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R.R. 144329

Circular 7/88

Department Of Education

Primary Branch

To the Boards of Management and Principal Teachers of National Schools

Discipline in National Schools

The Minister for Education wishes to refer to the Report of the Committee on Discipline in Schools. Following consideration of the Report, Rule 130 of the Rules for National Schools has been amended and guidelines on discipline have been prepared for Boards of Management and teachers. These are detailed in Appendices A and B respectively.

The texts of the amended Rule 130 and the guidelines were first issued to the bodies representing management, parents and teachers in January 1987. They are now being issued to schools, incorporating certain amendments made following representations made in the meantime.

D. Ó Braonáin,
Secretary.

March, 1988

0331A.

Appendix A to Circular 7/88

Rule 130

Rules for National Schools

The Minister for Education wishes to advise the authorities of National Schools that Rule 130 of the Rules for National Schools has been amended to read as follows:

“School Discipline

- (1) The Board of Management has ultimate responsibility for discipline in schools and a duty to ensure that a fair code of discipline applies therein. This code should be formulated by the principal and the teaching staff in consultation with parents and be approved by the Board.
- (2) Teachers should have a lively regard for the improvement and general welfare of their pupils, treat them with kindness combined with firmness and should aim at governing them through their affection and reason and not by harshness and severity. Ridicule, sarcasm or remarks likely to undermine a pupils self-confidence should be avoided.
- (3) The use of corporal punishment is forbidden.
- (4) Any teacher who contravenes sections (2) and (3) of this rule will be regarded as guilty of conduct unbecoming a teacher and will be subject to severe disciplinary action.
- (5) Where the Board of Management deems it necessary to make provision in the code of discipline to deal with continuously disruptive pupils or a serious breach of discipline, by authorising the Chairperson or Principal to exclude pupils from school, the maximum period of such exclusion shall be three school-days. A special decision of the Board of Management is necessary to authorise a further period of exclusion up to a maximum of 10 school-days, to allow for consultation with the pupils' parents. In exceptional circumstances, the Board may authorise a further period of exclusion in order to enable the matter to be reviewed.
- (6) No pupil can be struck off the rolls for breaches of discipline without the prior consent of the Patron and unless alternative arrangements are made for the enrolment of the pupil at another suitable school in the locality".

Appendix B to circular 7/88

Discipline in National Schools

Guidelines for Boards of Management and Teachers

I Rule 130 (Amended as per Circular 7/88)

"School Discipline

- (1) The Board of Management has ultimate responsibility for discipline in the school under its management and a duty to ensure that a fair code of discipline applies therein. This code should be formulated by the principal and the teaching staff in consultation with parents and be approved by the Board.
- (2) Teachers should have a lively regard for the improvement and general welfare of their pupils treat them with kindness combined with firmness and should aim at governing them through their affections and reason and not by harshness and severity. Ridicule, sarcasm or remarks likely to undermine a pupil's self confidence should not be used in any circumstances.
- (3) The use of corporal punishment is forbidden.
- (4) Any teacher who contravenes sections (2) or (3) of this rule will be regarded as guilty of conduct unbefitting a teacher and will be subject to severe disciplinary action.
- (5) Where the Board of Management deems it necessary to make provision in the code of discipline to deal with continuously disruptive pupils or with a serious breach of discipline, by authorising the Chairperson or Principal to exclude pupil or pupils from school, the maximum initial period of such exclusion shall be three school-days. A special decision of the Board of Management is necessary to authorise a further period of exclusion up to a maximum of 10 school-days to allow for consultation with the pupils' parents or guardians. In exceptional circumstances, the Board of Management may authorise a further period of exclusion in order to enable the matter to be reviewed.
- (6) No pupil shall be struck off the rolls for breaches of discipline without the prior consent of the Patron and unless alternative arrangements are made for the enrolment of the pupil at another suitable school.

II The Board of Management

The Board of Management is charged with the direct government of the school and should ensure that a fair and efficient code of discipline applies therein. Schools should adopt a positive approach to discipline, an approach which appeals to the child's better nature and encourages an acceptable standard of behaviour.

Subject to the approval of the Board of Management, school policy in relation to discipline should be formulated by the Principal Teacher and the teaching staff as part of the overall Plan for the efficient administration of the school. In common with all aspects of the School Plan it should be reviewed in the light of changing needs and circumstances. It is the responsibility of the Board of Management to ensure that a stimulating and happy atmosphere, which is conducive to learning, is fostered within the school and to be supportive of the Principal Teacher and staff with regard to the maintenance of discipline.

It is in the interest of pupils, parents and teachers that good relations should prevail between school and home. Parents should be provided with opportunities to contribute to the development of the schools policy in relation to discipline and their full co-operation with regard to the effective implementation of the Policy should be secured. Boards of Management and Principal Teachers have a positive role to play by fostering understanding and co-operation between teachers, parents and pupils.

III The Principal Teacher

The Principal Teacher should establish clearly-defined structures through which teachers can actively participate in the organisation and running of the schools, because rules and procedures which emerge through consensus have the best chance of being effective and generally accepted.

When formulating the school policy in relation to discipline, the age, range of abilities and level of aspirations of the pupils should be taken into account. The number of rules should be kept to a minimum and they should be easy to understand and implement.

Subject to the authority of the Board of Management, the Principal Teacher should:

- in consultation with the staff, formulate a policy document in relation to discipline which reflects the particular needs of the school
- ensure that all staff members familiarise themselves with this document
- ensure that the policy on discipline is implemented in a manner which is consistent and fair to all pupils
- be supportive of individual teachers with regard to the implementation of the policy on discipline

- deploy teachers in a way which makes appropriate provision for pupils with serious learning or behavioural problems
- as far as possible, assign experienced teachers to reception classes
- pay considerable attention to the motivation and support of newly qualified teachers
- ensure effective communication between school and home.

IV The individual Teacher

The individual teacher is responsible for the effective implementation of the schools' policy in relation to discipline within his/her own classroom and in communal areas during breaks etc. He/she is entitled to expect the support of the Principal Teacher and the Board of Management with regard to the fair implementation of this policy.

The individual teacher should:

- present lessons in a stimulating manner and cultivate a happy atmosphere conducive to learning, within the classroom
- be familiar with the school's policy document in relation to discipline
- implement this policy fairly, firmly and with kindness
- co-operate with colleagues in the implementation of the discipline policy
- be particularly supportive of new teachers with regard to the supervision and control of pupils.

V Parents and Guardians

The school should establish and maintain contact with all parents in relation to the educational progress and behaviour of their children. The school discharges its part of the task more effectively if it can rely on the co-operation and support of the parents in the pursuit of shared objectives.

Parents and Guardians should:

- familiarise themselves with the schools policy document in relation to discipline
- co-operate with the school with regard to the implementation of its policy on discipline
- communicate regularly with the school about factors likely to affect the behaviour of their children in school.

It is a matter for the individual school, as part of its overall policy on discipline, to devise a graded system of sanctions suited to its particular needs and circumstances. In the implementation of these sanctions it should be made clear that it is behaviour that is rejected and not the child. Sanctions of doubtful value should be avoided. Such sanctions may alienate some children further and are unlikely to motivate them in a positive manner. It is also essential that the dignity of parent and child be respected at all times.