Striving for excellence

LEARNER MANAGEMENT POLICY & GUIDELINES

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Table of Contents

1 INTRODUCTION 3

2 POLICY AIM 3

3 POLICY SCOPE 3

4 LEGAL FRAMEWORK 4

5 UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PRIMARY & HIGH SCHOOL LEARNERS 5

6 MANAGING PRIMARY SCHOOL LEARNERS 7

6.1.1 Establish Clear Rules and Expectations 7

6.1.2 Manage Transitions Smoothly 7

6.1.3 Build Positive Relationships 8

6.1.4 Use Positive Reinforcement 8

6.1.5 Create an Engaging Learning Environment 8

6.1.6 Stay Organised and Prepared 8

6.1.7 Boredom or Lack of Engagement: 9

6.1.8 Provide Clear Instructions 9

6.1.9 Address Misbehaviour Calmly and Fairly 9

6.1.10 Poor Teacher-Student Relationships: 10

6.1.11 Lack of Respect for Authority: 10

6.1.12 Foster Inclusivity and Cooperation 10

6.1.13 Maintain Ongoing Communication 10

7 ALIGNING LEARNER MANAGEMENT WITH THE SCHOOL DISCIPLINE SYSTEM 10

7.1 Key Components & Implementation 11

7.2 How the merit and demerit system works 11

7.3 What Weakens the Merit and Demerit System 12

7.4 Learner Management Policy Conclusion 15

8 ANNEXURE A: POLICY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM 16

1 INTRODUCTION

A comprehensive Learner Management Policy is essential to creating a positive, safe, and productive learning environment at our primary school. This policy outlines the expectations, responsibilities, and procedures that guide the management of learners' behaviour, attendance, and overall well-being. Our aim is to foster mutual respect, inclusivity, and academic excellence while supporting the holistic development of every child. By setting clear guidelines and working collaboratively with staff, parents, and learners, we strive to ensure that all learners are empowered to reach their full potential in a nurturing and structured setting. **Nurturing** children means to care for, support, and encourage the growth, development, or success of learners promoting health and well-being.

2 POLICY AIM

The aim of the Learner Management Policy at our primary school is to establish clear, consistent, and fair guidelines that support the development of positive behaviour in and out of class, regular attendance, and overall well-being among all learners. This policy is designed to promote a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment, encourage self-discipline and responsibility, foster academic and personal growth, and provide clear procedures for addressing behavioural and attendance concerns. Ultimately, it ensures that every learner could reach their full potential in a supportive and nurturing setting.

3 POLICY SCOPE

This policy is a comprehensive tool that applies to all learners enrolled at the primary school as well as the Solid Beginnings School internal and external stakeholders, including, but not limited to, teaching and non-teaching staff, learners, the School Governing Body (SGB) and the Department of Basic Education. Its scope covers all school-related activities, both on and off campus—such as classroom behaviour, attendance, punctuality, participation, and extracurricular events. The policy governs interactions between learners, staff, and visitors within the school environment and outlines procedures for addressing behavioural issues, attendance concerns, and learner welfare. It also includes collaboration with parents, guardians, and relevant external support services as needed. By defining this scope, the policy

ensures that its principles and procedures are consistently upheld throughout all aspects of school life.

Policy Communication: This policy will be communicated to all stakeholders and is subject to periodic review to ensure its continued effectiveness.

4 LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The management of learners in South African primary schools is governed by a comprehensive legal and policy framework to ensure quality education, learner well-being, and the upholding of rights. This policy complies with the following legislative and regulatory frameworks:

Legal Framework	Function
Constitution of South Africa (Section 14)	The South African Constitution guarantees a right to basic education (Section 29), which mandates that schools provide inclusive, non-discriminatory, and quality learning, impacting schools structure and learner management and supervision.
Children's Act, No. 38 of 2005:	**Children's Act, No. 38 of 2005:** Protects the rights and well-being of children, ensuring that learner management practices promote the best interests of the child.
South African Schools Act (SASA) No. 84 of 1996	The South African Schools Act (SASA) No. 84 of 1996 establishes the framework for school governance, discipline, admissions, and the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders. It mandates schools to adopt codes of conduct for learners and provides guidelines for managing learner behaviour and discipline.
South African Council for Educators (SACE) Code of Professional Ethics:	Guides educators on ethical conduct, including their responsibilities in managing learner behaviour and promoting a positive school climate

The **Basic Education Laws Amendment (BELA) Act, 2024** (Act No. 32 of 2024),	The BELA Act (Act No. 32 of 2024), which became largely effective in late 2024 and early 2025, amends the South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996 to strengthen, standardize, and update learner management across all public schools.
Department of Basic Education Policies:	Includes regulations on school safety, anti-bullying, attendance, and learner discipline (such as the Guidelines for the Consideration of Governing Bodies in Adopting a Code of Conduct for Learners).
National Education Policy Act, No. 27 of 1996:	**National Education Policy Act, No. 27 of 1996,** Provides a framework for policy formulation and the implementation of national education standards.
Supporting Documents, Linked Documentation, Procedures and Forms for this Policy	This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies and documents: • The Vision and Mission of the School • The Leaner Absenteeism Policy • The Learner Code of Conduct • The Teacher Code of Conduct

Together, these laws policies and guidelines ensure that learner management policies in South African schools are lawful, fair, inclusive, and focused on the holistic development and protection of every child. This framework provides the legal and policy basis for developing and implementing effective learner management policies in South African primary schools.

PART 1: THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PRIMARY & HIGH SCHOOLS

5 UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PRIMARY & HIGH SCHOOL LEARNERS

The Primary school teachers, particularly those who have been exposed to the high school environment and contexts, need to understand the differences between primary and high school learners to better meet the needs of the primary school environment. Understanding the following differences is critical:

	Primary School Learners	**Secondary School Learners**
Age and Developmental Stages	-In South Africa, the primary school learners are typically aged 5–12 years. -At this stage, children are in their early to late childhood and are developing **foundational skills** in reading, writing, numeracy, and social interaction. -Hence, a primary school teacher should be cognisant that his or her role is to impart foundational knowledge to learners. Learners rely on guidance and support so you can't just write a comment: *"Work not done and live it like that"*.	-Usually aged 13 –18 years. -These learners are in adolescence, experiencing puberty. The learners have developed greater independence, and significant cognitive, emotional, and social development.
Cognitive Abilities	-Learners think more concretely. -Learning is often hands-on and experiential. They require clear instructions, repetition, and structured routines.	- High school learners develop abstract and critical thinking skills. -They can reason, analyse, form arguments, and handle more complex and independent learning tasks.
Social and Emotional Needs	Primary school children need high levels of support, encouragement, and close supervision. - Friendships are simple, and their sense of self is strongly tied to family and teacher approval. -It is thus important to impart positive self-esteem in them.	-Greater desire for independence and peer acceptance. -Experience more complex emotions, identity exploration, and social pressures.
Learning Environment	-Often a single classroom with one main teacher. The environment should be nurturing, structured, and emphasise safety and belonging. -Learners do not yet understand the self-management and personal responsibility concept.	-Learners move between different classrooms and teachers. -The environment is less structured, with expectations for self-management and personal responsibility.

Assessment and expectations	-Assessment is often formative and continuous, focusing on overall development and progress. -Feedback is gentle and encouraging (It is important to use sensitive language to avoid lowering children's self-esteem).	Assessment is more formal, with exams, grades, and greater emphasis on academic achievement and preparation for further education or employment.

Primary school learners are younger, need more support, and are building foundational skills in a nurturing environment. Secondary school learners are older, more independent, face greater academic and social challenges, and are preparing for adulthood and further studies. Understanding the above-mentioned differences is the starting point and key to learner management in a primary school.

It is against this principle that our school requires children to be nurtured, ensuring that they are well nourished, warm, and always look clean and neat. The class teacher should ensure that there is a bottle of vaseline for skin care and a box of facial tissue for hygiene in class.

6 MANAGING PRIMARY SCHOOL LEARNERS

Effectively managing primary school learners is essential for creating **a positive**, **productive** classroom environment where all learners can learn and thrive. Here are key strategies for managing primary school learners effectively:

6.1.1 Establish Clear Rules and Expectations

- Set simple, age-appropriate classroom rules at the start of the year.
- Discuss and practice routines for common activities (lining up, transitions, group work).
- Repeat your classroom rules every day before you start your lesson and when a need arises.

6.1.2 Manage Transitions Smoothly

- Use signals (clapping, music, countdowns) to gain attention and transition between activities.

What is a classroom transition? Transitions in classroom management are the, often brief, processes of moving learners from one academic lesson, activity, or

physical space to another. Transitions are crucial moments that, when managed effectively, prevent chaos, maximise instructional time, and maintain a calm, focused environment.

Three Main Types: **Transitions include entering the room, switching between activities, and leaving the room.**

Importance: Properly managed transitions reduce behaviour issues, restlessness, help learners "switch gears" mentally, and improve focus.

Consistently reinforce expectations with positive reminders.

6.1.3 Build Positive Relationships

- Learn and use learners' names quickly.
- Show genuine interest in each child's well-being.
- Listen actively and treat learners with **respect** and **empathy**.

6.1.4 Use Positive Reinforcement

- Praise good behaviour and effort frequently.
- Use rewards, stickers, or classroom privileges to motivate learners.
- Acknowledge improvements and celebrate achievements.

6.1.5 Create an Engaging Learning Environment

- Plan varied, interactive, and hands-on lessons.
- Incorporate movement, games, and group work to maintain attention.
- Use visual aids, storytelling, and real-life examples.
- Identify the usually quiet and disengaged learners and engage them in the in and out of class discussions and activities.

6.1.6 Stay Organised and Prepared

- Prepare materials and lessons in advance.
- Avoid sending learners out of class to go fetch the needed materials from office, staffroom, other classes or staff members.
- Have clear lesson objectives and a structured schedule.
- Minimise downtime, which can lead to off-task behaviour.

What is downtime in classroom management?

- ✓ Downtown time refers to unstructured, unassigned, or "waiting" time when instruction stops, often leading to behavioural issues if unmanaged.
- ✓ It commonly occurs during transitions, when learners finish works early, or during unexpected interruptions.
- ✓ While sometimes necessary for mental breaks, reducing unnecessary downtime is crucial for maintaining focus.

6.1.7 Boredom or Lack of Engagement:

The possible causes of lack of learner engagement:

- Learners maybe academically challenged and such learners seek for teacher's attention in different negative ways.
- Lessons that are not engaging or relevant may lead learners **to act out** or **challenge the teacher out of frustration** or **boredom**.

6.1.8 Provide Clear Instructions & Establish Learner Needs

- Know each learner and their needs
- Use simple language and demonstrate tasks when possible.
- Check for understanding by asking questions or having learners repeat instructions.
- Give instructions one step at a time for complex activities.

If instructions, rules, or consequences are not clearly communicated, learners may feel justified in ignoring or challenging them.

6.1.9 Address Misbehaviour Calmly and Fairly

- Respond to disruptions with calm, consistent consequences.
- Focus on correcting behaviour, not punishing the child.
- Use time-outs, loss of privileges, or restorative conversations as appropriate. **NB-** Align your methods to the school discipline policy and guidelines.

6.1.10 Poor Teacher-Student Relationships:

- A lack of rapport, empathy, or understanding between teacher and learners can lead to disengagement, defiance, or disrespect.

6.1.11 Lack of Respect for Authority:

- If learners perceive a teacher as lacking authority, confidence, or consistency, they may not take rules or instructions seriously.
- Hence a teacher needs to establish authority in class and know how to balance it out.
- Be firm yet loving and caring.

6.1.12 Foster Inclusivity and Cooperation

- Encourage teamwork and peer support.
- Address bullying or exclusion immediately.
- Differentiate instruction to meet diverse learning needs.

6.1.13 Maintain Ongoing Communication

- Keep management informed about classroom expectations, achievements, and concerns.
- Communication to parents should be aligned to the school communication policy.
- Collaborate with colleagues for consistent strategies across classes.

7 ALIGNING LEARNER MANAGEMENT WITH THE SCHOOL DISCIPLINE SYSTEM

The school uses a learner merit and demerit system to manage leaner behaviour. A learner merit and demerit system is a structured classroom management tool used to encourage positive behaviour and discourage misconduct by awarding points for achievements (merits) and issuing penalties for violations (demerits). The merit and demerit system aims to foster a disciplined, value-based environment.

7.1 Key Components & Implementation

- **Merits (Positive Reinforcement):** Awarded for achievements like assisting educators, excellent academic work, smartness or positive behaviour, often leading to rewards.
- A learner who earns 5 clean merits without any demerit record will have their name displayed on the star chart.
- Learners who display consistent good behaviour will be awarded the principal's tea
- **Demerits (Corrective Action):** Issued for misconduct, such as missing homework, disruptive behaviour, or breaking school rules.

Structure: Often, learners start with zero points or a neutral balance, with violations classified by levels of severity (e.g., Level 1-4).

Level 1: *Homework not done, homework incomplete, late coming, untidy*

Level 2*: Misbehaving in class and out of class, class disruption*

Level 3*: Improper Uniform, disrespectful, copying and rudeness.*

Level 4*: Bullying others, vandalism and swearing*

7.2 How the merit and demerit system works

Accumulation of five or more demerits often leads to consequences like detentions, being taken to the Vice Principal's or Principal's office, parent meetings, or, in severe cases, suspensions. The learner diaries and merit/demerit pages should be checked consistently and learners who accumulate five demerits should be reported to management. Likewise, learners who accumulate any demerit for serious offences graded in level 4 offences should be immediately reported to the school management team.

The SMT will take the necessary steps to call for parents' intervention. Parents intervention will be called for if a learner accrues 5 demerits. A child's name will be listed in the black book and placed in the red zone. The red zone indicates that the learner may be suspended.

Level 4 offences call for parents' immediate intervention.

Serious misconducts are dealt with in accordance with the learner code of conduct. Refer to the learner code of conduct.

7.3 What Weakens the Merit and Demerit System

When giving demerits to primary school learners, teachers should guard against the following:

- **Overusing Demerits**: Excessive use of demerits can make them lose their effectiveness and may cause learners to feel discouraged rather than motivated to improve.
- **Lack of Consistency**: Applying demerits inconsistently or unfairly can lead to perceptions of favouritism or injustice among learners.
- **Public Shaming**: Giving demerits in front of peers can embarrass or humiliate learners, potentially harming their self-esteem.
- **Not Explaining the Reason**: Failing to explain why a demerit was given can leave learners confused about what behaviour needs to change.
- **Ignoring Positive Behaviour**: Focusing only on negative behaviours and not acknowledging good behaviours can create a negative classroom environment.
- **Disregarding Individual Differences**: Not considering the age, developmental stage, or unique needs of learners can make demerits less effective or even inappropriate.
- **Using Demerits as a First Resort**: Resorting immediately to punitive measures without trying positive reinforcement or other strategies first can hinder relationship-building.
- **Neglecting to Follow Up**: Not discussing with learners how they can improve or what steps to take next misses an opportunity for growth and learning.

By being mindful of these pitfalls, teachers can use demerits as a constructive part of classroom management rather than a source of fear or resentment.

7.4 Classroom Management during Exam Time

We have two scenarios during the exam writing time. We have classes writing exams, and others not writing exams on a given day or during certain class periods. It will be difficult to implement the usual timetable during the exam time. What should happen?

Learners who are not writing exams should be meaningfully occupied. Therefore, there is a need for clear communication amongst the teachers to effectively balance exams and lessons. Communicate in advance which subjects will be written, from what time to what time, and agree on the teacher or teachers who will be occupying certain grades. Communicating in advance will afford preparation time for the class and allow teachers occupying classes that are not writing exams on certain days or class periods to prepare.

7.5 Classroom Management After Exams at the End of the Term

Classroom management after learners finish end-of-term exams is important to maintain a positive, productive environment. This time can be tough, as learners may be less motivated and more restless. Teachers should remember that exams are done, but school is still open. School and class timetables must be followed, and children need useful activities. Children often misbehave if they are not busy. Here are some ways to manage classrooms after exams:

7.5.1.1 Set Clear Expectations

- Remind learners that school rules and respectful behaviour must continue to be followed until term end.
- Clearly explain the schedule and activities planned for the remaining days, so learners understand expectations.

7.5.1.2 2. Provide Remedial and Revision Opportunities

- Revise assessments and let the learners do corrections.
- Have learners complete assessment or exam corrections on an additional sheet of paper, as directed by the teacher.

- Offer targeted support or revision sessions for learners who need extra help.
- Go over difficult topics from the term in a relaxed, hands-on way.

7.5.1.3 Prepare for the Next Term

- Introduce new topics or skills for the next term in a fun way.
- Organise classroom clean-up or decoration projects to foster responsibility.

7.5.1.4 Engage Learners with Enrichment Activities

- Introduce supervised creative projects such as art, music, drama, or craft activities.
- Learners are not allowed to bring and play their own games in class.
- Ensure all activities are supervised, educational, and structured for meaningful engagement.
- Let learners study topics they like with small research projects or presentations.
- Clearly supervise all activities assigned to learners during this period.

7.5.1.5 Celebrate Achievements and Foster Community

- Hold class discussions reflecting on the term's successes and challenges.
- Plan end-of-term parties, award events, or thank-you activities to celebrate hard work.

7.5.1.6 Facilitate Life Skills and Social-Emotional Learning

- Teach about teamwork, solving problems, or setting goals.
- Use stories, acting, or group tasks to build social skills and confidence.

7.5.1.7 Involve Learners in Planning and Decision-Making

- Let learners help choose some of the activities or organise events.
- Encourage learners to lead sessions and share skills or interests with the class.

7.5.1.8 Maintain a Structured Routine

- Keep a daily schedule, even if it includes more relaxed or fun activities.
- Use clear transitions and routines to stop chaos or boredom.

7.5.1.9 Monitor and Supervise

- Watch and guide learners, especially during free or group activities.
- Do not leave learners unattended. Always ensure adult supervision is present.
- Address any behavioural issues promptly and fairly.

After exams, effective classroom management involves keeping learners purposefully engaged with enrichment, review, and community-building activities, while maintaining structure and clear expectations. This ensures a positive end to the term and sets the stage for continued success.

7.6 Learner Management Policy Conclusion

In conclusion, an effective school leaner management policy is vital for creating a safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environment. By establishing clear guidelines, promoting positive behaviour, and providing consistent support to both learners and staff, the policy ensures that every student can reach their full potential. Commitment to ongoing review and improvement of these practices will help the school community foster respect, accountability, and academic excellence for all learners.

8 ANNEXURE A: POLICY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

LEARNER POLICY MANAGEMNT POLICY & GUIDELINES VERSION 26/2

Staff Member

I, _____ ID Number _____

Acknowledge that I have read and understood the Solid Beginnings Learner Management Policy. I further confirm that I have filed the policy in my master file and I will be referring to the policy for guidance and reference.

Teacher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Management Representative:

Name & Surname _____ Capacity_____

Signature: _____ Date: _____