Code of Conduct is the effort made to acknowledge the good behaviour and commitment to their studies of students. Achievement certificates, class prizes, STAR Awards and end of year awards are made to deserving students.

School Detention

Portlaoise College operates a systematic detention system i.e. detention is every Friday from 1.15pm to 3.00pm. Detention must be done on the appointed Friday and cannot be postponed to another day unless under exceptional circumstances i.e. medical certificate. This must be agreed with the Year Head prior to detention. Failure to attend for detention may warrant an immediate suspension from school until a meeting can be arranged with a parent/guardian to discuss the matter further. Detention is given to students who breach the punctuality code and/or other breaches of the Code of Conduct as decided by the Year Head/Deputy Principal/Principal.

In-School Suspension

Portlaoise College operates a systematic In-School Suspension system weekly. In-School Suspension is a disciplinary technique which is designed to penalise students for their behaviour while still ensuring that they participate positively in the school community. When a student is put on in-school suspension, he or she is removed from the traditional classroom environment and put into a special suspension classroom, which is supervised, for one day. For the length of the suspension, the student reports for classes in the suspension room, and he or she is expected to complete classwork/ homework assignments/work on projects. In-School Suspension is given to students for continued or serious breaches of the Code of Conduct as decided by the Year Head/Deputy Principal/Principal. Future offenses by the student could result in additional suspension or expulsion.



What happens if you break the school rules?

- Poor behaviour recorded on VSware.
- Extra work assigned by the relevant teacher and/or detention which is recorded on VSware
- In-School Suspension.
- Suspension.
- On return from suspension on Red card for two weeks.
- Contract of Behaviour.
- Serious breaches of discipline, e.g. bullying, verbal abuse of staff, fighting, violent conduct, vandalism, on-going misbehaviour, will warrant Red card or immediate suspension and/or a report to the Board of Management for possible expulsion.

School Management will have the final say on determining what is or is not acceptable under this Code of Conduct.

Suspension from School

This is an extremely serious sanction. It makes a statement to the student that their behaviour has placed themselves outside the school community and it is taken as a statement by the student that he/she does not wish to abide by the minimum standards expected by all the students as contained in the school rules.

Parents and students will be given an opportunity to consult and respond before a decision is made and a sanction is imposed. The Principal reserves the right to consider an immediate suspension for reason of safety of the student, other students, staff and others.

Suspension can be used as a sanction in the following circumstances:

- Where a teacher/Class Tutor has exhausted the process outlined above in relation to a student's behaviour and application in class.
- Bullying or threatening another student.
- Abuse of a member of staff.
- Physical or verbal assault of any person of the school community.
- Smoking or vaping i.e. using an e-cigarette in the school grounds.
- Possession of cigarettes or e-cigarette in the school grounds.
- Stealing from or interfering with the property of another student, member of staff or the school.
- Being absent from the school without the permission of a parent/guardian.
- Leaving the school without permission from both parent and Year Head.
- Bringing drugs, illegal substances, aerosol sprays or dangerous weapons into the school or distributing or selling same.
- Causing deliberate damage to school property.
- Refusal to hand up a mobile phone or any other devices not permitted in school including inappropriate use of the device.
- Refusal to follow guidelines in relation to social distancing, wearing a face mask or any other Covid-19 Health & Safety guideline.

Suspension from school may be imposed by either the Principal or the Deputy Principal or Year Head acting on behalf of the Principal.



Right of Appeal

All suspensions of more than 5 days' duration may be appealed by the student themselves (if over 18) or the student's parents/guardians, by writing a letter to that effect to the Secretary of the Board of Management. The Board may invite the student and his/her parents/guardians to a meeting to consider the matter.

Exclusion/Expulsion from School

Where the Principal or the Deputy Principal, acting on behalf of the Principal, considers that a pupil should be excluded from school, the matter will be referred to the Board of Management for decision.

The Board will invite the student and his/her parents/guardians to a meeting to discuss the matter. In the case of expulsion, parents have the right of appeal to the Department of Education and Skills.

The parents will be notified of the date and time of the Board of Management meeting.

The parents will be advised that they can make an oral or written submission to the Board of Management.

A student can be recommended for expulsion and, on foot of a Board of Management decision, excluded permanently from the school, in the following circumstances:

- Where there is an ongoing refusal by a student to abide by the regulations of the school and the Principal, in consultation with the Board of Management, has, in his/her considered judgement, exhausted all reasonable options.
- Bringing drugs, illegal substances, alcohol, aerosol sprays or dangerous weapons into the school and selling or distributing same at any time when school rules apply.
- Serious physical or verbal assault of any member of the school community.
- Wilful and serious damage to the school property.
- Breaking the law of the land while in school.

All suspensions/expulsions are in accordance with TUSLA Guidelines:

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

Health and Safety Considerations

All members of the school community, students, parents/guardians and staff are asked to note that, where the school Principal or the Deputy Principal acting on behalf of the Principal, forms the considered opinion that the presence of a particular individual in the school environment poses a threat to the health and safety of students, staff or school visitors.

The student involved may be excluded from school at least until the next Board of Management meeting, where the matter will be dealt with. This measure is expected to be seldom used and is a recognition that the needs and rights of the majority to either learn or work in Portlaoise College are of paramount concern. Where students are excluded on these grounds, it will not be recorded as a disciplinary suspension or exclusion. Rather, it will be recorded on file that the student was excluded on Health and Safety grounds, to protect/prevent harm to any/all members of the school community.



CONCLUSION

This Code of Conduct should enable teachers to teach and students to learn in a structured, orderly environment. It will be subject to on-going review in light of the changing environment the school may find itself in. The school reserves the right to modify this Code of Conduct at short notice. Any change(s) made will be communicated to parents, guardians and students as soon as is realistically possible after the change(s) is made.

I have read the Code of Conduct policy for Portlaoise College and I agree to abide by it.

Signed: _____

Student

Parent/Guardian

Date: _____

The Policy is available on the school website and in the homework journal.