

Thomas More Christian Montessori School

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Discipline Policy (Grace and Courtesy) 2026

1. Rationale

As a registered school in NSW it is essential to ensure compliance with the NSW Educational Standards Authority requirements outlined in the NESA Registered and Accredited Individual Non-Government Schools NSW Manual including:

- Section B8 - that schools provide a safe environment where the risk of harm is minimised, students feel secure and that student welfare policies include effective behaviour management
- Section B9 - that the School must have in place and implement policies related to the discipline of students, including but not limited to the suspension and expulsion exclusion of students that are based on procedural fairness.

2. Positive Approach

At Thomas More Christian Montessori School we take a positive approach to behaviour management through our student Grace and Courtesy management approach which will be explained below. Our student Grace and Courtesy approach recognises the need for a series of sanctions based on Montessori principles that endeavour to specify behavioural approaches in a variety of situations. This must be done in order to provide mutual understanding between parents, staff, and students regarding any corrective action the school may be required to take including but not limited to suspension and expulsion of students that are based on procedural fairness.

Defining Suspension, Expulsion and Exclusion:

Suspension - removal of a student from the school for a period of time as determined by the principal. Suspensions are imposed in cases of unacceptable discourteous behaviour in the interest of the student, staff, and/or the school community. Parents are responsible for the supervision, care and wellbeing of students while they are suspended.

Expulsion - permanent removal of a student from the school.

Exclusion - we do not have a policy which would include excluding children who have been expelled from our school from being enrolled in another school.

At TMCN we expressly or implicitly prohibit corporal punishment. It will not be used under any circumstances. Additionally, we do not sanction the administering of corporal punishment by non-school persons, including parents, to enforce discipline at the school.

3. Behaviour Management

Following the codes of conduct and Christian and Montessori expectations of good will, service to others and the order and beauty in the learning environment, parents, teachers and students have the values of safe and positive student behaviour reinforced on a daily basis with appropriate behaviour management practices for students, consistent with the Montessori Philosophy of the School and with other aspects of the Student Welfare Policy.

Classroom expectations for appropriate behaviour from students, teachers and parents are central to the successful and harmonious operation of the TMCM school. These expectations are based on the Objects of the Thomas More Christian Montessori School Association, the ideals of wholesome Christian living and the order and beauty and respect for others promoted in a Montessori Classroom focused on individually based learning.

4. Rewards and Punishments

Maria Montessori advised teachers to avoid rewards and punishments. Rather she noted that actions that were undertaken by students in order to win “Awards” or “Rewards” were actions that did not have intrinsic or internal value to the student and these behaviours would soon be dispensed with as soon as the award was won or the reward given. Montessori teaches teachers how to facilitate the child’s sense of “self- accomplishment” and the joy of gaining mastery. Montessori observed that children are normally motivated to learn and to concentrate and to grow in mastery and once the child has reached this “normal” state of concentration and self-mastery this very state would extinguish all discourteous behaviours.

5. Inner Discipline

The development of inner discipline in a child is the goal in a Montessori education. Self-discipline is fostered in many ways. The classroom environment is organised in an orderly, logical manner. Children choose work, which they are capable of doing and are free to do it without interference from others. This approach alleviates many problems of discipline, which may be present in another kind of environment. In addition, the mixed age group allows the younger children to emulate the older children’s more mature behaviour.

6. Positive Approaches to Discourteousness

The positive model of grace and courtesy within a Montessori setting is self-discipline (where concentration, focus and independent learning happen without contention or interruption).

Children are respected and discourtesies are handled with positive responses, including:

- The actions of a child are discussed, not the personality.
- Opportunities are provided for the child to express and define his/her feelings.
- The teacher sets the tone for bringing the child into harmony by avoiding harsh words and sudden reprimands.

The underlying philosophy as expressed in Lou Austin’s Classic, “The Great Me and the Little Me” forms a foundation for all behaviour management strategies within the school. The philosophy states that everyone has two “me’s”. The Great Me and the Little Me. Everyone is able to choose which Me he/she wants to show. The Great Me is kind and loving while the Little Me is selfish, uncaring and unpleasant to be around. No one likes the Little Me, including ourselves when we are

showing the Little Me. If we have shown our Little Me, all we have to do is blow it out like the candle on a birthday cake and then breathe in the Great Me. Montessori states the teacher is to teach teaching not correcting. If the teacher sees a student performing a work incorrectly or is being discourteous, she/he does not intervene directly unless the student is causing damage to the materials, to another or him/herself. Later the teacher will use the example when discussing with the class and say, "Does the Great Me do such and such?" or "Does the Little Me do such and such?". Then the teacher instructs the class as to the correct behaviour for the given incident. The child is able to identify his behaviour and correct it without being singled out. This underlying and constant form of instruction allows all the children to adapt their behaviour as all want to be able to show their Great Me. In the upper grades, this form of group discussion regarding specific discourteous behaviours and appropriate behaviours continues to be used for behaviour management.

7. Grace and Courtesy

In accepting our responsibility for the optimum educational development of every student at TMCM, we recognise the need to create the best possible learning environment and social climate.

All students at TMCM are expected to:

- Attend every school day, unless they are legally excused, and be in class on time and prepared to learn.
- Maintain a neat appearance, including adhering to the requirements of the school's uniform or dress code policy.
- Behave safely, considerately and responsibly, including when travelling to and from school.
- Show respect at all times for teachers, other school staff and helpers, including following class rules, speaking courteously and cooperating with instructions and learning activities.
- Treat one another with dignity and respect.
- Care for property belonging to themselves, the school and others. Behaviour that infringes on the safety of others, such as harassment, bullying and illegal or anti-social behaviour of any kind, will not be tolerated.

The Three Key Values that ALL TMCM Students and Staff must adhere to are:

- RESPECT
- RESPONSIBILITY
- PERSONAL BEST

8. Disciplinary Sanctions

Defining Discourtesy and Consequences:

Minor Discourtesy

Behaviour or general classroom disruption (such as silliness, minor hitting, taking other's work, repetitive noise, copying behaviour, making a fuss and the like), that interferes with the orderly educational process.

The teacher manages this kind of behaviour by gentle direction described above, ie. reminders of the “Great Me and the Little Me”. – parents will be contacted by the classroom teacher if it is considered to be a repetitive form leading to other problems.

Serious Discourtesy

Behaviour that results in property destruction, wilful defiance, or endangering others. Such behaviour may be divided into two categories – NON-CONTACT and CONTACT.

Serious Discourtesy (Non-Contact) is seen as refusal to do work, constantly interfering verbally with other’s work, bad language and the like, including bullying (see “Anti-Bullying Definition” in Anti-Bullying Policy, Student Welfare).

Serious Discourtesy (Contact) is seen as out-of-control behaviour, hitting and kicking, temper tantrums, throwing objects, damaging students’ work or school property.

9. The Procedure the Teacher follows:

There are a range of possible actions that may be taken if the child repeats the offence after being reminded that the behaviour is not acceptable.

Stage 1)

Classroom management of behaviour which may include removal of privileges including the removal of freedom of choice of movement within the classroom, timeout, restriction of recess privileges, and of (half-time from lunch recess).

Stage 2)

Behaviour Contract established with student and parent which can include the green ticket or green tick system of communicating with parent daily how the child is progressing. (Child is given a green ticket or green tick if he/she is successful in extinguishing the Discourteous Behaviour for the entire day. Parent is thus made aware of how their child has done that day).

Stage 3)

Suspension (Behaviour contract established upon re-entry after suspension).

Stage 4)

Expulsion

In the case of *Serious Discourtesy (Contact)*, consequences may begin at either Stage 2 or Stage 3 depending on the seriousness of the behaviour and the risk to the child themselves and the other students. In these circumstances, the child may be removed immediately from the situation and, parents may be asked to pick up their child while the matter is being investigated.

10. The Procedures for each Stage are outlined below:

Stage 1 – Classroom management

This stage is handled by the classroom teacher who will document any actions taken.

Stage 2 – Behaviour contract

At this stage the classroom teacher contacts the parent and calls them to a conference ASAP with the student. The student is given an opportunity to be heard in relation to the misconduct. The teacher, parents and student agree on a behaviour contract which may include the green ticket or green tick system of daily communication between teacher and parent regarding the effectiveness of the contract each day. The child and parent are clearly informed as to the required behaviours that are expected to be manifest in place of the misconduct. The teacher keeps clear documentation of the misconduct and of the behaviour contract agreed upon. The teacher contacts and informs the Principal and shares documentation regarding the Behaviour Contract.

Stage 3 – Suspension

If the child does not modify his/her behaviour and continues to be disruptive, or where the child's behaviour is serious in the first instant, parents will be asked to a consultation with the teacher and the Principal. The child will also attend the first part of the consultation and be informed of specific allegation and the seriousness of the behaviour. The child will be given an opportunity to be heard. The Principal will investigate the allegations, interviewing all parties involved, consulting with school's advisory counsellor from Family Referral Services (FRS) if necessary, and a AISNSW representative, if necessary, and will decide on a fair and just response.

Depending on the seriousness of the behaviour and the risk to the child themselves and the other students, parents may be asked to pick up their child immediately while the matter is being investigated.

Action taken by the Principal may be the withdrawal of the child from the school for a "cooling-off" period (suspension) where the child is told that he/she is being given time to consider his/her behaviour away from the school environment. Parents may appeal in writing within 24 hours if they wish to appeal the decision for "suspension". In this case the Principal will schedule a meeting the day following the appeal to hear of the parents concerns. Parents are able to bring a support person to this meeting.

The Principal at this time may call for assistance outside the school i.e. local Family Counsellor who may also attend the appeals session to act as an unbiased listener. The counsellor may offer their suggestions to the Principal whose decision will then be final whether to continue the time for suspension or to reinstate the student the following day. The local Family Counsellor may assist the parents with parenting and behavioural management skills.

The child's re-entry after the suspension will be carefully monitored by the teacher and the Principal. A Behaviour Contract will be put in place. The Teacher and Principal will ensure that the child is acknowledged for every positive behaviour that he/she manifests and ensure that the child is very

clear regarding the behaviours that are expected. If there is no change in the child's behaviour or insufficient change *there may be a need to consider the child's inability to fit into the Montessori system and the possibility of expulsion from the school.*

Stage 4 – Expulsion

Action at this stage will be determined by the Principal, after consulting with the teacher, the child, the parents and any counsellors involved and after making sure that the child's rights to be heard and to have a fair and just consequence are adhered to.

The Principal will reach a preliminary decision in relation to the repetitive behaviours and any proposed penalty and advise the student (and parent/s) of the view. The student (and parent/s) would be advised that if they wish this preliminary decision to be reviewed they may make application for a review to the Principal and submit any information they want to be considered during the review process. The Principal after reviewing the additional information and after consultation with any of the sources listed above in Stage 3, will then either confirm the preliminary decision as the final decision or amend the preliminary decision based on the additional information provided.

11. Damages

Any damage to school property will become the responsibility of the offending child's parents and they will be expected to meet the cost of the damage.

All discourteous behaviours will be documented by the teachers and details will be available to parents, upon request.

12. Reports of Offending Behaviour by a Child

Offending discourteous behaviour should be reported by the child who has been offended to the teachers in the first instance.

If a child reports to their parents that they have been hurt by another child during school time, parents are requested to contact the teacher. The teacher is in the best position to document and deal with such occurrences. The teacher will also notify the Principal that a parent has made this report.

Parents are requested not to take action by directly contacting parents of the "other" child. Parents should contact the teacher and rely on the teacher's judgement in assessing the nature of the incident and work with the teacher in evaluating the situation. The teacher will also notify the Principal in any such instance.

We expect all community members (students, parents and teachers) to abide by the Codes of Conduct. (*see School Policies for Codes of Conduct for Staff, Parents and Students*). Failure to follow Student Code of Conduct will result in consequences that could lead to the expulsion.