Code of Behaviour Policy

St Clare's School 2025/26

ST. CLARE'S SCHOOL

TEACHING, LEARNING & GROWING TOGETHER

Code of Behaviour

Introductory Statement

Under Section 23 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, the Board of Management of each school must prepare and make available a Code of Behaviour. This Code has been developed as a continuous process. It is reviewed annually.

Rationale

This policy has been developed in the context of St. Clare's School being a school which caters for children with moderate to severe/profound learning needs. Every child has a positive behaviour support plan to support children, teachers and SNA's in understanding and reframing behaviours by recognising and reducing stressors. *(NCSE Relate, pg. 21).*

The challenge is ours to find effective ways of helping students to express their needs in a manner that follows the following principles:

- Rights Based
- Student Voice
- Regulation First
- Neuro-affirmative
- Staff and Student Wellbeing
- Unconditional Positive Regard
- Solution Focused
- Universal Design for Learning

(NCSE Relate, pg. 14)

Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of the School

This policy reflects the ethos of our school which states that "all students are treated with respect, as individuals entitled to a safe, secure and stimulating environment" (Mission Statement, St. Clare's School 2015). St Clare's School is committed to a Catholic ethos emphasises the dignity of every person, compassion, inclusion, forgiveness, respect, and a commitment to creating a caring community.

In St. Clare's School, we work in close partnership with parents and guardians to promote a positive, supportive learning environment for all pupils. Our Code of Behaviour Policy is grounded in encouragement, positive reinforcement, and respect for each child's individual needs. We aim to foster a safe, calm and nurturing atmosphere in which children can learn, communicate, and develop to their fullest potential.

The Board of Management holds overall responsibility for behaviour within the school. On a day-to-day basis, the Principal oversees the implementation of the Behaviour Policy and supports staff in maintaining consistent, positive approaches. Each teacher is responsible for promoting and supporting positive behaviour within their classroom, while also contributing to a shared sense of safety, respect, and wellbeing throughout the school.

Parents and guardians play a vital role in supporting their child's social, emotional, and behavioural development. By reinforcing school routines, communicating openly with staff, and sharing information that may impact their child's behaviour or wellbeing, parents/guardians help ensure that the school can respond appropriately and consistently to each pupil's needs.

Aims

The aim of this Behaviour Support Policy is to:

- Promote a positive, safe, and supportive school environment in which every student can achieve their full potential academically, socially, and emotionally.
- Ensure the school operates in an orderly and harmonious manner, enabling effective teaching and learning without unnecessary disruption.
- Foster a culture of respect, tolerance, empathy, and understanding throughout the school community.
- Encourage and support positive behaviour, and regulation, recognising and accommodating the diverse needs, abilities, and circumstances of individual students.
- Provide a clear, consistent, and compassionate framework for understanding and responding to behaviours that challenge, ensuring that dignity, safety, and wellbeing are upheld at all times.
- Safeguard the physical, emotional, and psychological wellbeing of students, staff, and visitors within the school environment.
- Support staff in the implementation of proactive, positive, and evidence-informed strategies for behaviour support.
- Develop and maintain good-practice guidelines that protect the entire school community from challenging behaviours while promoting strong home–school collaboration for consistent behaviour support.
- Ensure that the school's expectations, supports, and strategies are clearly communicated and understood by students, staff, and parents through policy documentation and open communication.
- Uphold the school's ethos of respect, inclusion, and personal growth, ensuring that every student feels valued, supported, and able to participate fully in school life.

Content

This policy will include the following content:

- Standards of behaviour expected in the school
- The plan for promoting good behaviour
- Ways in which the school responds to challenging behaviour
- The plan for implementing the code of behaviour

• School procedures for the use of suspension and exclusion

This policy applies to all students attending St. Clare's School.

This policy applies to all staff, visitors, external therapists employed by the school e.g. music therapists etc. and those working with students in a voluntary capacity or on work placement, during school hours or on school related activities.

This policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant policies especially Working Together policy, Bí Cineálta, Health & Safety, Intimate Care Policy, Admissions, Wellbeing, Literacy, Language and Communication and Inclusion Policies.

Standards of Behaviour expected in the school

Staff Code of Conduct

Staff members should endeavour to take care of the students under their supervision with the primary aim of ensuring their safety, welfare and wellbeing.

Staff members should respect confidential information relating to colleagues, students and families gained in the course of professional practice, unless the wellbeing of an individual or a legal imperative requires disclosure.

Staff members should uphold the reputation and standing of the profession. They should act with honesty and integrity in all aspects of their work. They should avoid direct conflict between their private interests and their professional work.

Staff members should respect students, parents, colleagues, school management, co-professionals and all in the school community. They should interact with them in a way that does not discriminate and that promotes equality in relation to gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, ethnicity, membership of the Travelling Community and socio-economic status.

Recognising the unique and privileged relationships that exist between staff members, the students entrusted to their care and parents/guardians, staff members should conduct these relationships in a way that is professional, respectful and appropriate.

Written communication and reports about students must always prioritise their wellbeing and be created with respect and sensitivity. All written and verbal communication should be mindful of each child's disability, strengths, and individual needs. Reports must uphold the rights and dignity of the child, using respectful language and reflecting a supportive, child-centred approach.

Students

St. Clare's is a school for pupils with moderate to severe/profound learning needs. This Code of Behaviour recognises that each student functions at an individual level of understanding. The following principles underpin this code of behaviour and any sanctions that may be imposed by the Principal, Staff and the Board of Management.

- Kindness
- Fairness
- Inclusion
- Wellbeing
- Discretion
- Dignity
- Respect

Some students with significant learning disabilities may not act with intent or understand the impact of their behaviours or dysregulation on themselves or others, including behaviours such as self-harm or verbal/physical aggression. Every effort is made to support these students in developing greater self-awareness through approaches such as modelling, social stories, and sensory integration interventions. For students who are better able to understand rules and expectations, teaching is adapted to their preferred learning style—such as Lámh, visual cues, PECS, social stories, play-based learning, and turn-taking activities.

St Clare's school recognises that behaviour is a form of communication. Staff in consultation with parents and the wider multidisciplinary team will identify the skills students need to communicate appropriately by promoting regulation and reducing stressors that could present as behaviours of concern.

The basic rules of waiting, turn taking, requesting appropriately, sitting etc., will be taught on a daily basis.

Parents

Parents and guardians play a vital role in supporting positive behaviour within our school community. It is very important that our families work in partnership with the teachers and staff of St. Clare's school. We ask that communication is open, frequent and that relevant information that may impact their child's wellbeing is shared. Agreed learning targets from the child's Student Support Plan (SSP) should be reinforced and reviewed both at home and in school. Parents are encouraged to support the school's behaviour strategies, attend meetings when required, and collaborate with us to develop consistent, holistic approaches that help their child feel safe, secure, understood, and ready to learn. Together, we can create a supportive environment that promotes every student's growth and success and wellbeing.

The School Environment

Positive Behaviour Support Plan

Teachers use a standard school template to draw up Positive Behaviour Support Plans (PBSP) (appendix a) for each child in their class. The PBSP includes information on the behaviour and what that behaviour may be communicating and offers proactive and preventative strategies, De-escalation tactics and reactive strategies in consultation with SNA's and Parents/guardians.

When a more detailed intervention is required, the schools Multidisciplinary Team will collaborate closely with the class teacher to develop a comprehensive risk assessment and support plan. This

process involves identifying specific triggers, outlining proactive strategies to reduce risk, and establishing clear, safe responses for managing potential incidents. The plan will be tailored to the student's individual needs and reviewed regularly to ensure it remains effective and supports the student's wellbeing.

School and classroom rules

The development of school rules forms an integral part of our Wellbeing curriculum and is explored in a range of ways by individual teachers, depending on each student's abilities and level of understanding. Through this curriculum, students learn about expectations, boundaries, and positive ways of relating to others. Lessons are delivered in clear, supportive, and accessible terms—using visual supports, social stories, modelling, or other adapted methods—to help students understand what is expected of them. This structured approach promotes consistency across the school and supports students in developing the social and emotional skills needed to feel safe, confident, and secure within the school environment

The Plan for Promoting Good Behaviour

Wellbeing

Our school places the wellbeing of every student at the centre of its approach to behaviour. We recognise that positive behaviour is closely linked to a safe, supportive, and nurturing environment where students feel understood, valued, and able to learn. The school's plan for promoting good behaviour focuses on proactive strategies, including clear routines, consistent expectations, social and emotional learning, and the use of individualised supports tailored to each student's needs. Students are encouraged and reinforced for demonstrating positive behaviours, while any challenges are addressed through structured, respectful, and supportive interventions. This approach aligns with our commitment to the rights and dignity of each child, fostering a culture of respect, inclusion, and wellbeing throughout the school community.

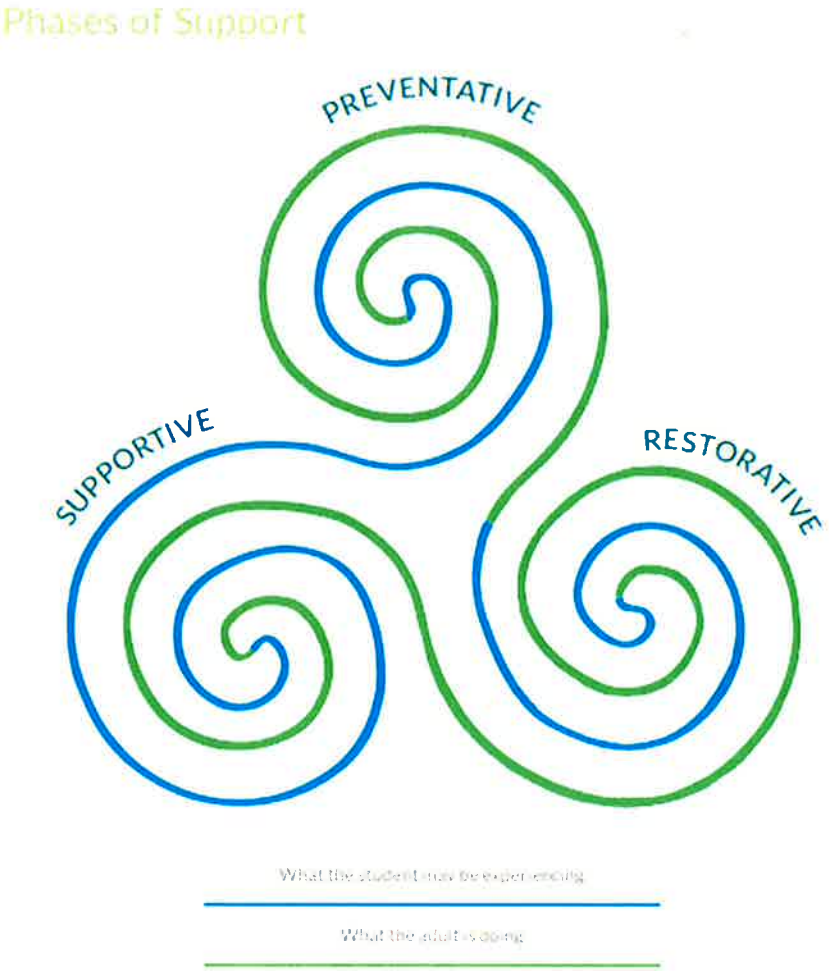
Relate

St Clare's school recognises that behaviour is a form of communication and endeavours to use the principles of the NCSE relate document to promote our vision for inclusive and relational approaches. These principles are as follows:

- Rights based – the best interest of the child must be the primary consideration in all actions concerning children
- Student Voice – Students have the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them.
- Regulation first – recognising stressors as well as having preventative, supportive and restorative measures in place
- Neuro-affirmative – We respect and celebrate difference, supporting behaviour is not about changing the person or being neuro-typical
- Solution focused – change focused approach that helps people to find ways forward from difficult or challenging situations by focusing on the future and what is already working
- Staff and student wellbeing – The Wellbeing Policy Statement Framework for Practice (DEYS,2019) sets out the ambition and vision that the promotion of wellbeing is at the core of the ethos of every school

- Unconditional positive regard – a caring attitude towards another, where the other person is authentically valued and totally accepted without judgement
- Universal Design for Learning – recognises and accommodates and celebrates the variability of student's strengths needs and how they learn

The staff at our school endeavours to recognise children's stressors be that biological, cognitive, emotional, social, pro-social or language and communication. Regulation and dysregulation look different from student to student. Building a relationship with students will help to develop a deeper understanding of them as individuals, as well as creating a relationship where students feel safe. Building a strong foundation, proactive regulating measures is more successful during times of dysregulation.



(NCSE Relate, pg. 27)

Ways in which the school community respond to behaviours of concern

Intensive support is required when behaviours of concern persist due to a mismatch between a student's needs and the supports available, or when students need additional skills to have their needs met. Responding to challenging behaviour involves individualised, proactive strategies—such as environmental adjustments, interpersonal supports, and skill development—as well as planned reactive strategies to help calm and de-escalate. These guidelines set out by the NCSE relate documents requires the identification of stressors (e.g. pain, sensory differences, trauma, family stress, community and communication needs). This approach enables the development of a tailored, multi-component support plan that reflects each student's unique context.

The staff St. Clare's School has adopted the Relate model in conjunction with Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI) practice. The guiding philosophy of CPI is;

Care – Respect, dignity, empathy, person centred

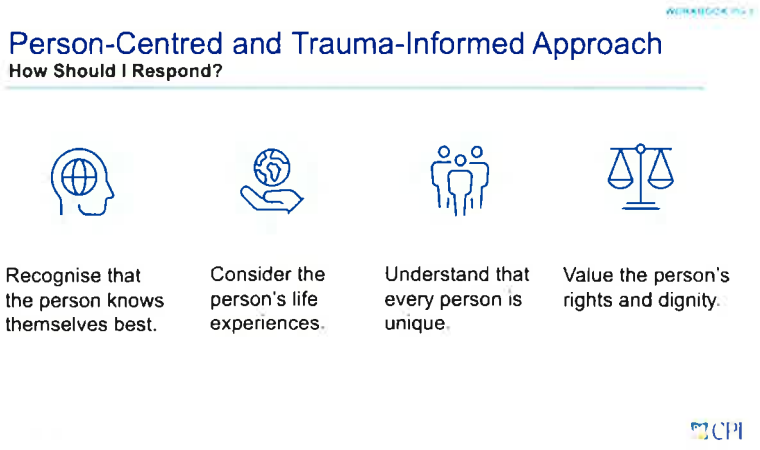
Welfare – Maintaining independence, choice, and wellbeing

Safety – Protecting rights and minimising harm

Security – safe, effective, harmonious and collaborative relationships

Our aim is to eliminate all forms of restrictive practice in St. Clare's School. There are six core strategies that we use in training in order to minimise incidents of restraint

CPI uses a person- centred, trauma-informed approach to ensure the necessary approaches to prevent or minimise restraint. In circumstances when we cannot eliminate restraint staff are trained to maximise safety and minimise harm to all involved.



Following an incident of behaviours that challenges

- Reassurance and support will be given to all involved
- Medical attention will be sought were necessary.
- Staff must report the incident to the class teacher or teacher on duty and incident reports must be completed. (Appendix b)
- The student's parents/guardians will be informed any serious incidents.

Procedures for Suspension

Schools are required under section 23(2) of the Education Welfare Act 2000 to include their procedures for suspension and exclusion in their code of behaviour. The factors to be considered before suspending a student (pg. 72 NEWB Guidelines)

The Grounds for suspension

Suspension should be a proportionate response to the behaviour that is causing concern. Normally, other interventions will have been tried before suspension, and school staff will have reviewed the reasons why these have not worked. The decision to suspend a student requires serious grounds such as that:

- The student's behaviour has had a seriously detrimental effect to the education of other students
- The students continued presence in the school at this time constitutes a threat to safety
- The student is responsible for serious damage to property

A single incident of serious misconduct may be the grounds for suspension.

(Developing a code of behaviour: Guidelines for schools, pg. 71)

In the most extreme of situations where the student's continued presence in the school at this time constitutes a serious threat to safety, the Board of Management of St. Clare's School reserve the right to implement suspension procedures. Fair and transparent procedures will be followed – in the case of our students with learning disability it would be unreasonable to impose a fixed standard of behaviour. The Board of Management of St. Clare's School would use this period of suspension to give school staff and the Board an opportunity to plan other interventions and to seek professional advice from members of the multidisciplinary team involved with the student.

Procedures in respect of suspension

- No undue delay in an investigation and decision about the imposition of suspension.
- Parents informed by phone or in writing.
- Parents given an opportunity to respond.
- In the case of an immediate suspension parents must be notified and arrangements made with them for the student to be collected.
- All investigations are dealt with in confidence.
- Fair procedures – the right to be heard i.e. parents are fully informed about the processes and given an opportunity to respond before a decision is made and the right to impartiality in the process of investigation and decision making.
- The opportunity to appeal a Principal's decision should be offered by the Board of Management. In the case of decisions to suspend made by the Board of Management an appeals process may be provided by the Patron.

In exceptional circumstances the Principal has the authority from the Board of management to consider immediate suspension should it be necessary.

If a child become very distressed, dysregulated or ill during the school day there must be a parent/guardian/servicer provider available to respond to the request of the school for the child to be brought home/where they live.

Any suspension longer than 3 days should be brought to the Board of Management for consideration and approval.

Procedures for Exclusion

In the most extreme of situations where the health and safety of other students or staff members is at serious risk the Board of Management of St. Clare's School reserve the right to implement exclusion procedures. Given the seriousness of exclusion as a sanction the Board of Management should undertake a very detailed review of a range of factors in deciding whether to exclude a student.

The Grounds for Exclusion

Exclusion should be a proportionate response to the student's behaviour. Exclusion of a student is a very serious step, and one that should only be taken by the Board of Management in extreme cases of unacceptable behaviour. The school should have taken significant steps to address the misbehaviour and to avoid exclusion of a student including, as appropriate:

- meeting with parents and the student to try to find ways of helping the student to change their behaviour
- making sure that the student understands the possible consequences of their behaviour, if it should persist
- ensuring that all other possible options have been tried
- seeking the assistance of support agencies (e.g. National Educational Psychological Service, Health Service Executive Community Services, the National Behavioural Support Service, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, National Council for Special Education).

A proposal to exclude a student requires serious grounds such as that:

- the student's behaviour is a persistent cause of significant disruption to the learning of others or to the teaching process
- the student's continued presence in the school constitutes a real and significant threat to safety
- the student is responsible for serious damage to property.
- Any serious threat or act against another student or member of staff

The grounds for exclusion may be similar to the grounds for suspension. In addition to factors such as the degree of seriousness and the persistence of the behaviour, a key difference is that, where exclusion is considered, school authorities have tried a series of other interventions, and believe they have exhausted all possibilities for changing the student's behaviour.

(NEWB guidelines pg. 81)

Procedures in respect of exclusion

- A detailed investigation carried out under the direction of the principal. The Parents should be informed in writing of the details of the alleged misbehaviour, how it will be investigated and that it could result in exclusion. The Parents will be given every opportunity to respond before a decision is made.
- A recommendation to the Board of Management by the Principal. This involves provision of comprehensive records the same as which have been given to parents.
- Consideration by the Board of Management of the Principal's recommendation and the holding of a hearing. The parents are invited to this hearing and advised that they can make a written and oral submission to the Board of Management.
- Board of Management deliberations and actions following the hearing. If they decide to exclude then the Board must inform the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) in writing and allow twenty school days from the date on which the EWO receives this written notification.
- Consultations arranged by the Educational Welfare Officer
- Confirmation of the decision to exclude. Parents must be informed of their right to appeal and supplied with the standard form on which to lodge an appeal.

Procedures for notifying the school about reason for absence from school

Each parent/Guardian must inform the school in writing via Aladdin.

Details of who to contact about behaviour matters

Class Teacher

Principal

CDNT

Success Criteria

Ongoing review with feedback from all parties concerned. Reduction of incidents, accidents and near misses.

Roles and Responsibility

St. Clare's School will endeavour:

- To promote a rights-based education.
- To ensure that this guideline document is available to parents and staff.
- To ensure relevant staff training, including CPI.
- To provide supports for individuals following an aggressive or violent incident including medical assistance and peer support.
- That a comprehensive holistic assessment process is in place which includes a referral procedure, multidisciplinary meetings, behaviour support plan and a review system.
- To ensure that an emergency response process is in place.

Staff will:

- Ensure that they read and understand this document.
- Promote the rights and dignity of students.
- Avail of training opportunities.
- Ensure that they are aware of each individual's behavioural support plan.
- Seek assistance when confronted with an incident.
- Ensure that all relevant documentation is completed.
- Ensure that parents/carers of the student are informed following an incident, through home–school diaries or a phone call.

Parents:

Our enrolment form includes the following paragraph, which outlines our school's approach to supporting students who may display behaviours that challenge. Parents and carers will be asked to acknowledge and support this philosophy by signing the enrolment form

"We at St. Clare's School promote respect for the children. We understand that if there is a behaviour issue the child is striving to communicate. We aim to build relationships and show unconditional positive regard. We will provide support and care for all of the children to the best of our ability. Parents will be involved in drawing up supportive behaviour strategies when and if the need arises. We will cooperate with the staff and support the ethos and behaviour policy of the school.

Timetable for Review

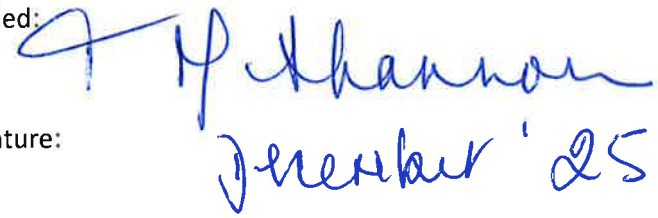
To be reviewed in June 2026

Ratification & Communication

Following ratification by the Board of Management this policy will be made available to all on the school website.

Ratified:

Signature:



Appendix A

ST. CLARE'S SCHOOL
TEACHING, LEARNING & GROWING TOGETHER

Positive Behaviour Support Plan

Student: **Date:**

Target behaviour of concern – Description of behaviour

Why is the behaviour happening? What is the behaviour communicating?

Prevention:

Pro-Active and Preventative Strategies

-

Supporting:

De-escalation Strategies (Strategies to use as soon as child is displaying signs of getting overwhelmed - Supportive strategies for Anxiety level, Directive strategies for defensive level)

-

Reactive Strategies (What to do when the child is in crisis and displaying the targeted behaviour of concern)

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Restoring:

Strategies when the student begins to calm (Tension Reduction/Therapeutic Rapport)
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Appendix B

ST. CLARE'S SCHOOL
TEACHING, LEARNING & GROWING TOGETHER

Incident Report Form

Pupil Name: _____
Date of Incident: ____ / ____ / _____
Time of Incident: _____ **Duration of Incident:** _____
Location: _____
Staff Present: _____

1. Antecedents (What happened before the incident?)

- Stressor or possible cause observed:

2. Description of Behaviour

- Behaviours observed (tick or describe as appropriate):
  ☐ Verbal outburst
  ☐ Physical aggression towards staff
  ☐ Physical aggression towards peers
  ☐Self-injurious behaviour
  ☐ Property damage
  ☐ Absconding/attempted absconding
  ☐ Other: _____

Details:

3. Description of Incident

(Provide a clear, factual account. Avoid opinion or interpretation.)

4. Actions Taken by Staff

- De-escalation strategies attempted (e.g. redirection, offering space, visual supports):

- Reactive Strategies or Interventions used (if applicable, including restraint/CPI disengagements or holds low, medium or high):

5. Outcome

- Resolution of incident (e.g. therapeutic rapport, student calmed, removed to quiet area, lesson resumed):

- Any injuries sustained:
  ☐ None
  ☐ Pupil
  ☐ Staff
  ☐ Other

If yes, provide details: _____

6. Follow-Up / Next Steps

- Parents/guardians informed? ☐ Yes _____
- Senior staff informed? ☐ Yes
- Medical attention required? ☐ Yes _____
- Referral to an outside agency required? ☐ Yes_____
- Any additional support recommended?

Staff Member Reporting:
Name: _____
Signature: _____
Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Appendix C

Positive Support Strategies for Classroom Use

Visual & Communication Supports

- Focus on unique interests
- Engagement at their physical level
- Tone of voice
- Visual / facial expression
- Photo of child modelling behaviour
- Now/Next boards
- First–Then cards
- Individual visual schedules
- Object-of-reference cues
- Choice boards
- Lámh signs embedded into teaching
- AAC devices readily accessible
- Emotion check-ins (Zones visuals)
- Visual timers (sand timer, digital, countdown)
- Visual rules (3–5 only)
- Visual reward trackers
- Communication prompts
- Photographic instructions for tasks
- Visual "break" card



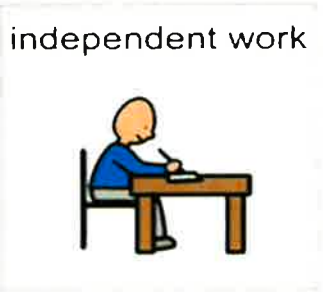
Behaviour & Regulation Supports

- Personal motivators
- Calm corner with sensory tools
- Weighted blankets/lap pads
- Fidget box (noise-free)
- Scheduled sensory breaks
- Movement sensory circuits
- Predictable transition signals
- Consistent praise language
- Token boards
- Gentle prompting hierarchy
- Sensory-friendly lighting
- Noise-reducing headphones
- Personal space markers
- Reduced language instructions (visual + gesture)



Instructional Supports

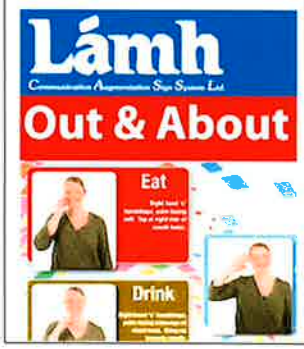
- Task analysis (micro-steps)
- Errorless learning
- Work–break–work structure
- Hands-on resources
- Chunked activities
- Workstations for independence
- Repetition and overlearning
- Pre-teaching vocabulary or skills
- Explicit teaching of routines
- Concrete examples before abstract
- Partner or peer-assisted learning
- Individual mini-goals per lesson
- Modelling expected behaviour/skills
- Multi-sensory teaching (visual + tactile + sound)
- Meditation



Positive Support Strategies for Whole-School Use

Universal School-Wide Supports

- Whole-school behaviour expectations displayed visually
- Consistent visual signage across all areas
- Lámh signing promoted school-wide
- School-wide "calm talking" or "quiet zone" strategies
- Visual yard expectations
- Visuals for entrance/exit routines
- Staff using consistent prompt words
- Structured arrival routines
- Positive Language



Regulation & Sensory Supports

- Sensory room available for programmes
- Individual programmes
- Sensory breaks built into timetables
- Quiet spaces in corridors
- Movement corridor with balance lines/markers
- Noise-reduction strategies in communal areas
- Chill-out space in yard
- Whole-school access to sensory equipment library
- Access to outdoor calming spaces
- Apps for regulation



Social & Emotional Supports

- Whole-school Zones of Regulation
- Social stories for school-wide events
- School wellbeing committee
- Celebrating effort over achievement
- Whole-school kindness or "Bí Cineálta" initiative
- Peer-buddy systems
- Calm-down passes
- Friendship groups
- Positive postcards home
- Gratitude walls or class displays



Instructional and Organisational Supports

- Universal Design for Learning
- Transition kits for moving between rooms
- Staff communication books
- Multi-disciplinary collaboration routines
- Whole-school reward system
- School-wide visual timetables
- Safety and personal care visuals
- Whole-school crisis plan with visuals
- Training for SNAs and teachers on AAC/Lámh
- Annual review of positive supports with staff input



Reference / Bibliography

Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools. NEWB 2008.
https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/guidelines_school_codes_eng.pdf

NCSE Relate 2025 https://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/NCSE-Relate.pdf

Understanding Behaviours of Concern and Responding to Crisis Situations
https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/understanding-behaviours-of-concern-and-responding-to-crisis-situations.pdf

Crisis Prevention Institute https://www.crisisprevention.com/en-IE/?state=CfDJ8F0iAOjTwLRAtBbvHQKSPf54fnvRlykzUfhkpwzNo8lV2xt1IuThYdKT7s_rYkWsZVVSJHv1ZCT_IFN9oQVnWcCRaNTX08iz8G5nJGe5LojYGoG7JEc16Dd_lMO8v4VR5tIKslLIB19GfyJLMrzIZ4g

Autism Good Practice, Guidance for Schools, Supporting Children and Young People,
https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/autism-good-practice-guidance-for-schools-supporting-children-and-young-people-d9271bb.pdf