

The Code of Behaviour Policy for St. Michael's N.S. Cootehill

The policy is addressed under the following headings.

Guidelines for behaviour in the school:

1. Whole school approach to promoting positive behaviour

- Staff
- Board of Management
- Parents
- Pupils

2. Positive strategies for managing behaviour

- Classroom
- Playground
- Other areas in the school

3. Rewards and sanctions

- Rewards and acknowledgement of good behaviour
- Strategies for dealing with unacceptable behaviour
- Involving parents in management of problem behaviour
- Managing aggressive or violent behaviour

4. Suspension / Expulsion

- Suspension
- Expulsion
- Appeals

5. Keeping records

- Class
- Playground
- School records

6. Procedure for notification of a pupil's absence from school

7. Reference to other policies

The Code of Behaviour Policy for St. Michael's N.S. Cootehill

1. Guidelines for behaviour in the school

The Education Welfare Act, Section 23, states that the code of behaviour shall specify *“the standards of behaviour that shall be observed by each student attending the school”*.

- Each pupil is expected to be well behaved and to show consideration for other children and adults
- Each pupil is expected to show respect for the property of the school, other children's and their own belongings
- Each pupil is expected to attend school on a regular basis and to be punctual
- Each pupil is expected to do his/her best both in school and for homework.
- Due consideration will be given to children coming from a socio-deprived background.

Section 23 (4) of the Act further states that, prior to registering a pupil, the principal teacher shall provide the parents of the child with a copy of the school's code of behaviour and that the principal *‘may, as a condition of so registering such child, require his or her parents to confirm in writing that the code of behaviour so provided is acceptable to them and that they shall make all reasonable efforts to ensure compliance with such code by the child’*.

2. Whole school approach in promoting positive behaviour

‘A positive school ethos is based on the quality of relationships between teachers and the ways in which pupils and teachers treat each other. This positive ethos permeates all the activities of the school and helps in forming a strong sense of social cohesion within the school’ (Circular 20/90).

Staff

In our school, we treat all children with respect and dignity. There is a strong sense of community and cooperation among staff, pupils and parents and all are agreed that their focus is primarily on the promotion and recognition of positive behaviour. (Circular 20/90).

- Each teacher has responsibility for the maintenance of discipline within his or her classroom while showing a common responsibility for good order within the school premises. Overall responsibility for school discipline rests with the school principal. Every effort will be made by staff to adopt a positive approach to the question of behaviour in the school. We insist on a high standard of behaviour in the school.
- An information booklet is available to each parent of children enrolling in the school which contains information relevant to our code of behaviour.

The school's SPHE curriculum is used to support the code of behaviour. It aims to help our children develop communication skills, appropriate ways of interacting and behaving, and conflict resolution skills. It also aims to foster self-esteem and to help children accommodate differences and develop citizenship.

- All teachers have received training in SPHE and are aware of our school's code of conduct and how to promote strategies to develop good behaviour skills; such strategies include circle time, discussions, role play etc.
- Staff encourage and promote respect and courtesy among the entire school community, that all pupils and adults respect each other at all times.
- Pupils are expected to be truthful, obedient and well behaved at all times. However children with behavioural difficulties arising from their SEN will be treated accordingly and at the teachers' discretion.

Board of Management

‘The Board of Management has a role to play in the maintenance of desirable standards of behaviour in a school. It should be supportive of the Principal Teacher in the application of a fair code of behaviour and discipline within the school’ (Circular 20/90).

- The Board of Management has been consulted in reviewing, drafting and ratifying the code of behaviour.
- The Board of Management supports the staff in implementing the code of behaviour e.g. provision of opportunities for staff development.
- The Board of Management is consulted and approval is given if it is deemed necessary to suspend or expel a child from the school.
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Parents

‘Evidence seems to indicate that schools which succeed in achieving and maintaining high standards of behaviour and discipline tend to be those with the best relationships with parents.’ ‘Schools need the support of parents in order to meet legitimate expectations with regard to good behaviour and discipline.’ (Circular 20/90).

- Co-operation and contact between parents and teachers is seen by us to be necessary and valuable. It is the policy of this school that parents of all pupils be given the opportunity to meet the teacher of their child on a

one to one basis once a year. If it is necessary to meet at another time it can be easily arranged. However because of the demands and responsibilities of teaching and supervision parents and guardians are asked to note that if they wish to meet with the teacher at any time other than the parent/teacher meeting they should make an appointment. Teachers are not available to answer the phone during class time.

- An information booklet which contains information relevant to our code of behaviour is available to each parent of children enrolling in the school.
- Parents are aware of and cooperate with the school's system of rewards and sanctions
- Parents ensure their children are at school in time
- Parents attend meetings at the school if requested
- Parents help their children with homework and ensure that it is completed
- Parents ensure their children have the necessary books and materials for school.

Pupils

- Pupils play a role in the ongoing implementation of the code of behaviour by:
 - Drafting rules for the classroom
 - Taking part in assemblies
 - Working on Student Council e.g Green Schools
 - Buddy systems
- Pupils review classroom rules regularly.

3. Positive strategies for managing behaviour

'The most effective methodology that teachers develop in attempting to manage challenging behaviour is to prevent it occurring in the first place'. (Managing Challenging Behaviour, Guidelines for teachers INTO 2004: 5).

Classroom

- "Ground rules"/ behavioural expectations in each class that are consistent with the ethos as expressed in the code of behaviour and which set a positive atmosphere for learning
- Pupil input in devising the class rules
- Teachers ensure that pupils understand and are frequently reminded of how they are expected to behave
- A clear system of acknowledging and rewarding good behaviour and sanctions for misbehaviour
- Classroom management techniques that ensure a variety of activities and methodologies to sustain pupil interest and motivation

Playground(s)

We consistently praise and promote good behaviour at all times among our children. Good behaviour is rewarded by

Mention at assembly
Medals for achievements
Certificates
Note home to inform parents of the 'good news'
Golden time
Classroom or whole school events
Participation in projects community based as well as academic
Library visits
P.E. related activities –trips for away matches
School tours

- A concise set of playground rules which emphasise positive behaviour and make clear what activities are permitted is communicated to Staff and pupils.
- There is a monthly duty rota drawn up indicating the teachers and SNA responsible for play and lunch time supervision. There are two people supervising in both sections of the playground i.e. junior and senior areas. The senior children i.e. those from 3rd to 6th class are allowed to play at the front and rear of the building, therefore two teachers supervise in either area. There is one teacher and an SNA supervising in the junior playground i.e. at the rear of the building and, in the event of an accident or if a child needs attention, there will be an adult available to attend the child and also one to remain in the playground with the others.
- Should there be a concern about a child or a group of children at play, the Staff and SNA will be advised and vigilant at break times and any noteworthy observations will be communicated to the relevant parties.
- Some of the older children will be encouraged to teach the younger children playground games.
- The children remain indoors on wet days. Each class stays in their own classroom, and the four adults on supervision move between the rooms. The children can watch a DVD, do some drawing, read, play board games, or any other suitable activity.

- Children who have been requested, by written permission from their parent/guardian, to remain indoors may do so and remain in classroom 5 in the senior end of the school. Younger children, depending on numbers can either stay in the school office or stay in Room 11.
- Children line up at the door of their respective classroom and their teacher supervises as they leave the room for the playground. After break they line up in their respective playgrounds supervised by the teachers and the SNA on duty where they are collected by their own class teachers.
- Children are encouraged to use the toilets before playtime. There is a designated toilet available for use during breaks, which a child is free to use if requested. Ch can use the toilets in Room 10, while children in Rooms 1-5 can use the toilets in Room 3. Children who are ill enough to go home may remain at the General office until such time as a parent or guardian comes to collect them.
- In the case of any incident of misbehaviour, the teacher on duty will deal with the incident at the time and refer it to the class teacher after break. The gravity of the incident will dictate the appropriate measures used in managing the incident further.
- Children who misbehave during playtime may be removed from the playing area and asked to stand by the wall for a period of time at the discretion of the teacher on duty.
- Teachers keep a written record of all instances of serious misbehaviour as well as a record of disruptive pupils.

Strategies for dealing with unacceptable behaviour

The Education (Welfare) Act 2000, Section 23, states that a school outlines *'the measures that may be taken if a student fails to observe the standards of behaviour that the school has outlined'*.

'The degree of misdemeanours i.e. minor, serious or gross, will be judged by the teachers and/or Principal based on a common sense approach with regard to the gravity/frequency of such misdemeanours.' The measures are as follows:

- a. Reasoning with the pupil
- b. Reprimand (including advice on how to improve)
- c. Temporary separation from peers, friends or others within their class.
- d. Loss of privileges eg. Time out from Golden Time (held every Friday at 2.30pm), loss of a responsible job, time out in the yard.
- e. Prescribing additional work in the form of writing eg. Writing out the school's behaviour rules or an appropriate written activity pertaining to the misbehaviour. This written work shall be sent home to be signed by a parent/guardian, and then returned to the school.
- f. Temporary removal of the child to another classroom with a written assignment that has to be completed before he/she returns.
- g. Referral to Principal Teacher
- h. Communication with parents in the form of a meeting between class teacher, principal and parents/guardians where a behaviour contract may be agreed between the pupil and the school that will be monitored daily by the class teacher, the principal and the parents/guardians.
- i. Suspension
- j. Expulsion in accordance with the guidelines of the National Education Welfare Board Act 2000

Bullying behaviour will be dealt with in accordance with the Anti-Bullying Policy.

Involving parents in Management of Problem Behaviour.

Initially misbehaviour should be dealt with by the class teacher by way of a warning and/or advice. The class teacher may contact the parents by phone to arrange a meeting. Any parents with concerns should meet with the class teacher first. In the case of more serious or persistent poor behaviour the principal may be involved. The Board of Management may also become involved depending on the seriousness of the misdemeanour. Teachers may keep a record of consistently poor behaviour displayed by the pupil(s).

It is important to be aware that *'Parents should be kept fully informed from the outset of instances of serious misbehaviour on the part of their children. It is better to involve parents at an early stage than as a last resort.'* (Circular 20/90).

Parents are contacted when the level and frequency of the misdemeanour are established.

In very serious cases of misbehaviour the principal will contact the parents by phone if possible and if not, by letter, to determine a mutually agreeable time to visit the school to discuss issues that have arisen

When the parents come to the school the principal and/or class teacher may meet with the parents in an appropriately appointed room to discuss the issues that have arisen. Together the parents, principal and teacher shall decide on an appropriate course of action in dealing with a difficult pupil. Whatever is decided shall be pertinent to the misdemeanour and best suited to the individual pupil. The decision will be discussed with the child and, he/she with the parents must agree to be bound to follow this course of action.. Parents may be informed daily for an agreed period of time on the pupil's improved behaviour.

It has always been our experience that parents are appreciative of our efforts to resolve any issues as promptly as possible. Co-operation and contact between parents and teachers is considered by us to be necessary and important in delivering an all round education to the child. It is our policy that parents of all pupils be given the opportunity to meet with their child's teacher on a one-to-one basis once a year at the parent/teacher day. However, if at any other time a parent has a concern, they are encouraged to contact the school to arrange an appointment with their child's class teacher. This information is available in our school information booklet which is given to parents on enrolment of their child.

- In instances where there is no response from the parents, or any improvement in the child's behaviour is evident then a (second) letter will be sent seeking to resolve the problem.
- In circumstances where there is consistently poor behaviour or if the pupils fulfil all or any of the criteria for suspension or expulsion then the pupil may be suspended or expelled, depending on the level of misdemeanour, the parents having been notified. (See procedures for suspension on the next page/Anti-Bullying policy)
- A decision to expel a pupil shall be a decision taken by the Board of Management.
(See guidelines on Expulsion below)

Managing aggressive or violent misbehaviour

If a child persists with serious emotional behavioural problems e.g. constantly disrupting the class, assaulting other children, by striking out, biting or any other form of anti social behaviour, the following steps will be taken:

- The parents/Guardians will be informed immediately.
- The members of staff together with the SEN are acquainted with the situation and advised to be vigilant while on supervision duty etc.
- Teachers who have previously taught the child will be available to assist in the creation of individual behaviour plans. The parents/guardians will also be consulted when devising these plans.
- Through the Special Educational Needs Organiser, appropriate support will be sought from services available e.g. Health Service Executive, NEPS, ...
- Following a discussion with the parents/guardians the pupil may be referred for psychological assessment
- There is a mentoring system for newly qualified teachers to support them in this area.

In the event of seriously violent or threatening behaviour causing a risk to the safety of the pupil himself/herself or the safety of other pupils or staff, the school may consider the temporary exclusion of the child while consultation with SENO and/or EWO takes place about appropriate resourcing, or alternative placement.

Suspension / Expulsion procedures

The Education Welfare Act, 2000, stipulates that a code of behaviour shall specify... *'the procedures to be followed before a student may be suspended or expelled from the school concerned'* and *"the grounds for removing a suspension imposed in relation to a student."* (Sections 23(2) c, d)

Suspension

The Board of Management of a recognised school has the authority to suspend a pupil. The Board of Management of St. Michael's N.S. Cootehill has delegated this authority to Mrs. McCarthy, the Principal. She may suspend a pupil for a period up to three days. This was done formally at a Board of Management Meeting and a record is kept in the Minutes Book of the Board.

A student should not be suspended for more than three days. If Mrs. McCarthy proposes a suspension that is longer than three days then the matter will be referred to the Board of Management for consideration and approval, giving the circumstances and the expected outcome.

However the Board of Management of St. Michael's N.S. Cootehill has authorised Mrs. McCarthy, the Principal, with the approval of the Chairperson of the Board, to impose a suspension of up to five days in circumstances where a board meeting cannot be convened in a timely fashion, subject to the guidance concerning such suspensions.

Suspension should be a proportionate response to the behaviour that is causing concern.

Other interventions will have been tried first (See above) but if the staff feel that these have not worked then a child may be suspended. The decision to suspend a child will be for one or more of the following reasons:

- The student's behaviour has had a seriously detrimental effect on the education of others.
- The student's 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 grounds for an automatic suspension;
For example: A serious physical/verbal assault on a member of staff/pupil/visitor,
Serious and deliberate damage to property and/or theft of items of value.
This is not an exhaustive list. These are only some examples.

The principal shall inform the education welfare officer, by notice in writing, when *a student is suspended from a recognised school for a period of not less than 6 days. (Sections 21(4) a)*

Circular 20/90 states that '*Parents should be informed of their right to come to the school and be invited to do so in order to discuss the misbehaviour with the Principal Teacher and/or the class teacher. This should always be done when the suspension of a pupil is being contemplated*'.

Teachers keep a written record of all instances of serious misbehaviour as well as a record of improvements in the behaviour of disruptive pupils. Communication with parents will be verbal or by letter, depending on circumstances. The parents concerned will be invited to the school. Parents will be involved at an early stage, rather than as a last resort. The following procedures will be followed:-

- Parents will be notified by letter or phone call and asked to call to the school to discuss the matter.
- Should there be no improvement or the letter ignored a second letter will be sent seeking to solve the problem.
- If there is still no improvement in the pupil's behaviour he/she may then be suspended, parents having been notified by letter of the details of suspension.
- As a final step the pupil may be expelled after a decision has been taken by the Board of Management.

Expulsion (permanent exclusion)

It is the right of a Board of Management to take '*...such other reasonable measures as it considers appropriate to ensure that good order and discipline are maintained in the school concerned and that the safety of students is secured.*' Aggressive, threatening or violent behaviour towards any person will be regarded as serious or gross misbehaviour, depending on the circumstances.

Expulsion 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 misbehaviour.

The strategies adopted by the school for Suspension (see above) may also be used when considering expulsion. If the school authorities are satisfied that they have exhausted all these strategies, and that the pupil's behaviour is still deemed to be unacceptable, then that pupil shall be expelled.

A proposal to expel 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 a real and significant threat to safety.
- The student is responsible for serious damage to property.

The grounds for expulsion are similar to those for suspension except in their degree of seriousness and persistence. The school authorities must also have tried a number of other interventions and believe they have exhausted all possibilities for changing the pupil's behaviour.

Expulsion for a First offence.

There may be exceptional circumstances where the Board of Management forms the opinion that a pupil should be expelled for a first offence. These may include:

- A serious physical/verbal assault on a member of staff/pupil/visitor,
- Serious and deliberate damage to property and/or theft of items of value.
- Supplying illegal substances to other students.

Procedures in respect of expulsion.

Expulsion may be considered in extreme cases. (In accordance with Rule 130 of the Rules for National Schools as amended by Circular 7/88.)

Schools are required by law to follow fair procedures as well as procedures prescribed under the Education Welfare Act 2000, when proposing to expel a student. Where a preliminary assessment of the facts confirms serious misdemeanour that could warrant expulsion, the procedural steps will include:

- A detailed investigation is carried out under the direction of the Principal whereby the student and parent are informed of the details of the alleged misbehaviour, how it will be investigated and that it may lead to expulsion. The student and parents will be given every opportunity to respond to these allegations before any decision is made.
- A recommendation is made by the Principal to the Board of Management.
- Consideration by the Board of the recommendation, and the holding of a hearing.
- Board of Management deliberations and actions following the hearing.
- Consultations arranged by the Educational Welfare Officer.
- Confirmation of the decision to expel.

Details of each of the above procedural steps can be found in 'Developing a Code of Behaviour:

Guidelines for schools' page 83-86. A photocopy is attached to this document. It is also available for inspection in the school.

The Act of 2000 (section 24) stipulates that where a board of Management is of the opinion that a student should be expelled, the board is required to inform the NEWB of its decision, and the reasons why in writing.

The decision to expel a student does not take effect until 20 school days have elapsed after the NEWB have received notification in writing. The new Notice of Decision to Expel form should be used for this purpose.

On receipt of this Form, a letter of acknowledgement will issue immediately from the National Welfare Board.

The date of receipt will be clearly indicated on the acknowledgement. The '20 school days' begin when the form is received by the NEWB.

This notice will only be completed and returned after all internal school processes have been exhausted.

When a school has expelled a student, and all appeals processes both internal and external have been exhausted, the student's expulsion will be reported on the Student Absence Report Form.

(Section 24(5))

Parents have a right to appeal a decision to expel a student under section 29 of the Education Act 1998, and will be informed accordingly of this option.

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Keeping records

Class level

Teachers are required to be vigilant in relation to record keeping for children who engage in difficult behaviour. Positive as well as negative behaviour should be recorded. Positive behaviour is publicly acknowledged and commended at our weekly assemblies.

Playground

- Supervising staff make a verbal report of misbehaviour to the class teacher, who then records it.

School records

- There is a school incident book which can be easily accessed from the general office for the recording of any serious misdemeanour.

Procedures for notification of pupil absences from school

The Education Welfare Act, 2000, Section 23 (2)(e) states that the code of behaviour must specify, "*the procedures to be followed in relation to a child's absence from school.*" Section 18 stipulates that parents must notify the school of a student's absence and the reason for this absence. We encourage our children to attend school by

- Creating a stimulating and attractive school environment
- A system for acknowledging and rewarding good or improved attendance is in place and trophies are awarded for good and improved attendance at the end of the week.
- Adapting curriculum content and methodologies to maximise relevance to pupils
- Adapting the class and school timetables to make it more attractive to attend and to be on time
- Parents and Guardians are made aware of the terms of the Education Welfare Act and its implications.
- Parents and Guardians are requested to send in a note informing teachers in writing of their child's absence from school and the reason for this absence. These notes are dated and kept for a period of two years. The school uses the standard forms to report on pupil absences to the National Education Welfare Board online. (*See forms on www.newb.ie*)

Reference to other Policies

Other school policies that have a bearing on the code of behaviour are

- SPHE plan
- Anti-bullying
- Enrolment
- Home / School links
- Health & Safety
- Special Educational Needs

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Success Criteria

- The smooth uninterrupted day to day running of the school.
- Observation of positive behaviour in class rooms, playground and school environment.
- Practices and procedures listed in this policy being consistently implemented by teachers.
- Positive feedback from teachers, parents and pupils.

Roles and Responsibility

- The Board of Management will study the document and ratify it if they are in agreement.
- The teachers, SEN and the principal of the school together with the support of the parents will implement the policy.
- The class teacher, SEN and principal will coordinate and monitor the implementation of this policy.
- The principal, teachers and SNA will ensure that the implementation of the policy is strictly adhered to.
- Pupils should be encouraged to be responsible for their actions and to be aware of the impact of their actions on others.
- Parents are encouraged to be supportive in the implementation of the policy as it is there all children.

Implementation Date

The policy will apply from the time it has been ratified.

Timetable for Review

This policy will be reviewed after three years in May 2012.

Ratification & Communication

'Schools' policies on behaviour should be communicated fully and clearly to parents' (Circular 20/90). Parents will be made aware through our information booklet that our policy is available from the school on request.

Reference Section

- Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 Section 23(1 -5), 24 (1-5)
- Education Act, 1998 Section 15 (2(d))
- Circular 20/90 on Discipline (DES web site www.irlgov.ie/educ). Also in CPSMA Handbook
- Circular 22/02 Appeals Procedures under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998. (DES website). Deals with appeals under the following headings:
 - (1) Permanent exclusion from a school
 - (2) Suspension
 - (3) Refusal to enrol
- Guidelines for Developing School Codes of Behaviour (National Education Welfare Board) *Draft edition published for consultation in 2007*
- Department of Education and Science Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post Primary Schools (1993) available on DES website
- Report to the Minister of Education Niamh Breathnach, T.D. on Discipline in Schools. Maeve Martin, 1997. Ch. 4 p.56-61 Recommendations for Schools
- Stay Safe and Walk Tall Programmes
- Management Board Members' Handbook. Revised 2007. CPSMA: A suggested Code of Behaviour & Discipline for National Schools
- INTO (2004) Managing Challenging Behaviour: Guidelines for Teachers
- INTO (2006) Towards Positive Behaviour in Primary Schools
- INTO (1995) Enhancing Self Esteem
- The Education Act 1998. The Education Welfare Act 2000. Questions and Answers, INTO
- The Principal's Legal Handbook Oliver Mahon B.L. IVEA 2002 Ch. 2 School Discipline
- Responding to Bullying. First Steps for Teachers. The Cool School Programme. NE Health Board

- Investigating and Resolving Bullying in Schools. The Cool School Programme. NE Health Board
- Stop it! Steps to Address Bullying. Wexford Education Network. Wexford Area Partnership. Phone: 053 23994
- Working towards a Whole School Policy on Self-Esteem and Positive Behaviour. Jenny Mosley. Positive Press 2001
- Working Together – to promote positive behaviour in classrooms, CEDR, Mary Immaculate College of Education
- Achieving Positive Behaviour. A Practical Guide. Patricia Dwyer. Marino

Appendix I:

Review of existing policy/practice

‘The ethos or climate of a school is a major factor in establishing and maintaining high standards of behaviour and discipline. This will involve a strong sense of community within the school and a high level of co-operation among staff and between staff, pupils and parents.’ Circular 20/90.

- Is there an existing code of behaviour in place?
- Were all teachers involved in the formulation of this policy? Were other staff involved?
- Had pupils an input?
- Was there appropriate consultation with and involvement of parents in formulating this policy?
- What was the role of the Board of Management in preparing this code of behaviour as required by the Education Welfare Act 2000?
- What is working well? Why is it so effective?
- What is not working well enough? Are there particular concerns that need to be addressed? Have specific incidents shown a need to revisit the policy?
- Are all staff aware of the content of the current code of behaviour and is it being used consistently? Does this include recently appointed or substitute teachers?
- Are parents aware of the code and are they supporting it appropriately?
- Are pupils aware of the code and do they generally comply with it?
- What specific changes do we need to make to the existing code of behaviour to make it more effective?
- Are there aspects of the current code that are no longer relevant and should be deleted?
- Is the SPHE curriculum used throughout the school to support the Code of Behaviour? Does it help our children develop communication and conflict resolution skills, appropriate ways of interacting and behaving? Does it foster self-esteem and help children accommodate differences and develop citizenship?
- Are there specific programmes in use consistently throughout the school that contribute to promoting a positive atmosphere? e.g. Walk Tall, Circle Time, Bubble Time... Are they successful?
- Are other associated policies dovetailing successfully with the approaches outlined in the code of behaviour?