

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR STUDENTS IN SECOND CYCLE INSTITUTIONS IN GHANA

1.0 PREAMBLE

The mission of Ghana Education Service is to ensure that all Ghanaian children of school going age are provided with inclusive and equitable quality formal education and training through effective management of resources to make education delivery relevant to the manpower needs of the nation.

To achieve this mission, the Service is required to ensure discipline in all schools to create an enabling environment that facilitates effective teaching and learning. Discipline directly affects academic achievements and good citizenship.

Consequent upon its vision and mission, the Ghana Education Service Council has prepared this document to serve as a guide and reference material on how to promote and maintain discipline in second cycle institutions. Guided by this document, individual schools must prepare their own Code of Conduct for students, considering the vision/mission of their schools, and being mindful of the prevailing local conditions, but still strictly conforming to the general rules and directives contained herein. School authorities must ensure that sanctions are administered on the basis of non-discrimination corrective nature avoid unfair, discriminatory and harsh disciplinary measures, and rather ensure that students, teachers and parents are given proper orientation to appreciate the rationale for the new Code.

Teachers are reminded that, as articulated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) which was ratified by Ghana in 1990 and the Children's Act of 1998 (Act 560), Children in Ghana have a right to education and should be free from being subjected to harmful or degrading treatment and any type of violence or exploitative labour that shall deny the child of his or her right to education. Teachers, as duty bearers and members of Ghana Education Service, have a responsibility to uphold and protect children's rights.

To achieve proper student behavior, punishment/sanctions in the new Code of Conduct for Students shall **be positive / corrective / reformational** to exclude all forms of physical, psychological and sexual violence in schools. Focus of teachers must be in **counselling and directing students to behave well.**

2.0 THE ROLE OF THE HEAD IN MAINTAINING DISCIPLINE IN THE SCHOOL

The Head of the school:

- (a) is directly responsible for ensuring good discipline in all aspects of school life.
- (b) must be a disciplinarian, and an epitome of good discipline, fairness, justice, human rights and rule of law.
- (c) must have good knowledge and control of the system of discipline in his /her school
- (d) held accountable by GES for all disciplinary issues

3.0 ROLE OF STAFF IN MAINTAINING DISCIPLINE

It is important for Management in SHS to appreciate that commitment in staff performance is key to enhancing discipline and higher academic performance of students.

To reduce indiscipline among students, staff must

- (a) be self-disciplined
- (b) involve students in administration
- (c) learn to employ improved skills for managing students effectively, and
- (d) be more dedicated to their duties.

Staff who play very critical roles to improving student discipline include the following:

- (a) **The Assistant Heads**, particularly Assistant Domestic, who deputises for the Head as Chief Disciplinary Officer, supervises Domestic Staff and reports to the Head on daily basis matters relating to student discipline, feeding and boarding.
- (b) **The Senior Housemaster / mistress** who is the custodian of the school Rules and Regulations (Code of Conduct for students), supervising work of Housemasters/mistresses, supervising issues and programmes pertaining to students' welfare and discipline including social activities and co-curricular programmes, and reports daily to the Assistant Domestic
- (c) **Heads of Departments** who supervise discipline and daily routine work schedules of staff and students of the various departments of the school.
- (d) **Housemasters / mistresses** essentially act in-loco-parentis for the students, manage performance of domestic duties, model and teach proper time management by students and conflict resolution, conduct

house inspections to ensure good hygiene and sanitation conditions, organise regular house meetings to discuss welfare matters of students, offer basic guidance and counselling services to students in their houses, delegate duties to House Prefects as a way of training them to be responsible leaders, and above all, report to Senior Housemaster / mistress periodically.

- (e) **Form masters/ mistresses** who supervise the academic and disciplinary aspects of students' life by classes. All teachers, especially form masters/mistresses are automatically academic counselors to students to encourage them along the way and not wait until they fail at the end. Some non-performing students can be rescued (if only a teacher is not the root cause)
- (f) **Teachers-On-Duty** who supervise routine activities of students on discipline, academic work, co-curricular activities, and all other aspects of school activities during the week, and report to the Head through the Senior Housemaster and Assistant Domestic.

Generally, therefore, in performing all these duties, the objective of staff shall be to promote personal cleanliness, table etiquette, proper dressing, morality, politeness in speech and communication, hard work, modesty in expenditure, etc. as a way of helping students to internalize discipline and reduce misbehaviour while in school, and become useful law-abiding citizens in future.

The situation where teachers do not offer guidance but wait for students to commit offences so they can inflict punishment on them should be discouraged.

4.0 ROLE OF PREFECTS

Prefects play key roles in school administration and maintenance of discipline in schools. Managements must, therefore, prioritise leadership training for/of Prefects to enable them to perform delegated duties effectively.

Prefects should be trained, encouraged, and well guided and resourced to directly supervise students on behalf of teachers, and at the same time, act as respectable representatives of the students.

Teachers should respect the representative capacity of prefects on all school committees and school fora.

Key among the routine prefectorial roles in second cycle institutions, Prefects

shall;

- (a) deputise for Housemasters/mistresses
- (b) prepare students duty roster
- (c) supervise performance of house duties on daily basis
- (d) appoint House Seniors-On-Duty
- (e) maintain discipline, refer serious misconduct to Housemaster/mistress
- (f) identify and report recalcitrant students to Housemasters/mistresses for counselling and / or sanctioning
- (g) attend to welfare needs of students
- (h) recommend sanctions and commendations
- (i) act as role models to their peers
- (j) keep financial records, and inventory of material resources of the House, and
- (k) report on all house activities / events / programmes to housemaster / mistress daily

Generally, students respect, appreciate and co-operate with Prefects they themselves have elected into office, such that where Prefects are effective, students tend to behave positively, while Prefects themselves also generally behave well. Disturbances and indiscipline occur in schools where Management does not recognize the importance of Prefects and does not involve them in administration.

5.0 GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING

Heads of Schools must allocate resources including suitable consultation rooms to improve Guidance and Counselling services in their schools to help promote acceptable conduct among students.

Counselling has proved to be more effective in addressing disciplinary challenges than excessive punishment. Effective Guidance and Counselling services also contribute immensely towards prevention of student agitation and unrest.

It is advantageous for Guidance and Counselling services to be provided by

a team/committee of teachers and students (peer counsellors) who command respect and confidence of their colleagues and peers. The Co-coordinator and Chairman of the Committee must essentially be knowledgeable and experienced professionally, and should be dedicated to the job.

The Guidance and Counselling Co-coordinator shall be regarded as a member of the Management Team with reduced teaching load, and shall report directly to the Headmaster / mistress who approve the committee's annual programme of activities.

6.0 DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE

Every second cycle institution shall constitute a Disciplinary Committee, composed of staff and students' representatives, to adjudicate in all manner of misconduct involving students only. The committee shall have no jurisdiction over cases involving teachers and supporting staff.

The committee must be guided by the principles of fairness, tolerance, transparency and justice, ensuring also that every accused student is granted hearing before judgment is passed.

On no account shall management sanction a student on a major case without recourse to the Committee, nor intimidate student representatives on the committee. Management shall investigate and establish prima facie offence before referring the case in writing to the Disciplinary Committee.

The Chairman of the Disciplinary Committee shall be a teacher not below the rank of AD II and appointed by the Head of school, but must be a non-management staff. The staff representatives (male and female) shall be elected by teachers, and students' representatives (boy and girl) by students. The secretary shall be a teacher, and his detailed reports of Committee proceedings shall be approved by simple majority before submission to the Headmaster / mistress for final approval and implementation. The Headmaster/mistress shall reprimand a committee member who misconducts himself / herself, or where necessary cause his replacement. Appeals and petitions to the Board of Governors shall be permitted.

7.0 MONITORING THE STATUS OF DISCIPLINE IN SCHOOLS

It shall be the responsibility of all stakeholders, especially Regional and District Directorates of education, members of Board of Governors, District Education Oversight committee members, Parent-Teacher association executives and Old Students Association executives to monitor the conduct of staff and students, and assist the school to improve / maintain high standard of

discipline to enhance high academic performance. It shall be the responsibility of the Headmaster / mistress to encourage this co-operation and partnership

8.0 RULES OF CONDUCT FOR STUDENTS

8.1 General Behaviour

- (a) Any breach of common sense is sanctionable offence
- (b) Students are to show courtesy and respect towards everyone. They must respect elders of the society as Ghanaian custom demands.
- (c) Students must internalise and exhibit good manners and values for life. Gentleness and good manners should be shown at all times.
- (d) Students must respect the rights of individuals, and abide by the Rule of Law.
- (e) Students must perform all their responsibilities in the school, including cleanliness of their body and surroundings. Diligence is expected at all times.
- (f) Students must maintain and safeguard all school property at all times

8.2 Flouting of Authority

Flouting the authority of the Head of School, Members of staff and Prefects is an offence.

8.3 Absence from School

Any student who, without prior permission, does not make 60% attendance in a semester shall be withdrawn (with approval of the Board) or made to repeat his / her class.

8.4 Attendance at School Assemblies

Except with permission of the Head, attendance at all School assemblies shall be compulsory for all students. Good conduct shall be observed at all school gatherings.

8.5 Class Attendance

Students shall not absent themselves from classes without permission. No student shall leave classes before school closes. Boarders shall attend evening / night preps. Day students shall obey all rules made for them.

8.6 Loitering

No student shall be found loitering at odd times and at odd places.

8.7 **Academic Work**

Students shall participate in all academic activities, and do all class exercises / assignments / homework without fail.

8.8 **Examinations and Examination Malpractices**

- (a) All examinations conducted by the school are compulsory for all students.
- (b) **Failure to write examination without good reasons constitutes very serious offence.**
- (c) Students who persistently refuse to write examinations shall be withdrawn after appropriate investigation and intervention.
- (d) Examination malpractices are serious offences punishable by dismissal, withdrawal and other such severe sanctions.
- (e) Academically weak students who may not benefit from academic work shall be counselled in consultation with their parents to take up / subscribe to alternative programmes.

8.9 **Breaking Bounds**

- (a) All students are required to keep within bounds at all times.
- (b) Students shall not leave the school compound without proper permission. Persistent offenders shall be de-boardinised.
- (c) Staff houses (on school compound and outside) are out-of-bounds to students except with permission by the Head of School.
- (d) The school kitchen and Staff Common Room are out-of-bounds to students except for those students who have official responsibilities to discharge.

8.10 **Reporting to School on Re-opening**

Students must report to school on the day of re-opening. Failure to do so without a tangible excuse e.g. medical report shall be considered a serious offence and offenders shall be severely punished.

8.11 **Punctuality**

Students must always be punctual to classes, meals, study and all school activities, programmes and functions.

8.12 **Improper Dressing**

- (a) Students must dress neatly, and wear prescribed dresses and footwear only.
- (b) Students who do not dress properly shall be punished.

- (c) Alterations to school uniforms are strictly prohibited.
- (d) Unprescribed dresses shall be confiscated for good.
- (e) Students shall wear decent haircut as prescribed by the school authorities.
- (f) The wearing of beard, side burns and / or moustache by boys/male students is strictly forbidden.
- (g) Students shall not wear ornaments such as chains, bangles, caps, braces etc. the wearing of dark goggles is also prohibited except with medical prescription.
- (h) Persistent offenders shall be suspended in addition to confiscation for good.

8.13 **Unprescribed Items**

Students are not allowed to bring the following items to school is proscribed unless approve by the school authorities:

- (a) Electrical and electronic appliances, eg. Mobile phones, Personal Computers, Walkman, Compact Disc, and Pen drives etc.
- (b) Contraceptives, eg. Condoms
- (c) Candles and other combustible materials
- (d) Alcohol, cigarettes, Indian hemp (wee), and all other hard drugs.

Their possession and use are criminal, and shall be reported to the police. These items will be confiscated for good, and offenders shall be drastically dealt with.

8.14 **Damage to School Property**

- (a) Students must develop pride in their school, and strive to keep property in good condition to ensure long usable life.
- (b) In particular, students must take good care of locks, furniture, plumbing items, books, Louvre blades, glass panes, electrical fitting, etc.
- (c) Water and electricity must not be wasted.
- (d) Unauthorized use or movement of school property is not allowed.
- (e) Scribbling on walls are prohibited.
- (f) Willful damage to school property is a serious offence. Offenders shall pay twice the prevailing price in addition to some other punishment.

8.15 **Sexual Offences**

- (a) Students who engage in sexual misconduct (eg. Homosexuality, rape, masturbation, lesbianism, defilement, rape etc.) Shall be withdrawn from

the school.

- (b) Association between boys and girls in obscure places or at odd times constitute an offence.
- (c) No student shall directly or indirectly do anything that may constitute sexual harassment of another student.
- (d) A student shall not condone sexual offences in the school.
- (e) Girls who become pregnant through rape, etc. shall be counselled to deliver and complete their course/programme of studies.
- (f) Girls who abort their pregnancy shall be withdrawn.

8.16 **Physical and Psychological Violence**

- (a) A student shall not do anything to harm another student physically or psychologically.
- (b) Fighting is regarded as an offence punishable by withdrawal from the school.
- (c) Assault on fellow student or staff is an offence punishable by withdrawal from the school.
- (d) Jeering, hoisting, whistling and disturbing during classes or official functions constitute an offence.
- (e) Any of the above offences shall attract deboardinization, suspension or withdrawal. In extreme cases, such offences shall be considered criminal, and shall be reported to the police.

8.17 **Incitement to Riot / Rioting / Demonstration**

- (a) Students involved shall be punished according to the role they played.
- (b) Ring leaders shall be dismissed
- (c) Those pressurized to demonstrate or participate shall be suspended.
- (d) Parents shall pay twice the cost of damages.

8.18 **Gambling**

Gambling and all forms of games of chance are prohibited in the school. Persistent offenders shall be dismissed.

8.19 **Other Offences**

The following acts also constitute punishable offences:

- (a) Failure to respond to school Bell, lateness and absenteeism from school functions.
- (b) Improper behaviour outside school
- (c) Travelling outside school / town without permission.

- (d) Anonymous letters with malicious intent / giving false information / impersonation / deliberate distortion of facts / character assassination
- (e) Negligence of duty by Prefects / Misuse of power
- (f) Overstaying mid-term holidays / public holidays / exeats.
- (g) Extortion / Forgery
- (h) Receiving visitors during instructional hours / contravening general visiting regulations
- (i) Sending food to the classroom / dormitory or eating there
- (j) Practicing Occultism and other such activities
- (k) Failure to perform house duties / complete reasonable punishment.
- (l) Violation of any of the exeat regulations of the school.

9.0 SANCTIONS

- 9.1 Any breach or non-observance of any section of the Rules of conduct shall constitute misconduct for which the offender shall be liable to a disciplinary action.
- 9.2 Each school management and Disciplinary Committee shall classify misconduct and sanctions into '**major**' and '**minor**', and judge each case on its own merit.
- 9.3 The essence of punishment shall always be to help the student to reform, and not to jeopardise their growth and development.
- 9.4 Sanctions may be stepped up or down or varied according as the school authorities may deem appropriate, but shall be within acceptable limits.
- 9.5 First time offenders especially where the offence is venial may not attract suspension, withdrawal or dismissal.
- 9.6 Where it is clear that a student cannot perform satisfactorily in a particular school for whatever reason, the student must have the opportunity to transfer to another school where they can thrive
- 9.7 In all cases, corporal punishment shall not apply.

10.0 CATEGORIES OF OFFENCES AND SANCTIONS

10.1 Minor Offences

- (a) Flouting of authority: Prefect and Members of Staff.(1st offence)

- (b) Absence from School ;(1st and 2nd offences).
- (c) Absenteeism from School functions (1st and 2nd offences)
- (d) Refusal to attend classes; (1st and 2nd offences)
- (a) Loitering
- (b) Failure to report on re-opening day
- (c) Improper dressing ;(1st and 2nd offences)
- (d) Bringing Unprescribed item(s) to school
- (e) Improper behaviour outside the school whilst in school uniform.
- (f) Minor Sexual misconduct ;(1st offence).
- (g) Negligence of duty by Prefects/Misuse of power; (1st offence)
- (h) Contravening General visiting regulation
- (i) Failure to perform House duties.
- (j) Sending food to the Classroom/dormitory ; (1st and 2nd offence)
- (k) Anonymous / false information ; (1st offence)
- (l) Defacing school wall ;(1st offence).

10.2 Major Offences

- (a) Flouting of the Authority of the Head.
- (b) Failure to participate in academic activity(2nd offence)
- (c) Breaking Bounds ;(2nd offence).
- (d) Damage to School property.
- (e) Major Sexual misconduct; (1st offence)
- (f) Improper dressing (3rd offence).
- (g) Physical and Psychological violence; (1st offence).
- (h) Incitement to riot/rioting / demonstration; (1st offence)
- (i) Gaming /Gambling ;(1st offence).
- (j) Anonymous letter/false information; (2nd offence).
- (k) Extortion/ Forgery/Stealing;(1st offence)
- (l) Occultism; (1st offence)
- (m) Drug abuse;(1st offence)
- (n) Hiding in the dormitory; (2nd offence).

10.3 Minor Sanctions

- (a) Cancellation of examination paper
- (b) Seizure of item
- (c) Written Warning
- (d) Signing of Bond by student with parents as witness.
- (e) Openly read written apology
- (f) Counseling and signing of bond
- (g) Payment of twice the cost of item

- (h) Manual work for persistence offence of the same misconduct.
- (i) One week internal suspension with manual work.

10.4 **Major Sanction**

- (a) Manual work
- (b) Deboardinazation
- (c) Demotion in position
- (d) Two week internal suspension.
- (e) External suspension not more than 3 weeks
- (f) Withdrawal
- (g) Dismissal.

11.0 **IMPLEMENTATION**

- 11.1 Minor offences may be handled by prefects, teachers, management or Head of School.
- 11.2 All major offences shall be heard by the school disciplinary committee.
- 11.3 Offences not herein mentioned shall be referred to the District / Municipal / Metropolitan Director of education for direction.
- 11.4 School Management may promulgate additional rules and regulations provided respect for human and constitutional rights are observed. Such rules shall be vetted by the Regional Director of Education.
- 11.5 The Disciplinary Committee shall write comprehensive report on each case, and management shall ensure the keeping of proper records on all disciplinary matters.

12.0 **REVIEW AND AMENDMENTS**

Only Ghana Education Service Council reserves the right to review and amend this Code of Conduct in whole or in part.