# L-Università ta' Malta

# A School Behaviour Policy that Bears Witness to Gospel Values

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*"Education is not just about transmitting knowledge; it is about forming the human person, equipping them with the values, virtues, and character to contribute to the common good."*

**Pope Francis**

# Abstract

**Angele Calleja**

**A School Behaviour Policy that Bears Witness to Gospel Values**

This study examines the alignment of behaviour policies in three Catholic primary schools with Gospel values, highlighting its importance for moral and academic development in faith-based education. Using qualitative methods—interviews with school leaders, focus groups with parents, and policy analysis—the research reveals a shared commitment to principles like compassion and respect, yet notes significant differences in their implementation.

School A focuses on fairness and equity, School B emphasises relational and character-building approaches, and School C employs a structured, rule-based framework. Despite these distinctions, the study reveals that parental involvement and student input are frequently underutilized, highlighting missed opportunities to enhance democratic engagement. Additionally, external factors such as family dynamics and technology emerge as critical influences that warrant more comprehensive consideration.

The findings underscore the continued need for behaviour policies that truly integrate Gospel values through restorative practices, while addressing gaps in policy implementation and stakeholder communication. The dissertation recommends standardized behaviour frameworks and enhanced engagement strategies to improve inclusivity and effectiveness. This research contributes to behaviour management by merging ethical principles with practical strategies relevant to faith-based and secular educational contexts.

**Keywords**: Gospel values, behaviour policies, Catholic education, restorative practices, participatory approaches.

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# Dedication

To my daughter Beatrix and in memory of my beloved Nonni

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# List of Abbreviations

AI – Artificial Intelligence

DSO – Designated Safety Officer

ICT – Information and Communication Technology

PBIS – Positive Behaviour Intervention and Support

SLT – Senior Leadership Team

# Introduction

## 0.1 Introduction

The role of behaviour policies in schools extends beyond merely maintaining order; they serve as instruments that shape pupils' moral, social, and spiritual development. In Catholic education, these policies hold the potential to embody Gospel values, offering a framework that promotes compassion, respect, and reconciliation. The current study explores the intricate dynamics of behaviour management in Catholic primary schools, examining how these policies align with Gospel principles, address behavioural challenges, and prioritise the person's centrality.

## 0.2 Rationale for the Study

Behaviour policies in Catholic schools are deeply rooted in the Church's educational mission, which calls for the holistic development of individuals (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2007). Despite the significance of these policies, research often overlooks how they operationalise Gospel values in daily school life. Schools face evolving behavioural challenges with increasing societal complexities—ranging from technology misuse to family dynamics. Understanding the foundations of a behaviour policy that reflects Gospel values becomes a pressing concern. This study addresses this gap by investigating the interplay between Gospel teachings, behavioural expectations, and practical strategies in Catholic primary schools.

The choice to focus on Catholic schools stems from their explicit commitment to integrating faith and education. This integration aligns with Pope Francis' (2013) advocacy for mercy-based education that prioritises the dignity and centrality of the person. This research aims to contribute to the discourse on values-driven behaviour management by exploring the theoretical and practical dimensions of behaviour policies within a faith-based context.

## 0.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is threefold. Firstly, it seeks to identify the underpinnings of a school behaviour policy that bears witness to Gospel values. Secondly, it examines the sources of behavioural challenges within the school context, providing a nuanced understanding of the external and internal factors that influence pupil behaviour. Finally, the study investigates the styles of behaviour policies that best align with the principle of the person's centrality, offering actionable insights for policy refinement in Catholic primary schools.

These goals are explored through the following research questions.

- **What are the underpinnings of a school behaviour policy that bears witness to Gospel values?**
- **What could be the sources of behavioural challenges in Catholic primary schools?**
- **What styles of behaviour policies lend themselves to a policy based on the centrality of the person?**

## 0.4 Outline of the Study

This dissertation is organised into five chapters, beginning with this introduction, each systematically addressing the research questions. Chapter 1 presents the literature review, providing a theoretical foundation by examining key concepts such as Gospel values, behaviour management strategies, and the challenges faced in faith-based education. It draws on frameworks by Rogers (1961), Dewey (1916), and Kohlberg (1981) to establish the context for the study.

Chapter 2 details the research methodology, outlining the qualitative approach employed to explore school leaders' perspectives, designated safeguarding officers (DSOs), and parents. The chapter describes the selection of participants from three Catholic primary schools in Malta and using thematic analysis to interpret the data.

Chapter 3 discusses the findings, presenting thematic reflections within and across the schools. The discussion integrates stakeholders' perspectives while aligning the findings with the theoretical and Gospel frameworks established in Chapter 1.

Chapter 4 concludes the study, synthesising the findings and their implications for policy and practice. It highlights the study's contributions to the discourse on behaviour management and offers recommendations for future research and practice.

# Chapter 1 – Literature Review

## 1.1 Introduction

This chapter explores foundational educational theories that could significantly influence school behaviour management, explicitly examining their alignment with Gospel values. By delving into prominent theories of moral development, this review considers how these frameworks could guide the development of age-appropriate strategies to nurture moral growth within a Church school setting.

Furthermore, the chapter investigates the philosophical underpinnings of Church school education, aiming to understand how these principles manifest in behaviour policies prioritising the person's centrality. The educational theories discussed might not only provide insights into the alignment with the foundational values of a Catholic primary school's behaviour policy. They could also offer practical guidance for senior leadership teams (SLT) and educators. This can be useful for developing or reassessing behaviour management approaches that effectively reflect Gospel values.

The insights gained from these discussions could be crucial for school management and leadership as they navigate the complexities of implementing effective behaviour policies deeply rooted in Christian values. This alignment might prove critical in Church schools, where educational practice and moral instruction are intertwined. This examination leads the review to address the primary research question: What are the underpinnings of a school behaviour theory that bears witness to Gospel values? Here, some theoretical foundations that support behavioural policies in schools are explored, focusing on how these policies integrate and reflect Gospel values.

Subsequently, the second question is: What could be the sources of behavioural challenges? To address this, theories of moral development and their implications for behaviour are explored to attempt to uncover the potential roots of behavioural issues within a school setting.

Finally, the third research question asks: What behavioural policies lend themselves to a policy based on the person's centrality? This part of the inquiry assesses various behavioural theories that appear to uphold the dignity and centrality of the student as an individual in the educational process.

The primary and secondary questions this dissertation aims to explore might provide valuable insights and practical recommendations that may help school leaders in primary Church schools make informed decisions that enhance their educational practices and align with their core values.

## 1.2 An Overview of Some Theories of Classroom Management and Moral Development.

Linking theories of school behaviour with Gospel values involves a deliberate integration of psychological and educational theories with the foundational principles of the Gospels. These principles include love, compassion, forgiveness, and empathy. This integration could be crucial in developing behaviour management strategies that address conduct and foster moral and ethical development among students.

In his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013), Pope Francis underscores the significance of aligning educational practices with these Gospel values. He articulates the necessity for Catholic education to not merely teach but embody the Christian principles of love, forgiveness, and compassion. According to Pope Francis, these values should be the cornerstone of school policies, shaping not just academic or disciplinary measures but also influencing how students interact with one another and understand their place in the world.

This approach encourages an educational environment where behavioural norms are not enforced through strict punitive measures alone but through guidance that nurtures understanding, reconciliation, and mutual respect. Theories of moral development, such as those proposed by Kohlberg and Piaget, suggest that such an environment is conducive to the higher stages of moral reasoning, where decisions are made based on universal ethical principles rather than mere obedience or self-interest. Educators can

help pupils behave appropriately and internalise these values by fostering a setting that emphasises Gospel values, leading to genuine moral growth.

Thus, integrating these theories with Gospel values could have profound practical implications for the way schools are run and how pupils are taught to behave and develop as moral individuals. This integration might form the bedrock of behaviour policies in Church schools, ensuring that educational practices are practical and profoundly transformative, aligning with the spiritual mission of the institutions.

## 1.2.1 The Behaviourist Approach to Behaviour Management

The table below summarises key behaviourist theories from Skinner, Watson, Pavlov, Thorndike, and Bandura, highlighting their practical applications in school behaviour management. It illustrates using reinforcement, structured routines, and modelling to promote positive behaviour. Linked to Gospel values, the table underscores respect, compassion, and community integration within Catholic educational frameworks, fostering holistic student development.

**Table 1.1 The Behaviourist Approach**

| The Behaviourist Approach |
| --- |
| **Key figures** |
| Skinner, Watson, Pavlov, Thorndike, and Bandura (Social Theory) |
| **Implications for a school behaviour policy** |
| These theories establish a robust framework that could enhance teaching and learning through effective behavioural interventions.<br><br>• **Operant Conditioning (Skinner, 1953):** Reinforcement and consequences play a critical role in shaping student behaviour. Positive Behaviour Interventions and Supports (PBIS) encourage structured reward systems to promote desired behaviours and discourage negative ones.<br>• **Classroom Routines (Watson, 1930; Pavlov, 1927):** Consistent and predictable routines create stability, improving classroom management and reducing behavioural disruptions.<br>• **Immediate Feedback and Role Modelling (Thorndike, 1911; Bandura, 1977):** Providing immediate reinforcement for positive behaviour encourages repetition, while role modelling by teachers and peers fosters the emulation of pro-social behaviours. |
| **Implications for school leadership** |
| • **Implement systems such as PBIS to reinforce positive behaviours and establish accountability frameworks (Skinner, 1953).**<br>• **Ensure school policies support predictable routines, fostering environments conducive to learning (Watson, 1930; Pavlov, 1927).**<br>• **Encourage teachers to be trained in applying reinforcement and modelling techniques to address diverse behavioural needs (Thorndike, 1911; Bandura, 1977).**<br>• **Develop behaviour management strategies that integrate scientific principles while addressing holistic educational goals (Wolfgang & Glickman, 1980).** |
| **Links to Gospel Values** |
| • **Behaviourist techniques, such as positive reinforcement, can be adapted to promote Gospel-aligned behaviours like kindness and forgiveness, fostering a compassionate school ethos (Franchi, 2013).**<br>• **Catholic educational directives emphasise balancing discipline with the dignity of the person. This includes promoting community, reconciliation, and respect,** |

**reflecting the mission of Catholic schools to foster moral and spiritual growth (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988).**

## 1.2.2 The Humanist Approach to Behaviour Management

The table highlights key humanist principles by Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow in behaviour management. It focuses on empathetic, supportive environments that meet students' holistic needs. This approach aligns with Catholic education's Gospel values, promoting dignity, compassion, and personal growth to foster academic and moral development.

**Table 1.2 The Humanist Approach**

| The Humanist Approach |
| --- |
| **Key figures** |
| Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow |
| **Implications for a school behaviour policy** |
| • Foster empathetic and supportive environments:<br>• Use Rogers' unconditional positive regard to boost self-worth and cooperative behaviour (Rogers, 1961).<br>• Ensure fundamental needs (Maslow's Hierarchy) are met for academic and social success (Maslow, 1943). |
| **Implications for school leadership** |
| • Cultivate a non-judgmental and emotionally supportive culture within schools (Rogers, 1961).<br>• Ensure basic student needs, such as safety and emotional well-being, are prioritised for effective learning and behaviour (Maslow, 1943).<br>• Structure professional development to include training on empathy, unconditional positive regard, and student-centred strategies (Noddings, 2005).<br>• Create policies that prioritise holistic development and pro-social behaviour, encouraging collaboration among educators, parents, and students (Kohn, 1996). |
| **Links to Gospel Values** |
| • Emphasise respect, compassion, and holistic development (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988). |

## 1.2.3 The Democratic Approach to Behaviour Management

The table below summarises the Democratic Approach to behaviour management, highlighting key theories and their implications for school behaviour policies and leadership. It emphasises collaboration, mutual respect, and empathy in fostering inclusive and supportive environments. The integration of Gospel values demonstrates alignment with Catholic educational principles, focusing on dignity, community, and ethical growth.

**Table 1.3 The Democratic Approach**

| The Democratic Approach |
| --- |
| **Key figures** |
| John Dewey, Paulo Freire, Nel Noddings, Rudolf Dreikurs |
| **Implications for a school behaviour policy** |
| <ul><li> **Collaboration and Participation: Dewey's (1916) vision of education as a social process underscores the importance of shared decision-making and active engagement in the classroom.**</li><li>**Dialogue and Respect: Freire's (1970) emphasis on treating students as co-participants fosters mutual respect and critical thinking, aligning with ethical discernment.**</li><li>**Caring Relationships: Noddings' (2005) ethic of care prioritises empathy and relational understanding, promoting supportive school environments.**</li><li>**Inclusive Discipline: Dreikurs' (1968) democratic discipline approach focuses on mutual respect and inclusivity, ensuring students feel valued.**</li></ul> |
| **Implications for school leadership** |
| <ul><li>**School leaders must model and promote democratic values through participatory processes encouraging pupil voice and shared ownership of behaviour policies (Dewey, 1916; Freire, 1970).**</li><li>**Leaders are tasked with fostering relational trust, ensuring that care and compassion form the foundation of interactions (Noddings, 2005).**</li><li>**Implementing democratic discipline frameworks to replace authoritarian structures, supporting fairness and respect (Dreikurs, 1968).**</li></ul> |

| | |
|---|---|
| • | **Create policies prioritising holistic development and pro-social behaviour, encouraging collaboration among educators, parents, and students (Kohn, 1996).** |

| **Links to Gospel Values** |
|---|
| • **Community and Participation:** Democratic principles resonate with Gospel teachings of mutual respect, collaboration, and the dignity of every individual (Second Vatican Council, 1965).<br>• **Compassion and Care:** Noddings' ethic of care aligns with Catholic teachings on nurturing empathetic and supportive relationships, as highlighted in Gravissimum Educationis (Second Vatican Council, 1965).<br>• **Ethical Discernment:** Freire's focus on reflection and ethical behaviour reinforces Catholic values of conscience and personal growth (Freire, 1970). |

## 1.2.4 The Psychoanalytical Approach to Behaviour Management

This table outlines key psychoanalytical principles from Freud, Erikson, and Klein, highlighting their practical implications for behaviour management and leadership. It emphasises addressing the emotional roots of behaviour, fostering supportive relationships, and aligning interventions with students' developmental needs. The integration of Gospel values underscores compassion, dignity, and reconciliation, promoting a holistic approach to behaviour management.

**Table 1.4 The Psychoanalytical Approach**

| The Psychoanalytical Approach |
| --- |
| **Key figures** |
| Sigmund Freud, Anna Freud, Erik Erikson, and Melanie Klein. |
| **Implications for a school behaviour policy** |
| • These theories provide insights into student behaviour's emotional and psychological roots, encouraging empathetic, relationship-focused interventions that address underlying causes. |
| **Implications for school leadership** |
| **Sigmund Freud:**<br>• Unresolved anxieties drive disruptive behaviour, highlighting the need for emotionally supportive environments to address underlying issues empathetically (Freud, 1933).<br>**Anna Freud:**<br>• Coping mechanisms such as denial and deflection require staff training to recognize these behaviours and guide students toward constructive conflict resolution (Freud, 1966).<br>**Erik Erikson:**<br>• Behavioural strategies should align with students' developmental stages, focusing on fostering trust, autonomy, and identity-building to support emotional and social growth (Erikson, 1963).<br>**Melanie Klein:**<br>• Early relationships significantly influence behaviour, emphasising the importance of nurturing strong student-teacher relationships to address conflicts effectively (Klein, 1946). |
| **Links to Gospel Values** |
| • Insights from Freud, Erikson, and Klein highlight the importance of addressing emotional needs, developmental stages, and relationships in behaviour management, which aligns with the Gospel values of compassion, respect, and reconciliation.<br>• This approach reflects key ideas in Gravissimum Educationis (1965), Gaudium et Spes (1965), The Catholic School (1977), and Evangelii Gaudium (2013), which emphasize holistic care, reconciliation, dignity, and nurturing relationships in education. |

## 1.2.5 The Cognitive Approach to Behaviour Management

This table outlines the cognitive approach to behaviour management, emphasising alignment with students' developmental stages. Drawing on key theorists, it highlights strategies for fostering intellectual and moral growth while integrating Gospel values to support Catholic education's holistic philosophy.

**Table 1.5 The Cognitive Approach**

| The Cognitive Approach |
| --- |
| **Key figures** |
| Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, Jerome Bruner, David Ausubel |
| **Implications for a school behaviour policy** |
| <ul><li>**These theories provide a framework for aligning behavioural expectations with students' developmental stages, enabling disciplinary strategies that respect their cognitive capacities.**</li><li>**This alignment enhances comprehension and compliance, fostering a supportive educational environment.**</li></ul> |
| **Implications for school leadership** |
| **Jean Piaget – Developmental Stages:**<br><ul><li>**Advocates tailoring education to students' cognitive stages, emphasising that "only education is capable of saving our societies from possible collapse" (Piaget, 1972).**</li><li>**Leaders can develop age-appropriate disciplinary methods that enhance understanding and compliance.**</li></ul>**Lev Vygotsky – Zone of Proximal Development:**<br><ul><li>**Highlights the importance of social interaction and mentorship in behavioural development, stating that "good learning is in advance of development" (Vygotsky, 1978).**</li><li>**School leaders can foster collaborative environments and anticipate students' developmental needs.**</li></ul>**Jerome Bruner – Scaffolding:**<br><ul><li>**Emphasises structured support to help students manage behavioural challenges, asserting that "any subject can be taught effectively... to any child at any stage" (Bruner, 1960).**</li><li>**This promotes autonomy and student self-regulation.**</li></ul> |

**David Ausubel – Meaningful Learning:**

- **Focuses on connecting new behaviour expectations to students' existing knowledge, noting that "the most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows" (Ausubel, 1968).**
- **Leaders can integrate behaviour expectations into the curriculum to deepen understanding.**

| Links to Gospel Values |
| --- |

- **The principles align with Gravissimum Educationis, emphasising holistic development by integrating intellectual, spiritual, and moral dimensions (Second Vatican Council, 1965).**
- **School leaders uphold the Church's commitment to comprehensive education by fostering environments that promote respect, growth, and understanding.**

# 1.2.6 The Constructivist Approach to Behaviour Management

The table below outlines the Constructivist Approach to Behaviour Management, focusing on active learning, collaboration, and individualized strategies. Aligned with Catholic values, it highlights how integrating constructivist principles can address behavioural challenges while fostering moral and intellectual growth.

**Table 1.6 The Constructivist Approach**

| The Constructivist Approach |
|---|
| **Key figures** |
| Jerome Bruner, Lev Vygotsky, Howard Gardner, and David Kolb |
| **Implications for a school behaviour policy** |
| <ul><li>The theories emphasise learning through interaction, reflection, and experience.</li><li>Policies inspired by this approach encourage active participation, collaborative problem-solving, and individualised learning strategies.</li><li>They support the development of self-regulation and moral reasoning while integrating Gospel values.</li></ul> |
| **Implications for school leadership** |
| **Bruner - Scaffolding and Discovery Learning:**<br><ul><li>Advocates structured support systems and active student participation to promote autonomy and positive behaviour (Bruner, 1960).</li></ul>**Vygotsky - Social Interaction:**<br><ul><li>Encourages collaborative learning environments that anticipate developmental needs and foster community responsibility (Vygotsky, 1978).</li></ul>**Gardner - Multiple Intelligences:**<br><ul><li>It suggests personalised educational practices to address diverse cognitive strengths, which resonate with Catholic values of individual dignity and holistic growth (Gardner, 1983).</li></ul>**Kolb - Experiential Learning:**<br><ul><li>Stresses the importance of transforming experience into actionable knowledge, fostering resilience and self-awareness in students (Kolb, 1984).</li></ul> |

| Links to Gospel Values |
|---|
| <ul><li>**The Vatican document Gravissimum Education highlights education as an integration of intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions, which resonates with constructivist theories.**</li><li>**It promotes student dignity, community, and personal growth (Second Vatican Council, 1965). This alignment encourages Catholic schools to cultivate supportive, morally conscious communities.**</li></ul> |

# 1.3 Moral Development and Pupil Behaviour

This table aligns moral development principles with practical implications for behaviour management and leadership while integrating Gospel values to create a holistic, ethically focused educational framework.

**Table 1.7 Moral Development and Pupil Behaviour**

| Moral Development and Pupil Behaviour |
| --- |
| **Key figures** |
| Lawrence Kohlberg, Carol Gilligan, Jean Piaget, and Elliot Turiel |
| **Implications for a school behaviour policy** |
| • **These theories establish frameworks that promote ethical reasoning, empathy, and respect for social norms, crucial for fostering moral and responsible students.** |
| **Implications for school leadership** |
| • **Kohlberg: Stages of moral development advocate for a shift from obedience-based rules to fostering principled ethical reasoning, urging leaders to align policies with students' evolving moral stages (Kohlberg, 1981).**<br>• **Gilligan: Emphasises an ethic of care, urging leaders to create a compassionate school culture where empathy and relationships are prioritised (Gilligan, 1982).**<br>• **Piaget: Advocates for policies that evolve with students' understanding of social cooperation, encouraging collaborative and respectful behaviour (Piaget, 1932).**<br>• **Turiel: Differentiates between moral imperatives and social conventions, guiding leaders to structure policies that clarify and address these distinctions (Turiel, 1983).** |
| **Links to Gospel Values** |
| • **The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium (1997): Highlights education as a moral endeavour, aiming to develop students' intellectual, ethical, and spiritual dimensions (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997).**<br>• **Policies informed by these theories align with Gospel values by fostering holistic development and promoting community, compassion, and integrity.** |

## 1.4 The Significance of this Study for Catholic School Leaders

The dissertation questions concerning the alignment of school behaviour theories with Gospel values, the origins of behavioural challenges, and the design of policies that honour the person's centrality could be critical for school leaders in primary Church schools. These questions seek to explore the development of behaviour management strategies that are effective and reflective of the school's religious mission, thus ensuring that policy implementation reinforces faith-based educational philosophy and promotes consistent ethical standards.

First, school leaders can benefit from exploring behaviour theories that resonate with Gospel values. This alignment could ensure that behaviour management strategies foster an environment conducive to learning and spiritual development. By integrating these values, school leaders might create a nurturing atmosphere supporting academic and moral growth, which is essential in faith-based education settings.

Second, understanding the sources of behavioural challenges is vital for crafting proactive and effective interventions. This knowledge can enable school leaders to address the root causes of misbehaviour rather than merely treating its symptoms, allowing for more compassionate and individualised strategies that respect the dignity of each student, a core principle in Christian education.

Furthermore, focusing on behavioural policies that prioritise the inherent worth of each person aligns with Christian doctrines of respect and dignity. For school leaders, such policies can foster a school climate where students feel respected and valued, thus enhancing both behaviour and academic engagement.

Lastly, integrating moral development theories into behavioural strategies could be particularly significant in Church schools. These theories could assist leaders in effectively nurturing moral virtues, guiding students toward academic success, and helping them become morally responsible and spiritually mature individuals.

These research questions could help school leaders formulate, evaluate, and refine behaviour management policies. One could ensure that the policies are theoretically

sound and practical by grounding these strategies in robust, values-oriented theories. This might lead to improved student outcomes and a harmonious school environment.

## 1.5 Conclusion

The insights gained from this literature review could be instrumental in further equipping school leaders with the knowledge necessary to implement effective behaviour policies that resonate with Gospel values. This alignment might be crucial for Church schools, which aim to provide a holistic educational experience that integrates academic excellence with spiritual and moral development. Such policies could form the bedrock of the unique mission of Church schools, ensuring that education extends beyond academic learning to include comprehensive spiritual and moral guidance.

In the context of Catholic education, school leaders hold a distinctive position. They are required to meld robust scientific principles with deep-rooted religious values. This dual mandate compels school leaders to maintain high educational standards while nurturing environments that uplift morally and spiritually. Thus, school leaders are pivotal in crafting educational spaces that aim for academic success and foster integrity and purpose among students, preparing them to lead lives that reflect their comprehensive education.

This dissertation discusses the methodological approach to investigate these educational theories and their practical applications in school settings. The forthcoming chapter will outline the research design and methods, detailing the selection of participants, data collection instruments, and analytical techniques used. This methodological exploration assesses how the theoretical frameworks discussed can be applied in real-world educational settings to enhance the student's personal and spiritual growth.

# Chapter 2 – Methodology

## 2.1 Aims of the Study

This chapter outlines the methodological framework for investigating the underpinnings of school behaviour policies rooted in Gospel values, focusing on how spiritual, ethical, and educational principles shape these policies. The study examines the relationship between behaviour management practices and the mission of primary Church schools to foster communities reflecting Christian teachings. It addresses three core questions: the foundations of Gospel-inspired behaviour policies, the sources of behavioural challenges, and the alignment of these policies with frameworks emphasising dignity and personhood.

A qualitative and exploratory approach was adopted to capture the lived experiences of stakeholders and the contextual factors shaping behaviour policies. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews with school leaders and focus groups with parents, complemented by a pilot study to refine the research instruments. Thematic analysis was employed to identify patterns and themes, offering insights into the role of community, respect, compassion, and personal dignity in shaping behaviour policies.

The research was conducted in three primary Church schools in southern Malta. They were chosen for their strong academic and holistic development records and their socio-cultural context, characterised by community and religious traditions. This geographical focus enabled a comparative approach, highlighting variations in stakeholder perceptions and policy implementation while contributing to a broader understanding of behaviour management in Church schools.

This chapter details the research design, methods, and ethical considerations. It lays the foundation for understanding how Gospel values inform behaviour management policies and their implications for practice in primary Church schools.

## 2.2 Research Design

### 2.2.1 Research Method

The research adopted a case study design, focusing on three primary Church schools in the south of Malta. Case studies were chosen for their practical applicability, as they provide rich, contextual insights that can be directly applied to real-world situations (Merriam, 1998). This approach was particularly suitable given the study's aim of exploring the Gospel values underpinning school behaviour policies, the challenges faced by stakeholders, and the methods used to guide pupils towards respectful behaviour.

A pilot study was conducted before the main study to ensure the effectiveness of the research instruments. The pilot study helped refine the questions, ensuring they were clear and effective for data collection (Maxwell, 2013). This preliminary step enhanced the validity and reliability of the data gathered during the main study.

The main data collection methods included **semi-structured interviews** with senior leadership team (SLT) members, designated safeguarding officers (DSOs), and **focus groups** with parents. Multiple data collection methods facilitated **data triangulation**, which strengthens research findings by providing a more comprehensive and corroborated perspective on the topic under investigation (Denzin, 1978). This triangulated approach enabled the study to capture diverse viewpoints and experiences from various stakeholders, enhancing the depth and credibility of the findings.

**Thematic analysis** was employed to analyse the data. This method was chosen for its flexibility and ability to identify, analyse, and report recurring themes within the dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is particularly suited to qualitative research exploring shared experiences and commonalities across participants, as it allows for the systematic examination of data to uncover meaningful patterns (Joffe, 2012). In the context of this study, thematic analysis was valuable for illuminating the Gospel values reflected in behaviour policies and the challenges and methods associated with managing behaviour in a Church school setting.

The study's focus on understanding human behaviour, thoughts, and feelings from the participants' perspectives guided the decision to use an entirely qualitative approach. Qualitative methods prioritise participants' voices, enabling the researcher to capture their lived experiences in their own words (Patton, 2015). This approach was appropriate for investigating the subjective and contextual nature of behaviour management policies informed by Gospel values.

The methodology adopted in this study, with its qualitative focus and thematic analysis, ensured a rigorous and nuanced exploration of the research questions. By centring the perspectives of parents and leadership teams, the study offers insights into the practical application of Gospel values in behaviour management within primary Church schools.

## 2.2.2 Participants Selection and Data Collection Methods

The study sought to capture the perspectives of key stakeholders in behaviour management policies in primary Church schools: **Senior Leadership Team (SLT)** members, **Designated Safety Officers (DSOs)**, and **parents**. This selection was methodologically justified based on these groups' distinct yet interconnected roles in shaping, implementing, and experiencing behaviour policies. By engaging these stakeholders, the study ensured a comprehensive understanding of how behaviour policies reflect Gospel values and address challenges in fostering respectful behaviour.

The **SLT** members, as architects of behaviour policies, were pivotal to this research. Their strategic oversight and decision-making responsibilities provided critical insights into how policies align with their respective schools' ethos and are rooted in Gospel values. Their inclusion facilitated an exploration of the philosophical underpinnings and strategic rationale of behaviour management practices (Bush, 2011). The **DSOs**, who are responsible for the operational implementation of policies, brought a grounded perspective. Their role as intermediaries between policy and practice provided invaluable insights into how Gospel values are enacted in daily school interactions, particularly in addressing behavioural challenges (Cowie & Jennifer, 2008). Finally, **parents** were included as vital stakeholders who observed and experienced the effects of behaviour policies in a broader context. Their perspectives highlighted the policies' impact on students outside the school environment and the alignment, or lack thereof,

between school and home approaches, which is critical for the holistic development of children (Epstein, 2011).

Although students were not directly interviewed due to developmental, ethical, and practical considerations, parent interviews indirectly included their perspectives. This approach was informed by recognising that students, as the primary subjects of behaviour policies, are critical to understanding their effectiveness. Parents were asked to reflect on their children's attitudes, behaviours, and experiences with the school's policies, offering a valuable window into how students internalise Gospel values and navigate behavioural expectations.

This strategy ensured the inclusion of students' voices while addressing the limitations of direct interviews with young children. Cognitive and linguistic barriers heightened suggestibility, and the potential influence of power dynamics often compromised the reliability and depth of data obtained directly from primary-aged children (Greig, Taylor, & MacKay, 2013; Ceci & Bruck, 1993). Additionally, ethical concerns regarding potential discomfort or emotional distress were mitigated by relying on parental observations, which provided a more robust and ethically sound approach (Christensen & Prout, 2005). This indirect method also enhanced data triangulation by linking parental insights to those of the SLT and DSOs, creating a richer, multidimensional understanding of the policies (Denzin, 1978).

### 2.2.2.1 Anonymity and Pseudonymisation

To ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms were assigned to participants and schools. The schools were called **School A**, **School B**, and **School C**, with SLT members and DSOs designated **SLT A**, **SLT B**, **SLT C**, and **DSO A**, **DSO B**, and **DSO C**, respectively. Parents were anonymised as **PA1-PA5** for School A, **PB1-PB4** for School B, and **PC1-PC3** for School C. This approach safeguarded participants' identities and maintained ethical standards throughout the study.

### 2.2.2.2 Participant Recruitment and Interview Structure

The respective Heads of School identified the SLT and DSO participants based on their active involvement in addressing behavioural issues and contributing to developing behaviour policies. Parents were informed about the study through their schools and

voluntarily participated in focus groups. This ensured all participants were relevant to the research objectives and willing contributors to the data collection process.

### 2.2.2.3 Data Collection

Data collection methods were designed to accommodate participant preferences and commitments. All interviews with SLT members were conducted face-to-face, allowing for rich, in-depth discussions. One DSO interview was conducted face-to-face, while the other two were held online. Similarly, one parent focus group was conducted in person, while the remaining two were held online at the participants' request for convenience due to their schedules and commitments.

The flexibility in the mode of data collection demonstrated a participant-centred approach, ensuring accessibility while maintaining the depth and quality of the data. The mixed approach of face-to-face and online meetings also reflected contemporary realities in research settings, particularly in accommodating diverse participant needs.

### 2.2.2.4 Rationale for Triangulation

Including multiple stakeholder groups and the indirect incorporation of students' perspectives through parent interviews allowed for robust data triangulation. This methodological strategy enhanced the validity and depth of the findings by corroborating insights from distinct sources (Denzin, 1978). The SLT offered strategic and philosophical perspectives, the DSOs provided operational insights, and parents contributed observations of how policies are experienced and internalised by students. Together, these perspectives captured the multifaceted nature of behaviour management in primary Church schools, ensuring the study's findings were comprehensive, credible, and reflective of the dynamic interplay between policy and practice.

## 2.2.3 Research Instrument

The primary research instruments employed in this study were **semi-structured interviews** and **focus groups**, selected for their ability to provide in-depth and nuanced insights into the research questions. These instruments were designed to explore the perspectives of key stakeholders: Senior Leadership Team (SLT) members, Designated

Safety Officers (DSOs), and parents on behaviour management policies in three primary Church schools in the south of Malta. Each instrument was carefully chosen and adapted to address the study's objectives and to ensure comprehensive data collection.

### 2.2.3.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with SLT members and DSOs to gather detailed, context-rich data on behaviour policies and their implementation. This format was selected for its flexibility, allowing the researcher to explore predetermined questions while providing scope for participants to elaborate on their responses or introduce new themes. According to Seidman (2013), interviews are particularly effective for exploring complex and sensitive topics, as they enable a deeper understanding of participants' experiences, facilitate clarification, and build trust.

Interviews with SLT members focused on their strategic and leadership roles, providing insights into formulating and aligning behaviour policies with Gospel values. Meanwhile, interviews with DSOs explored the practical application of these policies, focusing on the methods used to address behavioural challenges and ensure the well-being of pupils. The one-to-one format of these interviews fostered rapport and encouraged participants to share candid and detailed accounts of their experiences and practices.

### 2.2.3.2 Focus Groups

Focus groups were conducted with parents to complement the data obtained from the interviews. This method was selected for its ability to generate interactive discussions and uncover shared concerns or experiences among participants. As Barbour (2007) highlights, focus groups are invaluable in educational settings for creating a comfortable environment where participants feel encouraged to express their views openly.

The focus groups provided a platform for parents to discuss their perceptions of behaviour policies and share observations of how they impacted their children. The interactive nature of focus groups allowed participants to build on each other's contributions, generating rich, qualitative data. Additionally, the insights from these discussions were instrumental in triangulating the findings from the interviews, enhancing the overall credibility and depth of the research (Patton, 2015).

### 2.2.3.4 Triangulation and Integration

The combination of semi-structured interviews and focus groups ensured robust data triangulation, a key strategy for strengthening the validity of qualitative research (Denzin, 1978). By integrating data from multiple sources—SLT, DSOs, and parents—the study captured a holistic view of behaviour management policies, examining their formulation, implementation, and perceived impact from diverse perspectives. This approach provided a comprehensive understanding of the issues under investigation and contributed to the reliability of the findings.

These research instruments were integral to achieving the study's objectives, enabling a nuanced exploration of behaviour management practices in primary Church schools. The careful selection and application of semi-structured interviews and focus groups ensured that the data collected were meaningful and methodologically sound.

## 2.2.4 Procedure

A systematic and ethically rigorous procedure was followed to prepare for and conduct this study's interviews and focus groups. The process began after the Department Board of Examiners approved the research proposal. Following this approval, the researcher prepared an information letter for prospective participants and drafted consent forms tailored for the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), Designated Safety Officers (DSOs), and parents (Appendices 1, 2, and 3). These documents ensured that participants were fully informed about the research objectives, procedures, and rights in line with ethical research standards (Bryman, 2016).

Once these materials were finalised and submitted to the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) for review, the approval of the ethical documentation (Appendix 4) signified that the study met the required ethical standards, including participant confidentiality, informed consent, and the right to withdraw at any stage (Christians,

2011).

Following the ethics approval, the researcher sought permission from the

Secretariat for Catholic Education (SfCE) to conduct the study in the three selected

schools. This involved submitting an official request accompanied by the interview

and focus group questions, ensuring transparency about the data collection

instruments. The SfCE granted permission (Appendix 8), allowing the research to

proceed within the identified schools.

The next step involved contacting the schools' gatekeepers through an official

information letter (Appendix 9). Gatekeepers serve as intermediaries, facilitating

access to the research site and ensuring compliance with institutional protocols

(Creswell & Poth, 2018). Upon receiving approval from the schools, the researcher

sent an invitational email to prospective participants, providing details about the

study and inviting them to participate.

Before commencing the main study, a pilot study was conducted to ensure the

clarity and effectiveness of the interview and focus group questions. After

prospective participants agreed to participate, they were given a consent form to

sign, ensuring informed and voluntary participation. These forms were collected

before the scheduled interviews and focus group discussions. The interview and

focus group questions were sent to them beforehand to support participants'

preparation and ensure they felt comfortable with the research process. This step

aligns with best practices in qualitative research, fostering participant engagement

and allowing them to reflect on the topics in advance, which can lead to richer, more

thoughtful responses (Seidman, 2013).


This structured and ethical approach ensured that the study adhered to rigorous

academic standards and established trust with participants, facilitating meaningful
and reliable data collection.

## 2.2.5 The Pilot Study

The pilot study participant, who held a role like the target participants but was
unaffiliated with the selected schools, provided valuable feedback on the questions.
Conducting a pilot study is a critical step in qualitative research, as it tests the
instruments for clarity, relevance, and ability to elicit the required data, ultimately
enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings (Maxwell, 2013). Following the pilot,
the researcher was satisfied that the questions effectively addressed the primary and
secondary research objectives.

## 2.2.6 Data Collection

The data collection process for this study employed two sets of in-depth semi-structured
interviews and one focus group discussion at each of the three schools involved. This
combination of methods was selected to facilitate an in-depth exploration of the
complex issues surrounding pupil misbehaviour and behaviour management practices
while capturing the diverse perspectives of educators and parents. Semi-structured
interviews provided a structured yet flexible framework to gather rich qualitative data,
and focus groups allowed for interactive discussions that revealed shared concerns and
experiences. The data collection was conducted between December 2023 and April
2024.

Semi-structured, one-to-one interviews were conducted with each school's Senior
Leadership Team (SLT) and Designated Safety Officers (DSOs) members. This approach
was particularly suited to the research objectives as it offered a confidential
environment where participants could freely express their perspectives. One-to-one
interviews are recognised for their ability to delve deeply into participants' experiences,
offering opportunities for tailored probing, clarification, and emotional expression while
minimising the potential for social desirability bias (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The SLT
interviews lasted approximately fifty minutes, while interviews with DSOs were slightly

shorter, averaging forty minutes. This structure ensured sufficient time to explore each participant's unique insights while maintaining a manageable and consistent format.

Focus groups were conducted with parents to gain insight into their perspectives on pupil behaviour and school policies. This method was chosen for its ability to foster dynamic and interactive discussions that often generate a depth of understanding not achievable through individual interviews alone. Focus groups are valuable in exploring shared norms and uncovering diverse viewpoints within a supportive and collaborative environment (Morgan, 1997). These sessions lasted between forty and fifty minutes, allowing participants to engage meaningfully with the topics and share their experiences openly.

A standardised procedure was followed for all interviews and focus groups to ensure consistency and reliability. Participants were contacted in advance and invited to select a convenient time and format for their sessions, with the option of in-person or online participation. A few days before their scheduled session, participants were given a copy of the questions to review. This allowed them time to reflect on the topics and feel comfortable engaging in the discussions, a strategy that aligns with best practices in qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The participants and the researcher distributed and signed consent forms before the sessions began, reinforcing participation's voluntary and ethical nature. In-person interviews were recorded using two voice recorders to ensure data security and accuracy, while online sessions were recorded securely via Microsoft Teams and a secondary voice recorder. These measures ensured a reliable and thorough data recording while adhering to ethical considerations.

To maintain accuracy and credibility, verbatim transcriptions were produced for each interview and focus group discussion. Participants were invited to review their transcripts within a few days of the session. This member-checking process allowed participants to verify the accuracy of the data, clarify any ambiguities, and make amendments if necessary. Member checking is a well-established strategy in qualitative research that enhances the validity of findings by ensuring that the data accurately reflects participants' intended meanings (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

## 2.3 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are central to qualitative research, particularly in sensitive contexts such as schools, where trust and transparency between researchers and participants are essential. Building this trust ensures that participants feel comfortable engaging openly and honestly, primarily when the research explores potentially sensitive or contentious issues, such as critiques of school policies or student behaviour management practices (Mertens, 2020). This study adhered to rigorous ethical standards throughout the data collection process to protect participant well-being and ensure the integrity of the research.

Participants were provided with an information letter outlining the study's aims, the voluntary nature of their involvement, and their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. This proactive communication emphasised participants' autonomy and reinforced their ability to make informed decisions about their involvement. In line with best practices in ethical research, participants were assured that any information they shared would remain confidential, and their identities would be anonymised to protect them from potential repercussions (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018).

To safeguard confidentiality, pseudonyms were assigned to all participants and used during the transcription and analysis of data. Only the researcher had access to the recordings and transcripts, ensuring that sensitive information was handled securely. All raw data were destroyed following the completion of the dissertation, further protecting participant privacy.

In addition to confidentiality measures, the study prioritised participant validation for transparency and accuracy. Interview transcripts were shared with participants, allowing them to review and confirm the accuracy of the data. This process not only ensured that participants agreed with the interpretations of their contributions but also provided an opportunity to clarify or expand on any information that may have been unclear. Such practices are critical for fostering mutual trust and ensuring the credibility of the research findings (Mertens, 2020).

By implementing these ethical procedures, the study upheld the highest respect, confidentiality, and transparency standards, ensuring that participants' contributions

were valued and safeguarded. This ethical foundation was integral to building trust with participants and maintaining the integrity and validity of the research.

## 2.4 Data Analysis

The interviews and focus groups were conducted to explore perceptions of misbehaviour in schools and how these incidents are addressed from the perspectives of Senior Leadership Teams (SLTs), Designated Safety Officers (DSOs), and parents of pupils attending the three selected schools. The transcribed data from these sessions were analysed using thematic analysis, a widely used method in qualitative research that enables the identification, analysis, and reporting of themes within the data. This approach was deemed appropriate for the study's exploratory nature, allowing themes to emerge organically from the data rather than being constrained by preconceived theories or categories (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke, & Braun, 2017). Prioritising the participants' voices ensured that the findings reflected their perspectives rather than the researcher's assumptions (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Thematic analysis followed a structured process. The first step involved familiarisation with the data, achieved by repeated reading of the interview and focus group transcripts. This immersion facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the context and content of the discussions (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Next, the researcher coded systematically by identifying and labelling relevant text segments that addressed the research questions. Coding was conducted inductively, guided by the data rather than external frameworks. For focus group transcripts, coding also accounted for group dynamics, including areas of consensus or disagreement, as interaction patterns among participants are integral to understanding shared and divergent perspectives (King, 2004).

Following coding, the data were examined for broader patterns or themes representing significant ideas or concepts related to the research questions. This involved comparing individual responses to identify shared experiences or unique perspectives across participants (Nowell et al., 2017). Themes were reviewed and refined to ensure they

accurately represented the data and demonstrated coherence within and across themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The themes were then named and defined to capture their essence, ensuring they reflected participants' experiences and views (Terry et al., 2017). The final step was producing a comprehensive report detailing the findings. These findings were supported by data from quotes from the interviews and focus groups (Clarke & Braun, 2013).

The same thematic analysis procedure was applied to all transcripts from interviews and focus groups. This approach facilitated cross-examining data from different sources and schools, enabling comparisons within and across the three schools. This methodological triangulation, using multiple sources and methods to study the same phenomenon, enhanced the findings' credibility, validity, and reliability. By comparing insights from interviews and focus groups, the study ensured a thorough and multifaceted understanding of behaviour management practices (Flick, 2004).

## 2.5 Instrument Validity and Reliability

In qualitative research, overcoming subjectivity is essential to enhance the credibility and reliability of the findings. While subjectivity is inherent in qualitative inquiry, its influence can be mitigated through data triangulation, reflexivity, member checking, peer debriefing, and structured or semi-structured interview guides (Gibbs, 2018). These measures help reduce bias and strengthen the overall validity and trustworthiness of the research.

Particular attention was given to the design and implementation of the data collection process to minimise potential bias. As Creswell (2013) notes, unchecked bias can compromise qualitative studies' accuracy, credibility, and ethical integrity. Recognising this, the questions for interviews and focus groups were carefully developed and refined through extensive discussions with the researcher's supervisor. This collaborative process ensured that the questions were clear, unbiased, and aligned with the study's objectives.

Consistency in the data collection process further contributed to reliability. The same semi-structured approach was applied across all interviews and focus groups, ensuring

uniformity in gathering data. Leading questions were deliberately avoided to prevent influencing participants' responses and to allow their perspectives to emerge authentically. By maintaining a neutral stance during interviews and discussions, the researcher sought to capture the participants' genuine experiences and views, minimising the risk of researcher-induced bias.

These methodological choices reflect a commitment to upholding the rigour and ethical standards required in qualitative research, ensuring the findings are credible and reflect the participants' perspectives. By actively addressing potential sources of subjectivity, the study maintained its focus on producing valid, reliable, and ethically sound insights into the research questions.

## 2.6 Limitations of this Study

While this research provided valuable insights into the perspectives of key stakeholders; Senior Leadership Team (SLT) members, Designated Safety Officers (DSOs), and parents; it is important to acknowledge its limitations to contextualise the findings and maintain transparency.

One notable limitation was the exclusion of pupils' perspectives. Although students are central to behaviour management policies, this study did not directly explore their views. This decision stemmed from concerns about how young children unfamiliar with the researcher might respond to questions on school behaviour. Factors such as their developmental stage and potential discomfort discussing sensitive issues with a stranger posed challenges to obtaining reliable and meaningful data. Instead, the study relied on parents to provide an indirect understanding of pupils' experiences, which, while valuable, may lack the depth of insight that direct engagement with students could have offered.

Additionally, the study focused on three Church schools located in the south of Malta. While these schools provided a rich context for examining behaviour management policies grounded in Gospel values, the findings cannot be generalised to the entire school population in Malta or beyond. The unique socio-cultural and institutional

contexts of these schools may limit the transferability of the results to other regions or educational settings.

Another limitation inherent in qualitative research is the potential for bias, which cannot be eliminated despite rigorous efforts to minimise it. As Nickerson (1998) argues, bias is almost inevitable due to the subjective nature of research, the complexity of human behaviour, and the constraints of research methods. The researcher implemented measures to reduce bias, such as consistent interview protocols, avoiding leading questions, and reflexivity during data collection and analysis. However, these efforts can only mitigate, not eliminate, its presence.

Participant bias also presents a challenge in any study. Respondents may be influenced by social desirability, memory recall limitations, or personal motivations, which can shape their responses (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Participants may have sought to positively present their school or role, potentially limiting their contributions' objectivity. While this study employed triangulation and a neutral interviewing approach to counter these effects, the possibility of participant bias influencing the data cannot be entirely discounted.

Recognising these limitations is essential to understanding the scope and applicability of this research. While the findings offer meaningful insights into implementing behaviour policies in the selected schools, they should be interpreted with an awareness of the study's contextual and methodological constraints. These reflections also provide opportunities for further research to address the gaps and expand on the findings presented here.

## 2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the methodological framework employed to investigate the principles underpinning behaviour policies in primary Church schools, particularly their alignment with Gospel values. The study utilised semi-structured interviews and focus groups to explore key stakeholder perspectives, with thematic analysis enabling the identification of spiritual, ethical, and educational dimensions within these policies. Rigorous measures, including a pilot study and strategies to ensure reliability and

validity, strengthened the research process while addressing ethical considerations to build participant trust and transparency.

The chapter also acknowledged limitations, such as the exclusion of direct pupil perspectives and the focus on three schools within a specific region, which provide scope for future research. Despite these constraints, the study establishes a robust foundation for examining behaviour policies prioritising respect, dignity, and holistic development.

# Chapter 3 – Data Analysis

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the research, which explored the underpinnings of school behaviour policies that reflect Gospel values, the factors influencing pupil behaviour, and the integration of behaviour theories in respecting the person's centrality. The study was conducted in three primary Church schools in the south of Malta and involved six semi-structured interviews and three focus groups. Data collection included interviews with a senior leadership team (SLT) member and the designated safety officer (DSO) from each school, together with focus groups comprising twelve parents altogether, thus providing a comprehensive perspective on the schools' behaviour policies and practices.

The findings are presented school-by-school to ensure a systematic and detailed analysis. For each school, the analysis begins with the data gathered from the SLT interviews, followed by the DSO interviews, and concludes with the parents' focus group discussions. This approach facilitates a thorough examination of the data while allowing for a comparative understanding of the themes and sub-themes that emerged across the three schools. By organizing the analysis in this way, the chapter aims to highlight both the commonalities and unique approaches in how these schools conceptualize and implement behaviour policies aligned with Gospel values.

## 3.2 School 'A' SLT Data

**Table 3.1 Themes from the SLT Interview in School A**

| Themes | Sub Themes |
|---|---|
| Aim of Policy | Creating a Supportive and Safe Environment |
| | Ensuring Equity and Justice |
| | Guiding Effective Governance and Decision-Making |
| | Providing a Clear Reference Framework |
| School Values | Transparency and Clarity |
| | Fairness and Equity, |
| | Good Governance |
| Parental Involvement | Accessibility of Policies for Parents |
| | Engaging Parents as Key Stakeholders |
| | Parental Contributions to Continuous Policy Review |
| Student Involvement when Misbehaviour Occurs | Collaborative Problem-Solving |
| | Emphasis on Communication and Dialogue |
| | Positive Engagement with Pupils |
| Support | Internal Support Teams |
| | Collaboration with External Professionals |
| Pupil Involvement in Policy Drafting | Limited Pupil Engagement |
| | Proactive Leadership in Policy Development |
| | Reliance on Existing Frameworks |
| Recommendations | Child-centred communication |
| | Student Participation and Agency |
| | Inclusive Policy Presentation |

## 3.2.1 Aims of Policy

The first research question sought to understand the aim of the school behaviour policy. School A's senior leadership team (SLT) member articulated that the primary objective was to foster a peaceful environment that facilitates learning. The SLT member emphasized, *"We aim to achieve a peaceful environment conducive to learning above everything… There needs to be no hindrance to the pupils' learning."* This underscores the policy's dual focus on maintaining harmony and prioritising the educational experience of all pupils.

Transparency and good governance were also highlighted as central to the policy's design and implementation. The SLT member stressed the importance of ensuring the policy is applied fairly and consistently, reflecting principles of justice and equity. An essential component of this was the assertion that *"no preferential treatment [was]*

*given to anyone,"* ensuring that the policy upheld inclusivity and fairness within the school community.

Interestingly, the policy was rarely referenced and viewed primarily as a supportive framework or backup. According to the SLT member, this was due to the minimal instances of severe behavioural issues, as the young children in the school primarily experienced minor disputes. As noted, *"It's just young children with their small confrontations,"* reflecting the relatively low level of conflict and the proactive culture fostered within the school environment.

This perspective illustrates that the behaviour policy in School A is a formal document that reflects the school's ethos and aims to create an equitable, supportive, and learning-focused environment.

## 3.2.2 School Values

The interview with the senior leadership team (SLT) member explored the school values embedded within the behavioural policy. It revealed transparency, good governance, and fairness as the core principles guiding its formulation and implementation. These values reflect the school's commitment to creating an equitable and inclusive environment for all stakeholders.

Transparency emerged as a key priority, with the SLT emphasising the importance of ensuring that the behavioural policy is accessible and understood by all school community members. The SLT member stressed the value of clear communication, noting the risks of assuming shared understanding without explicit documentation. The SLT member explained, *"I assume everyone is on my same wavelength, but I've learnt the hard way that it's important to write the policy down."* This statement underscores the role of transparency in fostering alignment and accountability among staff, students, and parents.

The value of good governance was also highlighted as central to the behavioural policy. The SLT member viewed the policy as a structural tool that ensures consistency and fairness in decision-making. By documenting procedures and expectations, the policy

provides a governance framework that minimises ambiguity and supports equitable treatment of all stakeholders.

Fairness was identified as another foundational value, reflecting the school's commitment to equity and justice. The SLT emphasized that the policy aims to set behavioural expectations and uphold principles of impartiality and fairness when applying rules. These values illustrate the school's effort to align its behavioural policy with its broader mission and ethos.

By embedding transparency, good governance, and fairness into its behavioural policy, the school ensures its values are aspirational and operationalised in daily practices and interactions.

## 3.2.3 Parental Involvement

The data revealed that parental involvement was key to implementing the behaviour policy. Schools ensured that parents were well-informed and had opportunities to provide input, fostering a collaborative approach.

One method of ensuring accessibility was using the school's management information system, where all policies, including the behaviour policy, were uploaded. This platform allowed parents to access the full policy at their convenience. In addition, a summary of the behaviour policy was also included in the school diary, a resource used daily by parents and pupils. The interviewee explained: *"All policies are on the management information system. A summary is printed on the school diary, which the children take home daily."*

Parental feedback was sought through formal and informal channels throughout the academic year. Feedback sessions were also held at the end of every scholastic year to gather insights about the policy and its implementation. This consistent engagement ensured that parents were familiar with the policy and had the opportunity to influence its development and application. Schools demonstrated a commitment to transparency and collaboration by involving parents and strengthening the partnership between home and school.

### 3.2.4 Student Involvement When Misbehaviour Occurs

The school adopts an inclusive approach to addressing pupil misbehaviour by involving students in discussions about their actions. This involvement occurs in every instance of misbehaviour, ensuring that students are part of the resolution process. Discussions are tailored to the specific circumstances, with meetings held separately or collectively with all parties involved. One participant explained, *"Yes, they are... in every instance when they come to my office to discuss some kind of behaviour."*

When behavioural issues escalate, the psychosocial team may become involved, although such interventions are seldom necessary. The effectiveness of the current approach was highlighted by the SLT member, who noted, *"Our students are very cooperative. Not always, but 90% of the time, it [discussion with the SLT member] works."* This underscores the school's emphasis on fostering dialogue and mutual understanding to manage behaviour.

Although pupils were not involved in the initial drafting of the behaviour policy, they play an active role in resolving misbehaviour when it arises. This reflects the school's commitment to engaging students in meaningful ways during disciplinary processes, emphasising accountability and the development of constructive behaviour.

### 3.2.5 Support

The school employs a range of support mechanisms to address pupil misbehaviour, although such incidents are generally described as infrequent. According to the senior leadership team (SLT) member, most pupils are cooperative, but certain cases of misbehaviour, including bullying, arise due to familial influences and differing perspectives. Reflecting on this, the SLT member stated, *"When you meet the family and the parents, you kind of understand why [misbehaviour occurs]."* This suggests that addressing behavioural issues often requires an understanding of the broader social and familial context influencing the pupils.

In rare instances, the school has encountered situations requiring significant interventions. One such case involved a child who had to change schools because their

parents believed that staying in the small school environment would be too traumatic. The SLT member described this as a difficult decision, noting, *"They were both sweet girls, but the parents had to make a very, very tough decision... since they would still end up together at some point."* Such cases, however, are not typical and are addressed with sensitivity and care.

The SLT member also acknowledged that some behavioural problems originate outside of the school environment and carry over into the school setting. They explained, *"If I have to be very honest, the issue is not only school-related; many times, there are issues outside the school."* This highlights the importance of external contexts in shaping behaviour and the need for schools to engage with these wider influences.

In terms of formal support, the school benefits from the services of an anti-bullying team. However, the SLT member emphasized that their involvement is seldom required. Reflecting on their tenure, the SLT member noted, *"I've been Head here for fifteen years, and maybe we called them in three or four times."* This indicates that while the school has access to external resources, the internal systems and cooperative nature of the student body often mitigate the need for such interventions.

## 3.2.6 Pupil Involvement in Policy Drafting

The involvement of pupils in policy drafting emerged as a significant area of discussion, highlighting the current limitations and potential opportunities for greater engagement. According to the SLT, pupils were not directly involved in the drafting of the behaviour policy. While the SLT expressed enthusiasm for creating the policy themselves, they noted that the process primarily referenced the previous policy rather than incorporating direct pupil input.

The policy was subsequently presented to staff and parents for feedback, which was collected and used to make amendments before the final version was published online. However, the SLT member acknowledged in hindsight that excluding pupils from the process was an oversight, stating, *"The Student Council is involved a lot in our school, but not when it comes to drafting policies... that we have to fine-tune."*

Furthermore, the SLT member expressed doubt about whether pupils actively engage with the policy, noting its limited visibility among them. Although the Student Council plays a key role in various school initiatives, its involvement in policy drafting remains minimal. This suggests a missed opportunity to integrate pupil perspectives, which could enhance the relevance and accessibility of school policies for the student body.

## 3.2.7 Recommendations

The findings reveal several recommendations for enhancing the development and implementation of the school behaviour policy, emphasising greater inclusivity and accessibility. A key suggestion from the SLT member was the need to ensure that the policy is written in a manner that is accessible to children. Reflecting on the current policy format, the participant stated, *"I doubt that the students go through the policy, but as a school, we should do them in a child-friendly manner."* This underscores the importance of tailoring policy documents to suit the comprehension levels of young learners, ensuring that they are not only accessible but also meaningful to students.

Another recommendation was to involve pupils in the drafting process, a practice acknowledged as overlooked. The SLT member expressed regret, saying, *"With hindsight, I should have consulted with them [the pupils]."* The participant also highlighted the potential for the School Council to play a more active role in drafting and reviewing the behaviour policy, noting that this would empower students and foster a sense of ownership over the rules. Additionally, it was suggested that policies should be presented to parents and educators and directly to pupils, ensuring alignment and shared understanding across the school community.

# 3.3 School 'A' DSO Data

**Table 3.2 Themes from the DSO Interview in School A**

| Themes | Sub Themes |
|---|---|
| **Types of Discipline Used** | Discipline Rooted in Christian and Catholic Values<br>Transmission of Core Values Through Disciplinary Practices<br>Values Serving as the Foundation for Disciplinary Approaches<br>Discipline as a Means to Shape and Promote Desired Behaviour |
| **Targeting Causes of Misbehaviour** | Personalised Understanding of Individual Pupils<br>Regular Engagement with Guidance and PSCD Teachers<br>Educators' Active Monitoring of Behavioural Changes<br>Structured Referral Process Between Class Teachers and Guidance Teachers<br>Coordinated Efforts Between Guidance Teachers and the DSO<br>Predominantly Minor Nature of Misbehaviour<br>Absence of Wilful Damage in Misbehaviour Cases |
| **Strategies Used** | Classroom-Based Interventions as the Initial Step<br>Escalation to Guidance Teacher and SLT for Additional Support<br>Engagement of INCO, Social Worker, and Counsellor for Complex Cases<br>Encouraging Pupils to Proactively Seek Help for Their Behaviour |
| **Parental Involvement and Support** | Guidance Teacher-Initiated Parental Meetings<br>Willing and Immediate Cooperation from Most Parents<br>Instances of Denial Rather Than Disrespect from a Few Parents |
| **Discussions with Misbehaving Pupils** | Individualised One-on-One Discussions with the Guidance Teacher<br>Group Sessions Tailored to Pupil Comfort Levels<br>Creating Safe Opportunities for Pupils to Express Themselves<br>Balancing Academic Lesson Time with Guidance Sessions |
| **Pupil Involvement in Policy Making Stage** | Well-established and Structured Behaviour Policy<br>Regular Collection of Feedback from Pupils<br>Online Feedback Sessions Facilitated Through the ICT Lab<br>Assumed Consultation with Pupils During Policy Development |
| **Recommendations** | Sustained Use of Student Pass Cards for Accessing Guidance Sessions<br>Ongoing Emphasis on the Utilisation of Guidance Sessions<br>Ensuring School Values Are Consistently Integrated Across All Aspects of School Life<br>Maintaining Support Systems That Allow Teachers to Prioritise Teaching and Learning |

## 3.3.1 Types of Discipline Used

The data reveals that the discipline employed in the school is deeply rooted in its ethos of Christian and Catholic values. The Designated Safety Officer (DSO) emphasized that the school's approach to discipline reflects its faith-based identity, stating, *"Being a*

*Church school, of course, we have our Christian and Catholic values and our ethos."* This indicates that discipline is not merely about enforcing rules but is designed to align with and promote the school's moral and ethical framework.

The DSO further explained that these values are not limited to isolated practices but are ingrained in students throughout their entire school experience. This was summarized succinctly as *"Values are ingrained."* This highlights the consistent transmission of these principles across all aspects of school life, ensuring that students internalize the values over time.

Additionally, the DSO affirmed that the desired behaviour in pupils is achieved through consistently implementing these school values. This approach demonstrates that discipline is not seen as punitive but as a means of guiding students to embody the values that underpin the school's ethos. This integration of values into disciplinary practices ensures that behaviour management aligns with the school's mission of fostering a faith-driven and inclusive educational environment.

## 3.3.2 Targeting Causes of Misbehaviour

The study explored how the school identifies and addresses the underlying causes of pupil misbehaviour, emphasising a values-driven and personalised approach. The Designated Safety Officer (DSO) highlighted that educators' deep familiarity with their students enables them to recognise early signs of something wrong. This individualised understanding was captured in the DSO's remark: *"The teachers know their students very, very well... educators can tell that something is not right."* This proactive awareness is the school's strategy to address misbehaviour.

The DSO explained that most instances of misbehaviour are minor and often arise from small disagreements between pupils, with no reports of serious incidents, such as property damage. This observation underscores the effectiveness of the school's preventative approach in minimising significant disciplinary issues.

When misbehaviour occurs, the school's system emphasises collaboration and intervention. Class teachers refer pupils to the Guidance teacher, who provides a supportive and confidential space for addressing concerns. Pupils are seen regularly by

the Guidance teacher and Personal, Social, and Career Development (PSCD) teachers, who work together to uncover and address the underlying issues affecting pupils. As the DSO noted, *"I believe that with the role of the Guidance teacher, students have an open space to talk… of course, the Guidance teacher liaises with me."* This multi-layered approach, which includes coordination with the DSO, reflects the school's commitment to understanding and resolving the root causes of misbehaviour rather than simply addressing its symptoms.

### 3.3.3 Strategies Used

The data reveals a structured, multi-tiered approach to addressing pupil misbehaviour, emphasising proactive and collaborative strategies. The first step is classroom-based, with educators addressing the behaviour directly. One participant explained, *"Educators start by tackling the behaviour on a class-based level."* This approach allows teachers to manage minor issues promptly and maintain a supportive learning environment.

When classroom-based strategies are insufficient, the second step involves the Guidance teacher and the senior leadership team (SLT), who provide additional intervention and support. External professionals such as the Inclusion Coordinator (INCO), social worker, or school counsellor are engaged for more severe cases. The involvement of these professionals depends on the complexity and severity of the behaviour, as noted by the DSO: *"…depending on the level of severity of the behaviour."*

A unique aspect of the school's strategy is pupils' active role in seeking help when they recognise behavioural challenges in themselves. The DSO highlighted that students often take the initiative to seek guidance, stating, *"Students themselves ask to speak to the Guidance teacher about their behavioural issues."* This indicates a supportive school culture where pupils feel empowered to address their behaviour constructively, reflecting the effectiveness of the school's layered and collaborative strategy.

### 3.3.4 Parental Involvement and Support

The data highlights parents' crucial role in supporting the school's efforts to address pupil behaviour. The Designated Safety Officer (DSO) noted that most parents respond

positively and collaborate with the school when aware of their child's misbehaviour. The DSO's statement emphasised this proactive partnership: *"Usually, we get parents who are immediately on board, and they work with us in most cases."* Such cooperation underscores the alignment between parents and the school in addressing behavioural challenges.

When the Guidance teacher becomes involved in a case, the school facilitates a parental meeting to ensure that all parties are aligned in addressing the issue. This step reinforces the importance of open communication and shared responsibility between the school and parents.

However, the data also revealed that some parents may initially respond with denial rather than disrespect when their children exhibit undesirable behaviour. This reaction, as explained by the DSO, may stem from their strong commitment to passing on values to their children, making it challenging to accept instances of misbehaviour: *"It could be that they want to pass on the values so much that they cannot accept that their child is misbehaving in this way."* This observation highlights the need for sensitive and supportive engagement with parents to overcome such challenges and strengthen their role in fostering positive behaviour in their children.

## 3.3.5 Discussions with Misbehaving Pupils

The findings reveal that the school prioritizes open and constructive dialogue with pupils who misbehave, ensuring they have opportunities to reflect on and address their actions. When a pupil misbehaves, a session is set up with the Guidance teacher, providing a safe and supportive space for the pupil to express themselves. One participant explained, *"They thrash things out in a safe space where they feel safe enough to speak and protected."* This approach fosters healthy communication and encourages pupils to articulate their thoughts and emotions.

Group discussions are organised in cases involving more than one pupil, provided the pupils feel comfortable participating. This collaborative approach allows issues to be resolved collectively while maintaining a supportive environment.

Recognising that many pupils are eager to discuss their issues, the school has implemented a pass card system to enable pupils to visit the Guidance teacher as needed. This system balances lesson time and guidance sessions, allowing pupils to seek support without disrupting their education. As noted, *"They know that they have the office pass, and they can use it to go and discuss their issues."* This proactive strategy highlights the school's commitment to addressing misbehaviour through dialogue and support rather than punitive measures.

## 3.3.6 Pupil Involvement in Policy-Making Stage

The data indicates that while the school behaviour policy has been in place for a significant period, the extent of pupil involvement in its initial development remains uncertain. The Designated Safety Officer (DSO), who joined the school after the policy's implementation, suggested that given the Head of School's leadership style, it is likely that consultation with pupils occurred during the drafting stage. This belief reflects an assumption of participatory practices aligned with the school's values.

The school actively seeks regular feedback from pupils to ensure their voices are heard and considered in ongoing policy evaluation and refinement. Feedback is collected through online questionnaires completed in the school's ICT lab. The DSO explained, *"The Head of School asks them to express how they feel through a questionnaire usually done in the ICT lab."* This approach demonstrates the school's commitment to fostering pupil involvement and ensuring that the behaviour policy continues to reflect the needs and perspectives of its students.

## 3.3.7 Recommendations

The findings emphasise the importance of continuing specific practices supporting pupils and staff in maintaining a values-driven school environment. The Designated Safety Officer (DSO) recommended the ongoing use of the student pass card system, which enables pupils to attend guidance sessions as needed. These sessions were highlighted as essential for ensuring that school values permeate all aspects of school life, reinforcing a consistent and supportive ethos.

The current system was also recognized for allowing teachers to focus on teaching and learning while still addressing pupil needs. The Guidance teacher is pivotal in this structure, providing one-on-one support when required. As the DSO explained, *"...perhaps she (the class teacher) will not have the time to expand on the issue one to one...therefore the students themselves ask to speak to the Guidance teacher."* This recommendation underscores the effectiveness of a collaborative approach in which both classroom instruction and individual pupil support are balanced, ensuring the holistic development of students within the school's framework of values.

# 3.4 School 'A' Parent Focus Group Data

**Table 3.3 Themes from the Parents Focus Group in School A**

| Themes | Sub Themes |
|---|---|
| **Reflection of School Values in Policy** | Integration of Christian Values in the Treatment of Pupils |
| | Emphasis on Treating Others Well Rather Than Focusing Solely on Misbehaviour |
| | Recognition of Empathy as a Core School Value |
| | Support for Pupils' Moral and Ethical Development |
| | Framing Visits to the SLT Office as Supportive, Non-punitive |
| | Positive and Constructive Discipline Practices |
| | Balancing Strictness with Kindness in Teacher Interactions |
| | Commitment to Consistent Follow-Up on Behavioural Issues |
| | Prioritising a Values-Oriented Approach Over Purely Consequential Actions |
| | Encouraging Pupils to Reflect on Their Behaviour |
| | Fostering a Culture of Restorative Justice |
| | Ensuring Pupils Understand That Misbehaviour Leads to Consequences |
| | Providing Pupils with Choices to Foster Accountability |
| | Maintaining Consistency Among Educators in Policy Implementation |
| **Fair Treatment** | Personalised Understanding of Each Pupil |
| | Equal Treatment Without Preferential Bias Regardless of Background |
| | Widespread Perception of Fairness Within the School Community |
| | Fostering a Sense of Belonging for Non-Catholic Parents |
| **Misbehaviour** | Hurting Others |
| | Engaging in Theft |
| | Acts of Bullying |
| | Failure to Abide by School Regulations |
| | Incomplete or Missing Schoolwork |
| | Failure to Wear the Proper School Uniform |
| **Factors Affecting Misbehaviour** | Attention-seeking behaviour by Pupils |
| | Lack of Knowledge or Awareness About Appropriate Conduct |
| | Influence of Television and Social Media |
| | Unsupervised Online Chatting and Interactions at Home |
| | External Issues and Conflicts Originating Outside the School Environment |
| | Impact of Online Gaming on Behaviour |
| | Exposure to Inappropriate Content in Music Videos |
| | Parental Fear of Social Ostracization for Pupils When Restricted from Online Activities |
| **How Effective is the Policy** | Adaptability of the Policy to Address Emerging Cyber Issues |
| | Comprehensive Coverage of Behavioural Expectations |
| | Embedding School Values to Reinforce Behavioural Standards |
| | Challenges in Aligning Policy with Diverse Parental Values |
| **Pupil Feedback from Parents** | Pupils Recall Consequences Without Resentment |
| | Gratitude for Educators' Calm and Respectful Approach |
| | Recognition That Misbehaviour Is Handled in a Calm Manner |
| | Positive Perception of a Peaceful and Supportive School Atmosphere |

| Recommendations | Updating the Behaviour Policy to Address Emerging Cyber Challenges Incorporating Guidelines on Revolut Usage by Pupils Integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) Considerations into School Policies |
|---|---|

## 3.4.1 Reflection of School Values in the Policy

The findings highlight how the school behaviour policy embodies and reflects its Christian values, as perceived by parents. Parents noted that the school's disciplinary approach is deeply rooted in Christian principles, emphasising the importance of empathy and respectful treatment of others. One parent (PA2) stated, *"Christian values are reflected in how the school disciplines the children."* This focus shifts attention away from the misbehaviour itself and towards fostering positive interactions and relationships.

Parents felt that the school played a significant role in the moral development of its pupils. One parent (PA5) remarked, *"I am sure that through their values, they will help them move forward in their moral development."* This reflects the belief that the school's values are integral to shaping the pupils' character and ethical understanding.

The school's approach to discipline was described as positive and constructive. Parents appreciated that visits to the SLT office were not viewed as punitive but as opportunities for growth. They also observed that issues were consistently followed up on, with teachers balancing strictness with kindness, which made them approachable in the pupils' eyes. This balance fostered a supportive environment where pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions.

Parents highlighted the school's culture of restorative justice, noting that the behaviour policy teaches pupils to reflect on their actions and recognise the consequences of their behaviour. Moreover, pupils were given choices when deciding how to address their actions, promoting autonomy and critical thinking. One parent (PA5) emphasized the consistency in the school's approach, stating, *"Something that I have experienced is that all teachers follow the same pattern."* This uniformity across educators further reinforced the school's commitment to its values and the effectiveness of its policy.

## 3.4.2 Fair Treatment

The findings demonstrate that parents perceive the school as fostering a culture of fairness and inclusivity, grounded in individualised attention to pupils. Parents emphasised that each pupil is known personally by the senior leadership team (SLT) and educators, allowing for tailored interactions that promote equity. This individualized approach was seen as a cornerstone of the school's fairness in dealing with pupils.

Parents also expressed confidence that the school treats all pupils equally, without showing preferential treatment based on their backgrounds or circumstances. As one parent (PA2) explained, *"I also feel that no one is treated differently, just because they come from a different background, or their parents are different."* This observation highlights the school's commitment to equality and impartiality, reinforcing trust among the school community.

Additionally, parents noted that the school fosters a sense of belonging among non-Catholic families, reflecting its inclusive ethos. This inclusivity has inspired some non-Catholic parents to deepen their engagement with the Catholic faith, as illustrated by PA4's comment: *"We have people coming from different countries, not being Roman Catholic, asking what they have to do to try and get baptised."* This indicates that the school's environment respects diversity and encourages meaningful participation in its values and traditions.

## 3.4.3 Misbehaviour

When discussing what constitutes misbehaviour in pupils, parents identified several key concerns, reflecting interpersonal and rule-based issues. The most significant concerns centred around *hurting others*, *stealing*, and *bullying*, as these behaviours were seen as directly impacting the well-being and safety of others within the school community.

Additionally, parents highlighted other forms of misbehaviour related to responsibility and adherence to school expectations, including *missing work*, *not abiding by school regulations*, and *not wearing the proper uniform*. These behaviours were important

indicators of a pupil's respect for the school's rules and their role in maintaining order and discipline.

Together, these concerns demonstrate that parents view misbehaviour as encompassing both actions that harm others and those that undermine the school's structured environment.

## 3.4.4 Factors Affecting Misbehaviour

Parents identified various factors contributing to pupil misbehaviour, from individual motivations to external influences. One significant factor noted was attention-seeking behaviour, where pupils act out for recognition or special notice from teachers. One parent (PA4) explained, *"Sometimes I think they do it to attract attention. That is the most common reason."*

Another factor mentioned was the lack of awareness among younger pupils about the implications of their actions. Some parents felt that children, particularly in the early years, might not realise their behaviour constitutes misbehaviour. As PA1 remarked, *"I think at this age... I see the girls as innocent. They do not really understand what they are doing."*

External influences were also highlighted as a major contributor to misbehaviour. Parents pointed to the impact of television, social media, and older siblings in shaping undesirable behaviours. PA3 elaborated, *"...they watch it (undesirable behaviour) on TV... they are exposed to social media... or maybe older siblings."* This underscores the role of external environments in modelling behaviour that children may mimic.

Parents expressed concern about unsupervised online activities, such as chatting at home, online games, and music videos, which they felt could promote undesirable behaviour or inappropriate language. However, they also noted the social pressures of limiting children's online access. PA3 explained, *"...if a child is not so popular and the few friends she has try to message her and she does not even answer, they will neglect her. She will be left out."* This tension reflects parents' challenges in balancing online supervision with their children's social integration.

Finally, parents highlighted that those issues arising outside of school—such as conflicts that begin during online chats or interactions at home—are often carried over into the school setting. PA1 noted, *"They go home and start chatting, and the problems are carried over to school."* This demonstrates how external dynamics can affect behaviour within the school environment.

## 3.4.5 How Effective is the Policy

Parents generally perceived the school behaviour policy as comprehensive and far-reaching, addressing many areas effectively. However, they also emphasised the need for continuous updates to keep pace with emerging challenges, particularly concerning technology. One parent (PA3) highlighted this need, stating, *"The policy was updated recently but with the way technology and the world is today, we never have a perfect one (school behaviour policy) and it always needs to be improved."*

Parents expressed specific concerns about the rise of new cyber issues, including pupils' use of artificial intelligence (AI). While AI was acknowledged as a valuable resource, it was also seen as a behaviour-related issue that the policy had yet to address. PA1 explained, *"It is a good resource, but it is also a kind of behaviour that has not been addressed."* Another technological concern raised was children's use of Revolut cards. Parents felt that while financial tools could be helpful, they might not be age-appropriate and posed potential risks, with one parent commenting, *"And Revolut cards for kids... it is not bad, but I believe that for their age, it is quite above them. It is very risky for them."*

Parents widely recognised the policy's strength in transmitting values and teaching pupils what is acceptable and unacceptable. They stressed the importance of applying these principles to the rapidly evolving digital landscape. PA3 noted, *"Technological advances are also about values... a Christian value as in 'Am I cheating?'"* This demonstrates the need for the policy to integrate technological behaviours within its values-based framework.

However, parents also observed that not all families share the same values, which can complicate the consistent application of the policy. PA1 remarked that some parents

might not view specific issues as serious, stating, *"...not that big of a deal."* This discrepancy highlights the challenge of addressing diverse perspectives within a shared policy framework.

## 3.4.6 Pupil Feedback from Parents

Parents shared insights into the feedback they received from their children about the school's behaviour policy, highlighting the positive perceptions pupils have about how misbehaviour is addressed. While pupils remembered the consequences they received for misbehaviour, they did not harbour bitterness toward the experience. As one parent (PA3) reflected, *"...she still remembers it, but she is not sour about it."* This suggests that the pupils perceive the school's approach to discipline as fair and constructive.

The pupils also expressed appreciation for the way educators handle misbehaviour. They valued that educators do not shout at them and recognized that any misbehaviour is addressed calmly and respectfully. This calm and measured approach was key to the school's supportive environment.

Additionally, pupils conveyed a sense of peace within the school, indicating a broader appreciation for the overall atmosphere. One parent (PA5) remarked, *"I think that children experience a general feeling of peace at the school."* This feedback underscores the school's behaviour policy's effectiveness in fostering discipline and a positive and harmonious environment where pupils feel respected and supported.

## 3.4.7 Recommendations

Parents highlighted the need to update the school behaviour policy to address emerging challenges in the modern technological landscape. Their primary concern was the increasing relevance of issues related to internet use, artificial intelligence (AI), and Revolut by students. They emphasized that while the current policy is comprehensive, it needs to evolve to guide pupil behaviour in light of these new developments effectively. By incorporating guidelines on these topics, parents believed the policy could better equip the school to address contemporary concerns and align with the rapidly changing environment that pupils navigate daily.

# 3.5 School 'B' SLT Data

**Table 3.4 School 'B' SLT Data**

| Themes | Sub Themes |
|---|---|
| Aim of Policy | Fostering Maturity, Responsibility, and Respect in Pupils |
| | Promoting School Values Through Interactions with Others |
| School Values | Emphasis on Core Values as a Church School |
| | Fostering Respect for Others |
| | Encouraging Helping and Supporting Others |
| | Promoting Love and Compassion |
| | Instilling Respect for Life |
| | Strengthening Pupils' Character |
| | Preparing Pupils for Future Life Challenges |
| | Acknowledging Potential Misalignment Between School and Parental Values |
| | School's Commitment to Transmitting Core Values |
| | A Non-Imposition Approach to Value Transmission |
| | Pupils' Dedication to Upholding School Values |
| Parental Involvement | Maintaining an Open-Door Policy for Parental Engagement |
| | Ensuring Parents Are Always Heard and Valued |
| | Organizing Parental Meetings at the Start of Each Academic Year |
| | Encouraging Individual Feedback from Parents Throughout the Year |
| | Distributing End-of-Year Questionnaires to Gather Parental Input |
| | Maintaining Regular and Transparent Contact with Parents |
| | Using After-School Detention as a Last Resort for Discipline |
| | High Level of Parental Support and Cooperation with School Policies |
| Student Involvement when Misbehaviour Occurs | Engaging in Constructive Discussions with Pupils |
| | Addressing Even Trivial Misdemeanours with Seriousness |
| | Ensuring Both Sides Are Given a Fair Hearing |
| | Reasoning With Pupils to Foster Understanding |
| | Encouraging Pupils to Take an Active Role in Resolving Issues |
| | Involving All Relevant Parties in the Resolution Process |
| Support | Minimal Presence of Major Disciplinary Issues |
| | Behavioural Challenges Primarily Linked to Home Circumstances |
| | Support From the Secretariat Through Social Workers and Counsellors |
| | Difficulties in Addressing Behaviour Rooted in Home Situations |
| | Mindfulness Classes Led by a Qualified Educator to Foster Well-Being |
| Pupil Involvement in Policy Making | Regular Feedback Collected from Pupils |
| | Input Provided by the Student Council in Policy Drafting |
| | Circle Time Used for Open Discussions with Younger Pupils |
| | Feedback Contributions from the Teacher of Mindfulness |
| | Encouraging Pupils to Confidently Express Their Opinions |
| | Providing Space for Open and Inclusive Discussions |
| | Opportunities to Develop Leadership Skills Among Pupils |
| | Adopting a Collaborative, Non-Top-Down Approach |
| | Pupils Observing the Implementation of Their Suggestions |
| Recommendations | Increased Training for Staff as Front-Line Responders |
| | Re-evaluation of Detention's Effectiveness in Addressing Missing Homework |

| | Acknowledgment of Secretariat Support Despite Staffing Limitations<br>Call for Replacement of Psychosocial Team Members on Extended Leave<br>Enhanced Support Services for Parents, Including Requested Assistance<br>Development of a Comprehensive, Whole-Team Support System for Families |
|---|---|

## 3.5.1 Aims of Policy

The primary aim of the school's behaviour policy is to guide pupils towards becoming mature, responsible, and respectful individuals. This objective is deeply rooted in the school's values, which are reflected in all interactions within the school community. SLT B emphasised this alignment, stating, *"... that is what we aim for, and this is reflected in our relationships with others, in our actions...with ourselves, students, SLT members, teachers, and all educators."* This demonstrates that the policy not only seeks to manage behaviour but also to instil values that shape how individuals interact with one another, fostering a respectful and supportive environment.

## 3.5.2 School Values

As a Church school, the institution's core values include respect for others, helping others, loving others, respecting life, strengthening of character, and preparing for life. These values underpin the school's ethos and are integral to its mission. However, the SLT member acknowledged that these values might not always align with those held by parents. As one SLT member noted, *"The parents have their values; some may not agree with us, but we feel responsible to try and transmit these values."* This highlights the school's commitment to instilling these principles, even when there may be differences in perspective.

The SLT member emphasized that these values are transmitted without imposition, ensuring pupils are guided rather than compelled. Despite this, the SLT member expressed confidence that the pupils uphold these values, citing feedback from external speakers as evidence. *"Outside speakers from Caritas and Sedqa were amazed at how much the girls are aware of these issues (the value of life) ... they told us it shows that*

*the girls have certain values,"* the SLT member explained. This reflects the success of the school's efforts in fostering an environment where pupils internalise and demonstrate the values being taught.

### 3.5.3 Parental Involvement

The school strongly emphasises fostering open and collaborative relationships with parents, guided by an open-door policy that ensures parents are always heard. As one SLT member explained, *"We always listen to parents... we have a very open relationship with parents."* This approach creates a supportive and transparent environment where parents feel welcomed and valued as partners in their child's education.

To strengthen parental engagement, the school organizes meetings at the start of each year to provide information and encourage individual feedback from parents. Additionally, a questionnaire is distributed at the end of the year to gather insights and suggestions, reflecting the school's commitment to continuous improvement based on parental input.

When addressing instances of misbehaviour, the school prioritises communication with parents. Parents are always contacted to discuss the situation, and after-school detention is used only as a last resort. In some cases, parents themselves support this approach, with one SLT member noting, *"Sometimes the parent herself tells us to keep the child after school so that she learns from her mistake."*

### 3.5.4 Student Involvement When Misbehaviour Occurs

The school strongly emphasises involving pupils in resolving instances of misbehaviour through open dialogue and collaboration. Discussions with pupils are a cornerstone of the school's approach, as the SLT member highlighted, *"We believe in discussion."* This reflects the school's commitment to fostering understanding and accountability in pupils when addressing their actions.

Even when misdemeanours are considered trivial, the school takes them seriously to ensure that issues are addressed promptly and constructively. As SLT B explained, *"Misdemeanours are trivial, but they are always taken seriously by the school."* This

approach underscores the importance of consistent and fair handling of all behavioural concerns.

When conflicts occur between pupils, the school ensures that both sides are heard, promoting fairness and mutual understanding. Pupils are reasoned with, and efforts are made to resolve the issue collaboratively. The SLT member emphasized that *"all parties are involved whenever misbehaviour occurs,"* ensuring a comprehensive and inclusive process. This approach resolves conflicts and helps pupils develop problem-solving and interpersonal skills.

## 3.5.5 Further Support

The SLT member emphasised that the school does not face significant disciplinary issues, with most behavioural challenges stemming from difficult home circumstances. In such cases, the Secretariat provides valuable support through the provision of social workers and counsellors, offering an external layer of assistance to address complex situations.

However, the SLT member acknowledged the school's limitations in effectively addressing issues from challenging home environments. They expressed the frustration and helplessness that can arise in these situations, noting, *"It is a big headache when we have students where there are many issues at home... we seek help, but not much can be done."* This highlights the need for greater systemic support to address the root causes of behavioural concerns linked to home circumstances.

To further support pupils within the school environment, a qualified educator offers mindfulness classes weekly. These sessions aim to promote emotional well-being and self-regulation among pupils. As the SLT member remarked, *"Once a week, we give mindfulness lessons by one of our qualified educators. I cannot say it worked miracles, but the behaviour is milder."* While not a comprehensive solution, these classes represent the school's proactive efforts to foster a calmer and more supportive atmosphere for students.

## 3.5.6 Pupil Involvement in Policy Making

The school actively involves pupils in shaping its behaviour policy, ensuring their voices are heard and valued. The SLT member highlighted that the School Council contributed during drafting the behaviour policy, providing formal input from pupil representatives. Beyond this, the school maintains a practice of gathering constant feedback from pupils, including younger students who share their opinions during circle time discussions. This inclusive approach was illustrated by the SLT member's example: *"For example, this morning, there was a group of students who went to the Head's office to suggest certain things in the behavioural policy."*

Additional feedback is obtained through the mindfulness teacher, further enriching the dialogue between pupils and the school leadership. The teacher of mindfulness in the school promotes the emotional well-being and self-regulation of pupils by incorporating mindfulness practices into their education. This teacher facilitates weekly mindfulness classes, providing students with tools to manage stress, improve focus, and foster a sense of calm. The SLT member noted that these lessons, while not transformative in every instance, have contributed to a milder and more reflective atmosphere among pupils.

Additionally, the mindfulness teacher plays a significant role in gathering feedback from pupils, offering insights into their thoughts and feelings. This feedback is then used to inform decisions about school policies, including the behaviour policy. This dual role emphasises the proactive development of students' emotional intelligence and their active involvement in shaping the school environment.

The SLT member noted that pupils are accustomed to expressing their ideas, supported by a school culture that fosters open discussion and provides opportunities for pupils to contribute meaningfully. The SLT member explained, *"We give them leadership skills, so the students are not afraid to make their voices heard."*

The school's approach to policymaking is intentionally collaborative, avoiding a top-down method. Pupils are encouraged to share their ideas and could see some of their suggestions implemented. This reinforces the school's commitment to pupil involvement and demonstrates the tangible impact of their contributions.

## 3.5.7 Recommendations

The SLT member highlighted several recommendations to enhance the school's approach to managing pupil behaviour and supporting families. A key suggestion was the need for more training in pupil behaviour and management for teachers, who serve as the first point of contact for addressing these issues. The SLT member emphasised the importance of equipping teachers with the necessary skills and strategies to handle behaviour effectively, noting their critical role as frontliners.

Concerns were raised about the limitations of current disciplinary practices, specifically that detention does not adequately address the root cause of issues such as missing homework. This highlights the need for alternative strategies that target the underlying problems rather than relying solely on punitive measures.

While the school values the support provided by the Secretariat, the SLT member noted a challenge related to insufficient human resources, which affects the ability to provide comprehensive support. Additionally, they pointed out the need for replacements for Secretariat personnel on extended leave, as their absence creates gaps in the support system.

The SLT member also stressed the importance of providing a holistic support system for families, recognising that parents often request assistance managing their children's behaviour. They proposed establishing a whole-team approach to supporting families, ensuring that pupils and their parents receive the guidance and resources they need.

## 3.6 School 'B' DSO Data

**Table 3.5 Themes from the DSO Interview in School B**

| Themes | Sub Themes |
|---|---|
| **Types of Discipline Used** | **Adherence to the School Behaviour Policy**<br>**Implementation of Appropriate Consequences**<br>**Engaging in Constructive Discussions with Pupils**<br>**Timely Communication with Parents** |
| **Targeting Causes of Misbehaviour** | Managing Predominantly Minor Infractions<br>Conducting Discussions to Identify the Root Cause of Behaviour<br>Involvement of PSCD and Guidance Teachers in Interventions<br>Explaining the Rationale Behind Consequences to Pupils<br>Ensuring Parents Are Informed and Engaged |
| **Strategies Used** | Ensuring Pupils Are Familiar with School Regulations<br>Issuing Yellow Notes for Documenting Infractions<br>Requiring Parents to Sign Yellow Notes<br>Assigning After-School Detention for Recurring Infractions<br>Providing Extra Work During After-School Detentions<br>Addressing Preventive Measures Through PSCD Lessons |
| **Parental Involvement and Support** | High Level of Parental Cooperation with School Policies<br>Parental Commitment to Their Children's Academic Success<br>Understanding That Consequences Align with Actions<br>Open Discussions to Address Parental Disagreements |
| **Discussions with Misbehaving Pupils** | Encouraging Pupils to Understand Others' Perspectives<br>Addressing the Impact of Social Media During Discussions<br>Incorporating Behavioural Discussions into PSCD Lessons |
| **Pupil Involvement in Policy Making Stage** | Participation Through Student Council, Ekoskola Committee, and PSCD Lessons<br>Empowering Pupils to Express Their Opinions<br>Facilitating Open Dialogue Through Workshops |
| **Recommendations** | Customization of the Anti-Bullying Policy from the Secretariat to Align with School Needs |

## 3.6.1 Types of Discipline Used

The school's approach to discipline is guided by its established behaviour policy, which serves as a reference point for addressing behavioural issues. The DSO emphasized that discussions are held with the pupils when incidents occur to ensure that they understand their actions and the associated consequences. This reflective approach is complemented by clear communication with parents, as the DSO explained: *"Usually there are consequences, but always with discussions with the students. The parents are, of course, informed."* This highlights the school's emphasis on combining accountability

with understanding, ensuring that disciplinary measures are fair, transparent, and supportive.

## 3.6.2 Targeting Causes of Misbehaviour

The school adopts a proactive and reflective approach to addressing misbehaviour, focusing on understanding and resolving its underlying causes. According to the DSO, most infractions are minor, but discussions are always held with pupils to identify the root cause of the behaviour. During these discussions, the necessity and rationale for consequences are explained to ensure pupils understand the impact of their actions.

Interventions are carried out by PSCD and Guidance teachers, who play a pivotal role in addressing issues such as friendship conflicts or emotional challenges. The DSO highlighted the collaborative nature of this process, stating, *"If there are problems of friendship, they are tackled in PSCD and Guidance, and we always discuss with the students and parents."* Parents are kept informed throughout the process, reinforcing a partnership approach to managing and resolving behavioural issues.

This strategy reflects the school's commitment to addressing misbehaviour constructively, prioritising dialogue, support, and collaboration over punitive measures.

## 3.6.3 Strategies Used

The school employs a structured approach to managing pupil behaviour, ensuring clarity and consistency in applying rules and consequences. According to the DSO, pupils are fully aware of the school regulations, fostering an understanding of expectations. When an infraction occurs, pupils are issued a yellow note, which their parents must also sign to ensure their involvement. The DSO explained, *"They have the regulations to follow, and even the parents sign."*

For recurring infractions, the school escalates the response by assigning after-school detention. During detention, pupils must complete extra work, reinforcing the importance of accountability and reflection. The DSO noted, *"After a number of yellow notes, they get an after-school. There, they have to do work."*

Preventive measures are also integrated into the school's strategies, with PSCD lessons providing a platform for discussions with pupils. These sessions address behavioural expectations proactively and explore topics that can help prevent future issues.

This combination of clear regulations, escalating consequences, and preventive education reflects the school's comprehensive and balanced behaviour management approach, emphasising accountability and proactive support.

## 3.6.4 Parental Involvement and Support

Parental involvement is a key aspect of the school's approach to behaviour management, with most parents demonstrating alignment with the school's policies and practices. According to the DSO, parents are usually on board because they are keen for their children to succeed academically. Additionally, parents recognize that the consequences imposed by the school are fair and proportionate to their child's actions. The DSO highlighted this and explained, *"If the misbehaviour is that maybe they have quarrelled with another student, then the consequence will be matched to the action."*

When parents disagree with the school's handling of their child's behaviour, the school ensures that these concerns are addressed through open discussion. These conversations provide an opportunity to clarify the reasoning behind the school's actions and to reach a mutual understanding.

This collaborative and transparent approach fosters trust between the school and parents, ensuring that behaviour management strategies are understood, supported, and consistently applied.

## 3.6.5 Discussions with Misbehaving Pupils

The school places significant emphasis on engaging pupils in meaningful discussions about their misbehaviour, fostering reflection and empathy. During these conversations, pupils are encouraged to consider the impact of their actions on others. The school uses questions such as, *"Do you think that by your action you have caused someone to get hurt?"* to help pupils understand different perspectives and develop a sense of accountability.

In addition to one-on-one discussions, broader topics are addressed during PSCD lessons, which provide a structured platform for preventive education. A significant portion of these discussions focuses on the responsible use of social media at home, a growing concern. As noted by the DSO, *"...we try to plan for prevention (social media issues) with PSCD lessons."*

This dual approach—individual discussions and proactive classroom education—reflects the school's commitment to addressing misbehaviour constructively, while equipping pupils with the tools to prevent future issues and build positive relationships.

## 3.6.6 Pupil Involvement in Policy-Making Stage

The school actively involves pupils in policymaking by providing multiple platforms to express their opinions and contribute meaningfully. The DSO emphasized that pupils are given a voice through discussions in forums such as the Student Council, the Ekoskola Committee, PSCD lessons, and events like Anti-Bullying Week. The DSO explained that *"...they are given space to discuss."* These opportunities encourage pupils to engage critically and share their perspectives on school policies.

Additionally, pupils participate in workshops that include discussions facilitated by external entities. These workshops provide a broader context for pupils to explore and debate various topics, further developing their communication and critical-thinking skills. Workshop leaders from these external entities have praised the pupils' active participation and debating abilities, providing positive feedback to the school's administration.

This inclusive and participatory approach ensures that pupils feel valued and involved in the decision-making processes that impact their school environment, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility.

## 3.6.7 Recommendations

The DSO highlighted the importance of the forthcoming Anti-Bullying policy from the Secretariat, explaining that the school is awaiting its publication. Once available, the policy will be discussed and adapted to align with the school's specific needs and

context. This approach reflects the school's proactive stance in ensuring its policies remain relevant and effective in addressing bullying while tailoring the guidelines to fit its unique environment.

## 3.7 School 'B' Parent Focus Group Data

**Table 3.6 Themes from the Parents Focus Group in School B**

| Themes | Sub Themes |
|---|---|
| **Reflection of School Values in Policy** | **Fostering Respect, Kindness, and Accountability Through Policy**<br>**Alignment of the Policy with the School Motto 'Believe and Achieve'**<br>**Encouraging Behaviour Driven by Respect Rather Than Fear**<br>**Establishing Non-Coercive School Rules** |
| **Fair Treatment** | Equitable System of Yellow Notes for Consequences and White Notes for Rewards<br>Commitment to Fair Treatment of All Pupils<br>Emphasis on Inclusivity as a Core School Value<br>Consistent Application of Rules Across the School Community |
| **Misbehaviour** | Bullying Among Pupils<br>Causing Emotional Harm to Others<br>Disrupting the Classroom Environment<br>Engaging in Repeated Patterns of Misbehaviour<br>Physical Aggression Toward Others<br>Habitual Tardiness<br>Wandering or Distracting Others After Completing Tasks<br>Acts of Cheating<br>Causing Damage to School Property |
| **Factors affecting Misbehaviour** | Emotional Distress or Upset in Pupils<br>Impact of Home-Related Issues on Behaviour<br>Unintentional Nature of Some Misbehaviour<br>Burden of Emotional or Mental Strain on the Child<br>Influence of Medical or Psychological Conditions on Behaviour |
| **How Effective is the Policy** | Effectiveness Enhanced by Introducing an Online System for Immediate Parental Notification<br>Timely and Appropriate Actions Taken to Address Issues<br>Successful Implementation of Behavioural Systems for Younger Pupils<br>Policy Serves as a Strong Deterrent for Isolated Misdemeanours |
| **Pupil Feedback from Parents** | Appreciation for Positive Feedback from Teachers<br>Emphasis on Learning Opportunities Over Fear of Consequences<br>Clear Understanding of the Reasons Behind Consequences<br>Perception of the Head of School as Fair and Just<br>Feeling Adequately Prepared for Future Challenges<br>Desire for Recognition of Personal Qualities, Creativity, and Values Beyond Academics<br>Concerns About Repeated Awards Being Given to the Same Pupils<br>Sense of Safety Stemming from Clear Behavioural Expectations<br>Support in Developing Decision-Making Skills<br>Recognition of Discipline as a Valuable Life Skill |

| | Acknowledgment That Discipline May Cause Anxiety in Some Pupils |
|---|---|
| **Recommendations** | Appreciation for Positive Feedback from Teachers |
| | Emphasis on Learning Opportunities Over Fear of Consequences |
| | Maintain a Clear Understanding of the Reasons Behind the Consequences |
| | Maintain the Perception of the Head of School as Fair and Just |
| | Maintain Adequate Preparation for Future Challenges |
| | Desire for Recognition of Personal Qualities, Creativity, and Values Beyond Academics |
| | Concerns About Repeated Awards Being Given to the Same Pupils |
| | Sense of Safety Stemming from Clear Behavioural Expectations |
| | Support in Developing Decision-Making Skills |
| | Recognition of Discipline as a Valuable Life Skill |
| | Acknowledgement That Discipline May Cause Anxiety in Some Pupils |

## 3.7.1 Reflection of School Values in the Policy

Parents observed that the school behaviour policy effectively embodies the school's core values of respect, kindness, and accountability for one's actions. These values are central to the policy's design and implementation, ensuring pupils are guided by principles that foster personal growth and positive interactions.

Additionally, parents highlighted that the policy aligns closely with the school motto, reinforcing the institution's broader educational mission. They noted that the school rules are not coercive, fostering an environment where pupils act out of respect rather than fear. PB4's comment exemplified this: *"I think the aspect of respect is important. Pupils act out of respect and not fear."*

This feedback underscores that the behaviour policy is not just a set of regulations but a reflection of the school's ethos. It promotes a values-driven approach to discipline that is understood and appreciated by both pupils and parents.

## 3.7.2 Fair Treatment

Parents expressed confidence in the fairness of the school's behaviour management system, which uses yellow notes for consequences and white notes for rewards. This balanced approach ensures that pupils are held accountable for their actions and recognized for positive behaviour. As PB1 explained, *"If they do something good, they*

*are rewarded. If they do something bad, they are reprimanded."* This demonstrates the school's commitment to maintaining an equitable and transparent system.

Inclusivity was highlighted as a core value of the school, ensuring that all pupils and parents are treated equally, regardless of their roles or backgrounds. Rules are applied consistently to everyone, reinforcing a sense of fairness within the school community. PB2 noted, *"I form part of the PTA. I have never been treated differently because I form part of the PTA."*

This feedback underscores that the school's behaviour policy promotes accountability and positive reinforcement and reflects its dedication to inclusivity and equal treatment for all.

## 3.7.3 Misbehaviour

When discussing what constitutes misbehaviour, parents identified various actions that disrupt the school environment or harm others. Key concerns included bullying, hurting others' feelings, physical aggression, and repeated misbehaviour, which were seen as serious issues requiring immediate attention.

Parents also highlighted behaviours that affect the learning atmosphere, such as disrupting the class, tardiness, and wandering around after finishing work early. Additionally, cheating was noted as a significant concern, reflecting the importance of honesty and integrity in academic work.

Finally, damage to school property was mentioned as misbehaviour undermining respect for shared resources and the school community. These responses illustrate a broad perspective on misbehaviour, encompassing interpersonal and rule-based infractions that affect the school's values and operations.

## 3.7.4 Factors Affecting Misbehaviour

Parents identified various factors that could influence pupil misbehaviour, emphasising that external circumstances and individual challenges often play a significant role. One common belief was that pupils might act out because they are upset about something

that occurred earlier, such as an incident at home. PB3 explained, *"Maybe they are upset. Maybe something happened at home, and they are acting out."*

It was also acknowledged that misbehaviour is not always intentional. Some parents felt pupils might not deliberately aim to misbehave but struggle with managing their emotions or actions. PB4 noted, *"It might not necessarily be that they want to misbehave."*

Home-related issues were seen as another critical factor, with parents pointing out that family problems or burdens could weigh heavily on a child's mind and influence their behaviour. PB1 stated, *"...it could be a family problem, so the child's mind would be burdened."*

In addition to emotional and situational factors, parents highlighted the role of underlying conditions in shaping behaviour. For example, PB3 shared, *"It could be that there is a condition... my child had a speech problem... she would get frustrated when she could not express what she was feeling... obviously she would appear to be a misbehaving student."* Similarly, PB2 emphasised the impact of medical conditions like diabetes, explaining, *"I work with diabetic students. If their blood sugar decreases, their behaviour will not be normal."* PB2 also noted that some pupils might lack self-regulatory skills, which could exacerbate behavioural challenges.

These insights highlight the complexity of factors influencing misbehaviour, ranging from emotional distress and family dynamics to medical conditions and developmental skills. They underline the need for a compassionate and individualized approach to addressing such issues.

## 3.7.5 How Effective is the Policy

Parents considered the school's behaviour policy effective, particularly because appropriate actions were consistently taken when necessary. As PB4 stated, *"I believe a policy is as good as its implementation."* This reflects the parents' view that the policy's success lies in its consistent and fair application across the school.

In the younger years, a system based on Class DOJO was noted as particularly effective. Class DOJO is a digital platform that allows teachers to track and reward student

behaviour while fostering communication with parents. The system helps create a positive classroom environment by visually reinforcing good behaviour and providing real-time feedback. Parents felt that the Class DOJO system worked well but suggested that the yellow and white notes system could also be extended to the younger years to complement it. PB3 remarked, *"The system [yellow and white notes] can be implemented in the Early Years. It can also be implemented in Awards Day."*

The policy was also recognized as an effective deterrent for one-off misdemeanours, with parents appreciating the consistent application of rules. PB2 explained, *"They do not say it was just a one-off. The rules apply always to everyone."* This consistency reinforced the school's commitment to fairness and accountability.

While overall feedback on the policy was positive, parents suggested some areas for improvement. They recommended supplementing the current system with an online platform that could immediately notify parents of behavioural issues involving their children. This enhancement would provide timely communication and foster greater parental involvement.

Some parents questioned the effectiveness of assigning extra work during after-school detentions for missing homework. PB1 suggested a more productive alternative: *"...maybe instead of extra work, why don't they do the missing homework [during an after-school]? The homework would have been done, and she is keeping up with her classmates."* This recommendation underscores the importance of aligning consequences with academic needs.

## 3.7.6 Pupil Feedback from Parents

Parents shared insights into how their children perceive the school's behaviour policy and its impact. A key observation was that pupils appreciate the positive feedback they receive, focusing more on the learning opportunities rather than the fear of consequences. PB3 explained, *"...she emphasises what she did wrong, not the consequence given."* This highlights the constructive nature of the school's approach to behaviour management.

Pupils perceive the Head of School as being fair, and pupils understand the reasoning behind the consequences they receive. Parents noted that their children feel the school equips them with valuable life skills that prepare them for the future. This understanding fosters a sense of safety and clarity among pupils, who know what is expected of them and are taught to make thoughtful choices.

However, parents also reported that pupils desired recognition beyond academics, suggesting that awards should also celebrate creativity, personal qualities, and values. PB1 remarked, *"It is not about my daughter because she gets rewarded for the academics, but I would also give points for, say, you were caring during the break with another child."* Pupils also felt that awards could be more inclusive, with multiple recipients for a particular talent and greater variety in awardees, avoiding the same child receiving recognition repeatedly.

While the policy is generally viewed positively, parents acknowledged that it could cause anxiety for some pupils, particularly regarding expected behaviour. PB2 noted, *"It could cause some anxiety, but like we said, children have to learn for their future."* This reflects a recognition of the balance between fostering responsibility and addressing the emotional impact on pupils.

## 3.7.7 Recommendations

Parents proposed several recommendations to enhance the school's behaviour and reward systems, emphasising fairness, inclusivity, and practicality. One key suggestion was to distinguish between pupil misbehaviour and parental non-compliance when school rules are not adhered to. They stressed that pupils should not be reprimanded for issues arising from parental negligence.

Parents also recommended implementing an online system to supplement the current Notes system, enabling immediate feedback to parents about their child's behaviour. Additionally, it was suggested that the Notes system be extended to the early years, working in conjunction with existing mechanisms, which parents described as highly effective.

To address academic challenges, parents proposed that pupils in after-school detention should complete missing homework rather than extra work. They emphasised that completing unfinished assignments would prevent pupils from falling behind in their studies, making the consequence more productive.

Regarding recognition, parents suggested that the school award each child a certificate celebrating a positive quality, making the process more inclusive. PB3 noted, *"It is not just the academics that should be rewarded."* They also proposed that multiple pupils could be rewarded for the same talent or attribute, ensuring broader recognition. Furthermore, parents felt that values demonstrated by pupils should be acknowledged alongside academic and extracurricular achievements.

Parents also recommended including younger pupils on Awards Day, ensuring that recognition opportunities extend across all age groups.

These recommendations reflect a desire for a more holistic, inclusive, and supportive approach to managing behaviour and celebrating achievements, aligning with the school's commitment to fostering both personal growth and academic success.

## 3.8 School 'C' SLT Data

**Table 3.7 School 'C' SLT Data**

| Themes | Sub Themes |
|---|---|
| **Aim of Policy** | Creating a Learning Environment That Supports Academic and Personal Growth<br>Ensuring Fairness and Addressing Inequities<br>Establishing Clear Structure and Rules for Guidance<br>Recognising That Behaviour Is Often Symptomatic of Underlying Issues<br>Focusing Beyond Punishment to Promote Growth and Accountability<br>Developing a Deeper Understanding of Misbehaviour<br>Accurate Identification of Misbehaviour to Avoid Misinterpretation<br>Implementing Tailored and Effective Interventions |
| **School Values** | Respect as the Core Value Guiding Behaviour and Interactions<br>Linking Meaningful Consequences to Behaviour for Learning and Growth<br>Establishing Respect as the Foundation for Future Relationships |
| **Parental Involvement** | Regular Communication to Inform Parents of Changes and Updates<br>Notifying Parents When Misbehaviour Becomes Recurrent<br>Acknowledging and Considering Parents' Reactions to Behavioural Issues<br>Facilitating Open Exchange of Information Between Parents and the School<br>Promoting a Collaborative Approach Between Parents and the School<br>Recognising Behavioural Management as a Learning Experience for Parents |
| **Student Involvement when Misbehaviour Occurs** | Active Involvement of Pupils in Addressing Behavioural Issues<br>Providing Time for Pupils to Reflect on Their Actions<br>Encouraging Pupils to Take Responsibility and Make Amends |
| **Support** | Comprehensive Services Provided by the Secretariat<br>Assistance in Verifying and Refining School Procedures Through Support Personnel<br>Strong Rapport Between Secretariat Personnel and the School Community<br>Provision of Essential Guidance to Address Behavioural Issues<br>Accessible Support Services Regularly Utilized by the School<br>Availability of an In-House Guidance Teacher for Immediate Support |
| **Pupil Involvement in Policy Drafting** | Limited Direct Involvement of Pupils in Policy Development<br>Active Participation of Pupils in Addressing Behavioural Issues<br>Gathering Feedback from Pupils Through Questionnaires, Meetings, and Discussions |
| **Recommendations** | Establishing a More Structured Approach to Student Input in Policy Development<br>Differentiating Between Minor Infractions and Serious Misbehaviour<br>Evaluating the Appropriateness of Punishments to Avoid Excessive Measures<br>Reassessing the Effectiveness of Detention as a Disciplinary Tool<br>Exploring Greater Pupil Involvement in Policy-Making Processes |

## 3.8.1 Aims of Policy

The school behaviour policy is designed to ensure a conducive environment for learning, emphasising structure and clear rules to support this aim. According to the SLT member, the policy addresses not only behaviour but also the fairness or lack thereof within the school community.

The SLT member highlighted that behaviour often reflects more profound issues, describing it as symptomatic of more significant challenges pupils face: *"The behaviour of some of the students was simply a symptom of other big issues."* This perspective underscores the school's commitment to understanding the root causes of misbehaviour rather than merely responding to its surface manifestations.

The policy is not intended to mete out consequences; instead, it is used to identify and understand misbehaviour, enabling the school to implement appropriate interventions. This approach aligns with the school's religious mission, fostering moral growth in pupils by creating opportunities for reflection and dialogue. The SLT member shared an example of this collaborative approach: *"[I had] ... a case last week that can be considered very serious... I... bring in the boys; we sit down and discuss."*

This emphasis on constructive dialogue reflects the school's commitment to nurturing ethical development and promoting accountability within a supportive and structured environment.

## 3.8.2 School Values

The core value upheld by the school is respect, which forms the foundation for the pupils' future relationships. The SLT member emphasised the importance of embedding respect across all aspects of school life, highlighting its role in shaping pupils' interactions with themselves and others. They explained: *"We try to instil respect, this idea of respecting each other; I try to let them know that this is a matter of respect: respecting yourself, respecting your family, respecting your classmates, and respecting your teachers."*

This focus on respect is integral to the school's ethos and aligns with its broader mission to prepare pupils for life within and beyond the school environment. By fostering respect, the school promotes positive behaviour and contributes to its pupils' moral and social development.

### 3.8.3 Parental Involvement

The school strongly emphasises keeping parents informed of any changes and updates, ensuring transparency and collaboration. Parents are notified when misbehaviour is repeated, and their reactions are carefully noted. The SLT member explained: *"When we see mild cases [of misbehaviour] that are being repeated, we immediately speak to the parents."*

An essential part of the school's approach is fostering an exchange of information between parents and the school. The SLT member highlighted the importance of open communication with pupils about this transparency: *"I tell the boys, 'Listen, I am in contact with your parents. They know exactly what you are doing. If I feel they should know, I will call them. You cannot play around and change versions.'"* This ensures consistency and mutual accountability.

The school also reinforces the message that parents and the school are partners in addressing behavioural issues. The SLT member expressed this sentiment: *"We are in this together. So yes, if your child is not behaving well at school, there are consequences for you as well."*

This collaborative approach is not only about managing behaviour but is also seen as a learning curve for parents, fostering their understanding and engagement in their child's moral and behavioural development. Through this partnership, the school aims to create a unified approach to nurturing positive behaviour and effectively addressing challenges.

### 3.8.4 Student Involvement When Misbehaviour Occurs

The school actively involves pupils in addressing misbehaviour, fostering a sense of accountability and reflection. The SLT member highlighted that students are encouraged

to share their perspectives when issues arise: *"Everybody has the opportunity to speak about it, to tell us at least the different versions."* This approach ensures pupils feel heard and are included in resolving behavioural matters.

Pupils are also given time to reflect upon their actions, and they have an opportunity to discuss the situation with their parents. The SLT member explained: *"When I sense that someone is not being honest with me or is afraid of me, I tell him, 'Listen, go home, speak to your mum, think about it, discuss it,' and many times they come back [saying], 'Yes, this is what happened.'"* This practice allows pupils to process their behaviour in a supportive environment, promoting honesty and self-awareness.

Furthermore, the school ensures that pupils are always given the opportunity to do the right thing when misbehaviour occurs. This approach emphasises restorative practices, encouraging pupils to take responsibility and make amends, aligning with the school's commitment to fostering moral and ethical growth.

## 3.8.5 Further Support

The school benefits from comprehensive support services the Secretariat provides, including an anti-bullying team, a psychosocial team, social workers, and a counsellor. These personnel play a critical role in enabling the school to double-check its procedures when addressing misbehaviour, ensuring alignment with best practices.

The SLT member highlighted the positive rapport between the Secretariat-appointed personnel and the school, emphasising the accessibility and effectiveness of the support provided. They noted: *"Yes, we use these services... they guide us when necessary."* This collaboration enhances the school's ability to handle behavioural challenges with confidence and sensitivity.

In addition to external support, the school has an in-house guidance teacher who offers consistent and immediate support to both pupils and staff. This dual-layered system of in-house and external support ensures that the school has the resources to effectively and holistically address behavioural issues.

## 3.8.6 Pupil Involvement in Policy Making

The pupils are not yet directly involved in the drafting or formulating of the school behaviour policy. However, they provide feedback about the policy, particularly regarding its implementation and impact. This feedback is gathered through questionnaires, meetings, and discussions with pupils. The SLT member explained: *"Indirectly, they are in the sense that we try to get feedback from them... even through meetings I have with the boys. Directly, no, not yet."*

While the current involvement is limited to offering perspectives on existing practices, this approach ensures that pupil voices are considered in the policy's evaluation and refinement. This indirect participation reflects a step toward greater engagement, with the potential for expanding their role to include more direct contributions in the future.

## 3.8.7 Recommendations

The SLT member suggested adopting a more structured approach to incorporating student input into the school behaviour policy. This could be achieved by engaging the School Council to play a more active role in policymaking. The SLT member expressed optimism about this possibility: *"That is something that the School Council might delve into."*

This recommendation reflects a desire to foster greater pupil participation and ownership in developing and refining policies, ensuring that their perspectives are represented in a meaningful and organised manner.

## 3.9 School 'C' DSO Data

**Table 3.8 School 'C' DSO Data**

| Themes | Sub Themes |
|---|---|
| **Type of Discipline Used** | Promoting the Correct Model of Behaviour |
| | Ensuring Optimal Working Conditions for Educators |
| | Focusing on Misbehaviour Prevention |
| | Implementing Minor and Proportionate Consequences |
| **Targeting Causes of Misbehaviour** | Less Challenging Behaviour Compared to Secondary Schools |
| | Infrequent Cases of Serious Misbehaviour |
| | Influence of Home Background on Major Misbehaviour |
| | Support for Home-Related Issues Through Psychosocial Teams |
| | Bullying as a Minor Concern |
| | Emergence of Racially Motivated Behaviour |
| | Behavioural Challenges During Transport |
| | Contextual Variations in Behavioural Expectations |
| **Strategies Used** | Prioritising Preventative Measures |
| | Transitioning to a Pastoral Approach |
| | Establishing Clear Boundaries and Expectations |
| | Balancing Firmness with Kindness |
| | Implementing Effective Behaviour Monitoring Systems |
| | Involving Psychosocial Teams for Complex Cases |
| | Addressing Emerging Issues Such as Racism |
| | Ensuring Alignment Between Behaviour and School Values |
| | Fostering Collaboration Between Teachers and SLT |
| | Proactively Managing Minor Behavioural Issues |
| **Parental Involvement and Support** | Predominantly Cooperative Parental Engagement |
| | Occasional Challenges to School Practices by Parents |
| | Discrepancies Between Parental and School Perceptions of Pupil Behaviour |
| | Timely Communication of Behavioural Issues to Parents |
| | Comprehensive Record-Keeping of Behavioural Incidents |
| | Collaborative Approach Between Parents and School to Support the Child |
| | Parental Involvement in Discussions on Rare Cases of Suspension or Exclusion |
| | Parental Excuses Linked to Varied Environments Pupils Frequent |
| | Lack of Familiarity with the School Code Among Some Pupils and Parents |
| **Discussions with Misbehaving Students** | Focused Discussions for Major Infringements |
| | Assessing the Child's Understanding of the Issue |
| | Exploring the Issue from the Pupil's Perspective |
| | Allowing Pupils Time to Calm Down Before Discussions |
| | Ensuring All Parties Are Heard |
| | Explaining Consequences Clearly |
| | Identifying the Root Cause of Misbehaviour Through Dialogue |
| **Pupil Involvement in Policy Making Stage** | Full Pupil Participation in Establishing Class Rules |
| | Pupils Are Aware of the Rules |
| | Enforcement of Rules Requires Adult Oversight |

| | |
|---|---|
| | Policy Drafting Primarily Led by SLT and Educators |
| | Limited Direct Input from Pupils in Policy Creation |
| **Recommendations** | Incorporating Policymaking Discussions in the Student Council |
| | Revisiting the Benefits of the School's Former Pastoral Team System |

## 3.9.1 Types of Discipline Used

The DSO, responsible for implementing the school behaviour policy, emphasised that the type of discipline employed aims to ensure that pupils understand the correct behaviour model. This approach is designed not only to address misbehaviour but also to create an environment where optimum working conditions for educators are maintained, thereby minimising disruptions.

The primary focus is on preventing misbehaviour through proactive measures. However, when misbehaviour does occur, it is addressed with small, proportionate consequences, ensuring that discipline remains constructive and aligned with the school's values. This balanced approach supports both the pupils' moral development and the educators' ability to maintain a positive learning environment.

## 3.9.2 Targeting Causes of Misbehaviour

The DSO noted that pupil behaviour in primary schools is generally less challenging than that in secondary schools, with serious cases of misbehaviour being rare. While bullying was not identified as a significant issue, the school had observed the emergence of some racist behaviour. Additionally, incidents of misbehaviour by pupils on school transport were highlighted as areas requiring attention.

Pupils' home background was identified as a key factor influencing major behavioural issues. The DSO stated that in a Church school, where respect for authority and adherence to religious values are essential, children from homes where these values are not emphasized may struggle to conform to the school's expectations.

Another challenge arose from the pupils' exposure to different contexts outside of school, each with its own codes of behaviour. This sometimes led to difficulties adhering to the school's specific code of conduct.

To address such challenges, the psychosocial team was instrumental in supporting pupils dealing with issues rooted in their home environments. This team provides targeted interventions, ensuring that the underlying causes of misbehaviour are addressed constructively and supportively.

### 3.9.3 Strategies Used

The school employs a preventive approach to managing pupil behaviour, focusing on proactive measures to minimise incidents. Pupils are aware of what is expected of them and are familiar with the boundaries and thresholds guiding their conduct. The school maintains a system for tracking pupil behaviour, ensuring that even minor issues are promptly addressed to prevent escalation.

In some cases, pupils exhibit behaviour that contradicts the school's values, such as a recent incident involving racism, which the school found particularly concerning. For more serious behavioural challenges, the school engages the psychosocial team to provide additional support and address the root causes.

The DSO emphasised the importance of collaboration between educators and the school administration, particularly in maintaining consistency and alignment when addressing pupil behaviour. Additionally, the DSO highlighted the ongoing challenge of balancing kindness with strictness in managing misbehaviour, ensuring that discipline remains fair yet empathetic. This nuanced approach reflects the school's commitment to fostering both accountability and a supportive environment for its pupils.

### 3.9.4 Parental Involvement and Support

The DSO noted that parents are mostly cooperative in supporting the school's behaviour policy, although there are occasional instances where parents may challenge the school's observations or decisions. When misbehaviour occurs, the school ensures that parents are promptly informed, and detailed records of behavioural issues are maintained to facilitate transparent communication.

A challenge highlighted by the DSO is that parents may perceive their children's behaviour differently in the home environment, which can conflict with what is

observed at school. In some cases, parents attribute their child's misbehaviour to the influence of different environments that their children frequent. Additionally, the school code of conduct may be unfamiliar or difficult for some pupils and their families to embrace fully.

The school adopts a collaborative approach, emphasising that both parents and the school work together to support the child's development and address behavioural concerns. In the rare instances where a suspension or exclusion is deemed necessary, the matter is thoroughly discussed with the parents, ensuring that decisions are made with mutual understanding and support. This partnership underscores the school's commitment to fostering a positive and cooperative relationship with families.

## 3.9.5 Discussions with Misbehaving Pupils

The DSO emphasized that discussions with pupils are integral to the school's approach to addressing misbehaviour, particularly in cases involving major infringements. These discussions aim to ensure that the pupil clearly understands the issue and that the school gains insight into the situation from the child's perspective.

Pupils are given time to calm down before engaging in discussions, creating a supportive environment for open and honest communication. During these sessions, all parties are heard, ensuring a fair and comprehensive understanding of the incident. The school prioritises identifying the root cause of the misbehaviour, going beyond surface-level actions to address underlying factors.

Additionally, the pupils had the consequences carefully explained, helping them understand the connection between their actions and the outcomes. This approach fosters reflection and accountability, aligning with the school's commitment to guiding pupils' moral and behavioural development.

## 3.9.6 Pupil Involvement in Policy-Making Stage

The school involves pupils at the classroom level by ensuring that each class is fully engaged in setting up its own class rules. As a result, pupils are well-acquainted with the rules that govern their behaviour. However, when it comes to the school-wide behaviour

policy, there has been limited pupil input during its drafting. The SLT and educators primarily developed the policy, reflecting an adult-driven approach.

The policy enforcement also necessitates adult oversight, highlighting the importance of guidance and authority in maintaining consistency and accountability. A greater emphasis on incorporating pupil perspectives into the policy development process could foster a stronger sense of ownership and engagement among students.

## 3.9.7 Recommendations

The DSO highlighted the advantages of the previous pastoral team system that was once in place at the school. This system provided a permanent presence within the school, allowing the pastoral team to build strong, trusting relationships with pupils over time. The DSO emphasized that this ongoing support was instrumental in enabling early intervention, regular check-ins, and consistent follow-ups, ensuring that pupils received timely and familiar assistance whenever needed.

Additionally, the DSO suggested that policy discussions could be incorporated into the Student Council's activities, allowing pupils to contribute their perspectives and foster a sense of ownership and engagement in the school's policymaking process.

# 3.10 School 'C' Parent Focus Group Data

**Table 3.9 Themes from the Parents Focus Group in School C**

| Themes | Sub Themes |
|---|---|
| **Reflection of School Values in Policy** | Transmission of Outstanding School Values |
| | Greater Inclusion of Parents in Primary School |
| | Fair but Non-Harsh Approach to Discipline |
| | Notable Differences Compared to State Schools |
| | Celebration of Pupils' Achievements |
| | Emphasis on Values Alongside Academics |
| **Fair Treatment** | Thorough Investigation of Each Incident |
| | Avoidance of Whole Class Punishments to Respect Well-Behaved Pupils |
| | Parental Satisfaction with the School's Approach to Fair Treatment |
| **Misbehaviour** | Hitting Others |
| | Bullying Among Pupils |
| | Any Form of Physical Violence |
| | Clarification That Fidgeting Is Not Misbehaviour |
| | Recognising That Inability to Settle Down Is Not Misbehaviour |
| | Older Pupils Picking on Younger Pupils During School Transport |
| **Factors Affecting Misbehaviour** | Personal Problems Contributing to Anger |
| | Social Challenges Within the Home Environment |
| **How Effective is the Policy** | Older Pupils Taking Care of Younger Ones |
| | Head's Active Role in Accompanying Younger Pupils to School Transport |
| | Fostering a Strong Community Feeling Among Pupils |
| | Pupils' Pride in Belonging to the School |
| | Positive Perception of the Policy by Parents in the Primary School |
| | Need for Greater Consistency Between Educators |
| | Pupils' Happiness and Willingness to Attend School |
| **Pupil Feedback from Parents** | Positive Impact of Assemblies on Pupils |
| | Pupils' Love for Being Part of the School Culture |
| | Perception of Teachers as Kind and Approachable |
| | Pupils' Understanding and Acceptance of Consequences |
| | No Widespread Perception of Unfairness |
| | Some Concerns About Consequences Being Excessive, Though Parents Supported the School |
| | Occasional Complaints About the Role of Prefects |
| | Minor Grumbling but No Significant Issues Reported |
| **Recommendations** | Ensure Consistency Among Teachers in Addressing Misbehaviour |
| | Improve Communication Between Teachers on Behavioural Issues |
| | Avoid the Use of Whole-Class Punishments |
| | Maintain Parents' Overall Satisfaction with the School |
| | Continue Fostering a Welcoming Atmosphere for Parents |
| | Continue to Encourage Parents to Feel Comfortable Visiting the School |

### 3.10.1 Reflection of School Values in the Policy

Parents highlighted that the school effectively transmits outstanding values to their children, fostering a positive and values-driven environment. Those with children in both primary and secondary schools felt more included in the primary school community, noting a stronger connection with the school's ethos at this stage.

Parents also remarked that the school was better at transmitting values than state schools, emphasising its focus on respect, kindness, and moral development. They appreciated the school's approach to discipline, describing it as fair and balanced rather than overly harsh.

Additionally, parents praised the school for celebrating pupils' achievements and ensuring that values and academics were equally prioritised, creating a holistic and supportive educational experience for their children.

### 3.10.2 Fair Treatment

Parents reported that they had never experienced any issues with the school regarding unfair treatment of their children. When concerns arose, they emphasised that the school consistently conducted thorough investigations, ensuring a fair resolution.

However, some parents expressed dissatisfaction with the practice of whole-class punishments, noting that this approach could unfairly impact pupils who had not engaged in any misbehaviour. This feedback highlights the importance of individual accountability and reinforces the school's commitment to maintaining a fair and just approach to handling behavioural issues.

### 3.10.3 Misbehaviour

Parents identified hitting others, physical violence, bullying, and older pupils picking on younger ones on school transport as clear examples of misbehaviour within the school setting. However, they emphasised that fidgeting or a child's inability to settle down should not be classified as misbehaviour. This distinction reflects an understanding of

behavioural nuances and the importance of distinguishing between disruptive actions and natural developmental behaviours.

## 3.10.4 Factors Affecting Misbehaviour

Parents identified several factors influencing pupil behaviour at school. They noted that personal problems could lead to pupils manifesting anger as a response to unresolved emotions or challenges. Additionally, parents highlighted social problems at home as a significant cause of misbehaviour, emphasising the impact of familial dynamics on pupils' behaviour within the school environment. These insights underline the importance of addressing personal and home-related issues to support positive behaviour in pupils.

## 3.10.5 How Effective is the Policy

Parents expressed strong approval of the school's ability to instil a sense of community among pupils. They highlighted their children's pride in belonging to the school, which reflects positively on the effectiveness of the behaviour policy in fostering a supportive and inclusive environment.

While there were some concerns about incidents occurring on school transport, parents appreciated measures taken to address these issues. They particularly noted the care provided by older pupils for younger ones on transport and praised a former head of school for personally accompanying younger students to ensure their safety.

Overall, the behaviour policy in the primary school was perceived very favourably by parents. However, they suggested that greater consistency among teachers in handling misbehaviour would enhance its effectiveness.

Parents unanimously agreed that their children were happy to attend school, indicating the positive atmosphere created by the policy and its alignment with the pupils' well-being and engagement.

### 3.10.6 Pupil Feedback from Parents

Parents unanimously agreed that their children enjoy being part of the school culture, with positive feedback particularly highlighting the impact of school assemblies on the pupils. Pupils reported no perception of unfairness in the school's approach and described their teachers as kind and supportive.

Parents noted that their children understood and accepted the need for consequences when misbehaviour occurred. While some pupils occasionally grumbled about the severity of certain consequences, describing them as excessive, parents emphasized that they consistently supported the school in its decisions regarding discipline.

Although some pupils expressed complaints about the school prefects, parents stated that these issues were minor. Children occasionally grumbled about disciplinary matters but without any significant or lasting concerns. Parents felt that the school fosters a positive environment, balancing accountability with fairness and kindness.

### 3.10.7 Recommendations

Parents recommended that teachers adopt greater consistency in addressing behavioural issues to ensure a unified approach. They also suggested improved communication among teachers regarding behavioural concerns and the strategies used to manage them. Additionally, parents expressed a desire for the abolishment of whole-class punishments, which they felt could unfairly affect well-behaved pupils.

Despite these suggestions, parents emphasised that they felt welcomed and comfortable visiting the school, highlighting the school's positive and inclusive atmosphere. Overall, the group expressed high levels of satisfaction with the primary sector of the school, praising its approach to fostering a supportive and collaborative environment.

### 3.11 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the findings of the research, offering a comprehensive analysis of the underlying principles, influencing factors, and theoretical integration in

the behaviour policies of three primary Church schools in the south of Malta. Through a systematic exploration of interviews with senior leadership team (SLT) members and designated safety officers (DSOs), as well as focus groups with parents, key themes and sub-themes were identified, highlighting the shared and unique approaches each school adopts in aligning its behaviour policy with Gospel values. By structuring the analysis on a school-by-school basis, this chapter has provided a detailed and comparative perspective on how these policies are conceptualised, communicated, and implemented.

The findings illuminate the complex interplay between the schools' commitment to Gospel values, their efforts to foster a respectful and inclusive environment, and the practical challenges of addressing pupil behaviour while maintaining a person-centred approach. These insights provide a foundation for the next chapter, which will engage in a deeper discussion of the findings as related to the research questions and relevant literature. The subsequent chapter, **Discussion and Conclusion**, will synthesise the key themes, draw connections to theoretical frameworks, and reflect on the implications of the study for policy and practice, while also outlining recommendations and areas for future research.

# Chapter 4 – Discussion & Conclusions

## 4.1 Introduction

This final chapter synthesises the findings of this study, critically analysing the thematic reflections within and across the three Catholic primary schools. By examining the aims of behaviour policies, parental and pupil involvement, strategies for addressing misbehaviour, and factors influencing behaviour, this chapter comprehensively explores how these elements align with theoretical frameworks and Gospel values. Additionally, it evaluates the perspectives of stakeholders—senior leadership teams (SLTs), designated safeguarding officers (DSOs), and parents—emphasising points of congruence and divergence in their views and experiences.

The findings are contextualised within the broader literature, drawing on key theories such as Rogers' (1961) humanistic approach, Dewey's (1916) participatory ideals, and Kohlberg's (1981) moral development framework. Furthermore, the chapter considers the implications of these findings for policy and practice, addressing gaps and limitations in the current behaviour management frameworks. Contributions to educational discourse are highlighted, emphasising the role of faith-based principles in fostering holistic development.

Finally, this chapter presents recommendations for enhancing behaviour policies, highlighting the potential for integrating restorative practices, strengthening stakeholder collaboration, and addressing emerging challenges such as technology misuse and cultural diversity. The conclusion reflects on the broader significance of the study, advocating for a forward-thinking approach to shaping inclusive, adaptable, and values-driven behaviour management policies. Through this synthesis, the chapter underscores the transformative potential of aligning moral, academic, and social objectives in education.

## 4.2 Discussion of Findings

## Thematic Reflections Within and Across Schools

This section discusses how the three schools converge and diverge on the main themes identified in the study: aims of behavioural policies, parental and pupil involvement, strategies for dealing with misbehaviour and factors influencing behaviour.

### 4.2.1 Aims of Behaviour Policies

The schools shared a common objective of fostering safe, inclusive, and Gospel-centred environments, but their implementation varied.

- **School A** prioritised transparency and equity, embedding fairness as a core principle in its behaviour policies. This approach, emphasised by the SLT and DSOs, reflected Groome's (1988) call for fairness and dignity as essential to Catholic education. Parents noted that clear communication of these principles strengthened trust and accountability.

- **School B** adopted a relational approach, emphasising respect, compassion, and interpersonal harmony. The school's focus on character-building and moral accountability resonated with Gospel teachings but faced occasional challenges due to inconsistencies in policy application, as highlighted by the DSO and some parents.

- **School C** relied on structured frameworks to promote respect and accountability, tying disciplinary measures to explicit rules. While this model ensured clarity, parents expressed concerns about its rigidity, particularly in cases of perceived over-punishment.

Cross-school analysis revealed that while all schools aligned their policies with Gospel values, their operational emphases differed—School A prioritised equity, School B emphasised relationships, and School C focused on structure and accountability. This variability illustrates the flexibility of Gospel principles to meet diverse contextual needs while highlighting the schools' alignment with the Maltese "National Policy on Behaviour

in Schools" (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2014), which stresses inclusivity and mutual respect.
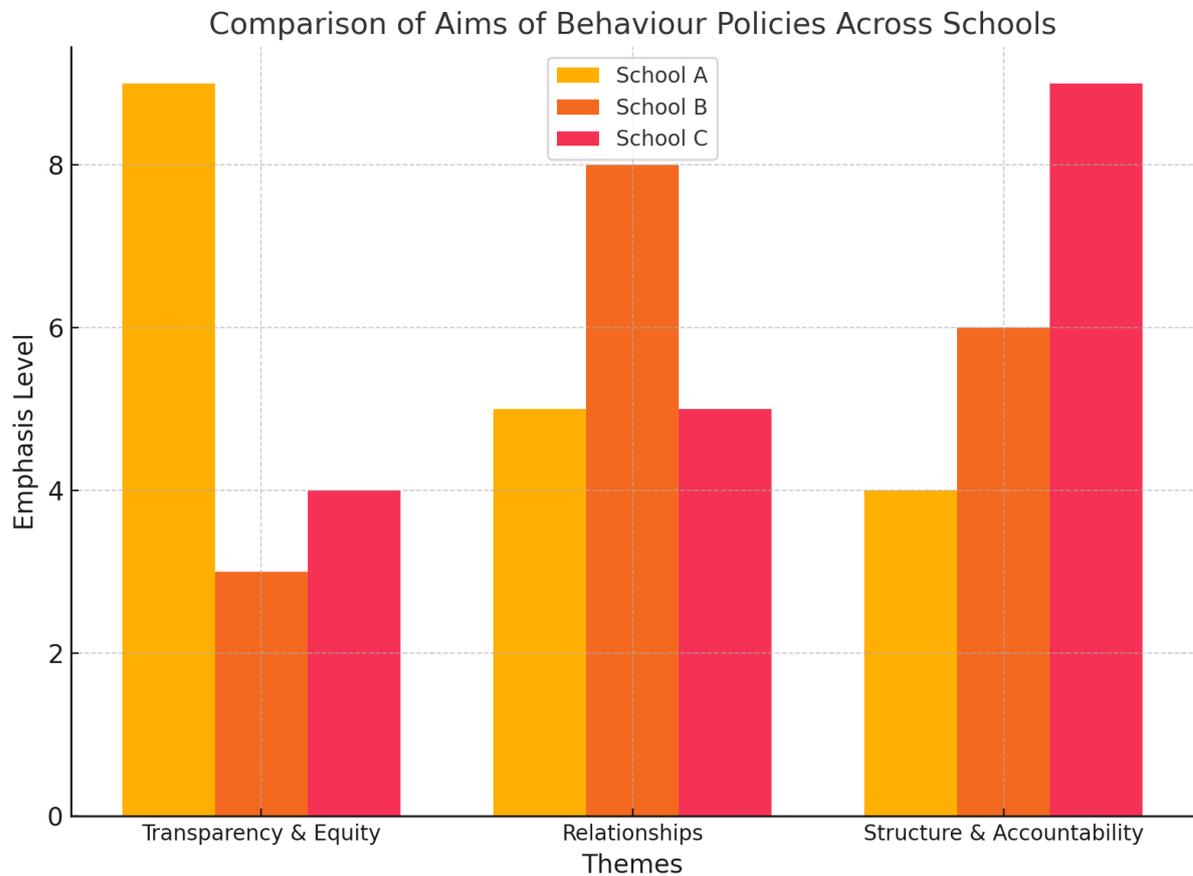


Figure 4.1: Comparative Analysis of Behavioural Policy Aims Across Schools

## 4.2.2 Parental and Pupil Involvement

Parental collaboration emerged as a key theme, though its application differed across schools.

- **School A** engaged parents through structured feedback mechanisms, including surveys and annual reviews. This collaborative approach mirrored Vygotsky's (1978) constructivist perspective that joint efforts between home and school strengthen shared values.

- **School B** maintained an open-door policy that encouraged continuous dialogue with parents. While this approach was praised for fostering trust, parents noted inconsistencies in addressing their concerns during decision-making.

- **School C** provided frequent updates on pupil behaviour but faced challenges in aligning parental understanding with behavioural expectations. Some parents indicated they were unfamiliar with the school's code of conduct, which hindered their ability to reinforce these expectations at home.

Pupil involvement was generally limited. Only **School B** actively integrated pupil input through its Student Council, reflecting Dewey's (1916) democratic ideals of shared responsibility. **Schools A and C** engaged pupils reactively in discussions about misbehaviour but did not involve them in broader policy formulation. This missed opportunity contrasts with Bezzina's (2012) argument that participation fosters a sense of community and moral agency.
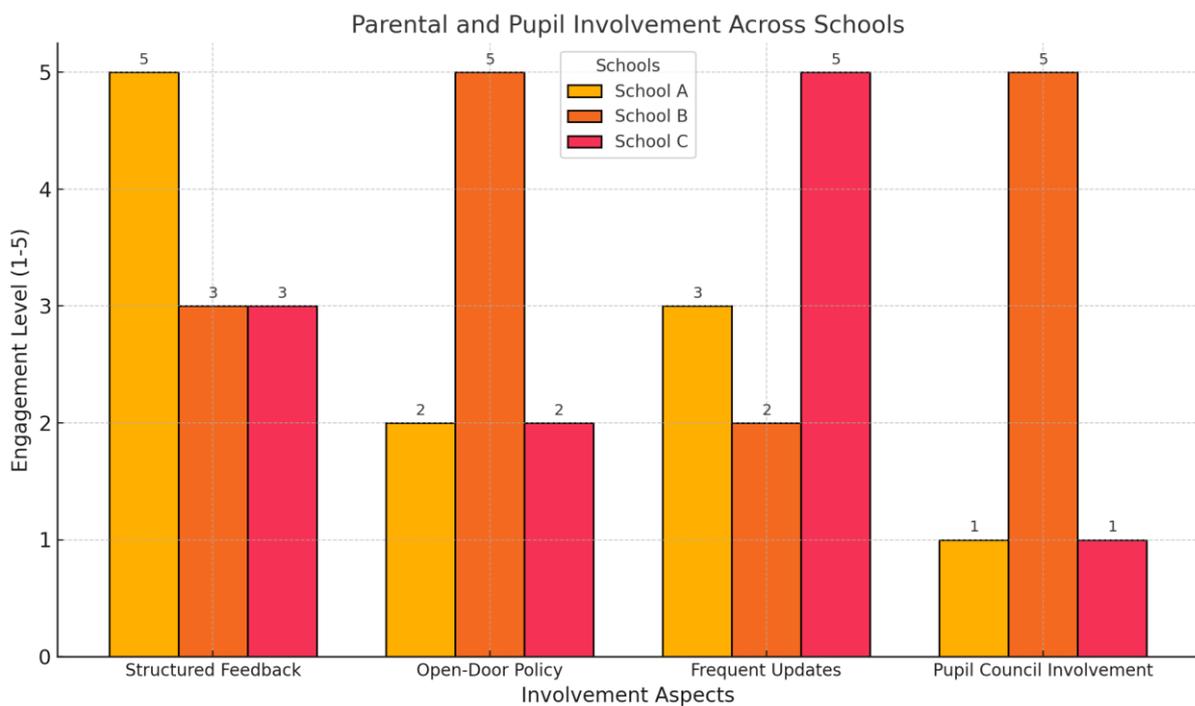


Figure 4.2: Levels of Parental and Pupil Involvement in Behaviour Policies Across Schools

## 4.2.3 Strategies for Addressing Misbehaviour

Behavioural strategies across schools reflected a mix of restorative and disciplinary approaches:

- **School A** employed restorative justice, emphasising dialogue and reconciliation to address infractions. This aligns with Rogers' (1961) humanist theory, which prioritises empathy and understanding. Parents appreciated the focus on fostering moral growth rather than punitive measures.

- **School B** balanced restorative practices with formal consequences, such as detentions, but inconsistencies in enforcement undermined the policy's perceived fairness, as noted by parents and the DSO.

- **School C** relied on structured disciplinary measures and psychosocial support for complex behavioural issues. While this approach provided clarity, some parents expressed concerns about harsh consequences in specific cases, echoing Cefai and Cooper's (2010) argument that rigid policies may not always account for individual pupil needs.
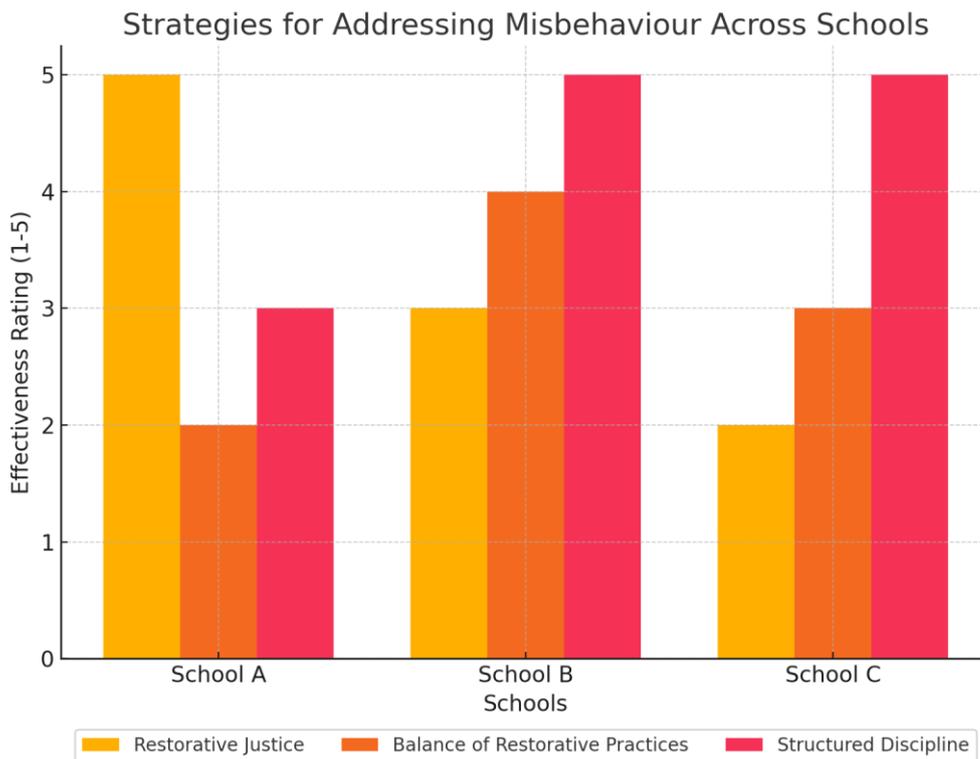


Figure 4.3: Strategies for Addressing Misbehaviour Across Schools

## 4.2.4 Factors Influencing Behaviour

External factors such as family dynamics, technology, and social influences significantly impacted pupil behaviour:

- **School A** leveraged digital tools to engage parents, fostering collaboration and addressing external challenges proactively.

- **School B** emphasised dialogue with families to mitigate external influences, though cyber misuse occasionally disrupted efforts.

- **School C** addressed racially motivated incidents through targeted psychosocial interventions, reflecting the importance of culturally responsive policies as highlighted in the Maltese "Anti-Bullying Policy Guidelines" (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2014).
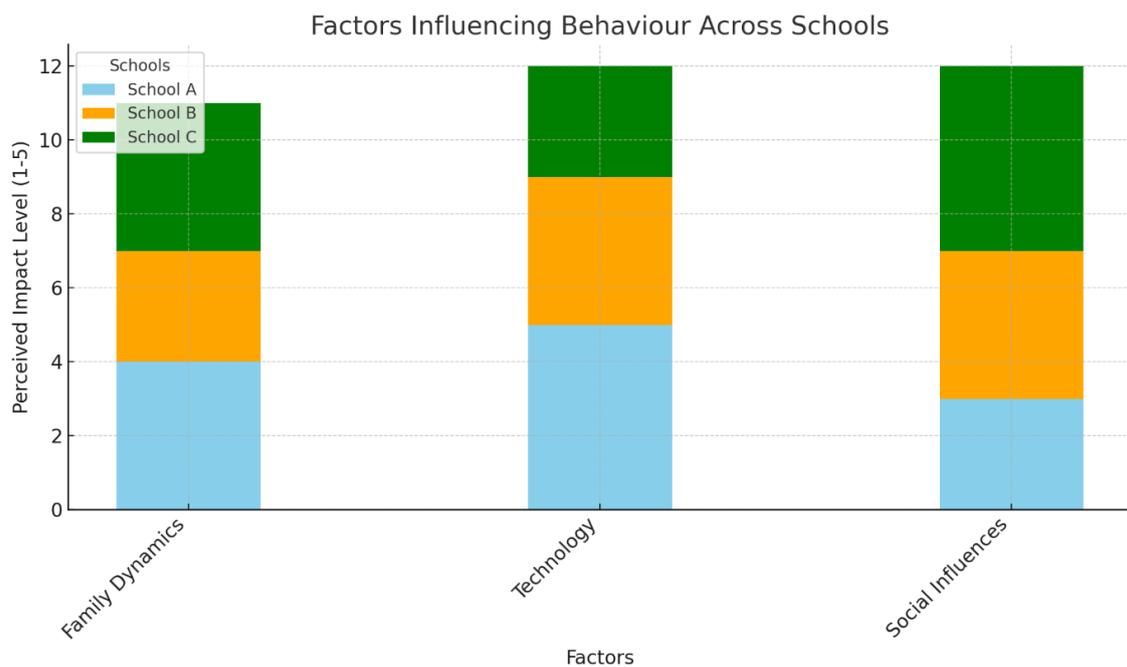


Figure 4.4: External Factors Influencing Pupil Behaviour Across Schools

## 4.3 Comparison of Perspectives Among SLTs, DSOs, and Parents

The study revealed both congruences and divergences among SLTs, DSOs, and parents:

- SLTs emphasised structural integrity and alignment with Gospel values. While SLTs in Schools A and B prioritised inclusivity and restorative practices, the SLT in School C focused on rule-based accountability.

- DSOs concentrated on operationalising behaviour policies, highlighting tailored interventions and practical challenges. In Schools A and B, DSOs stressed restorative strategies, while in School C, they emphasised structured interventions for addressing complex issues.

- Parents valued Gospel-driven principles like fairness and respect but often expressed concerns about communication gaps and inconsistent policy enforcement. Parents in Schools A and B appreciated collaborative approaches. However, they noted resistance to aligning home and school expectations, whereas parents in School C raised concerns over the rigidity of disciplinary measures.
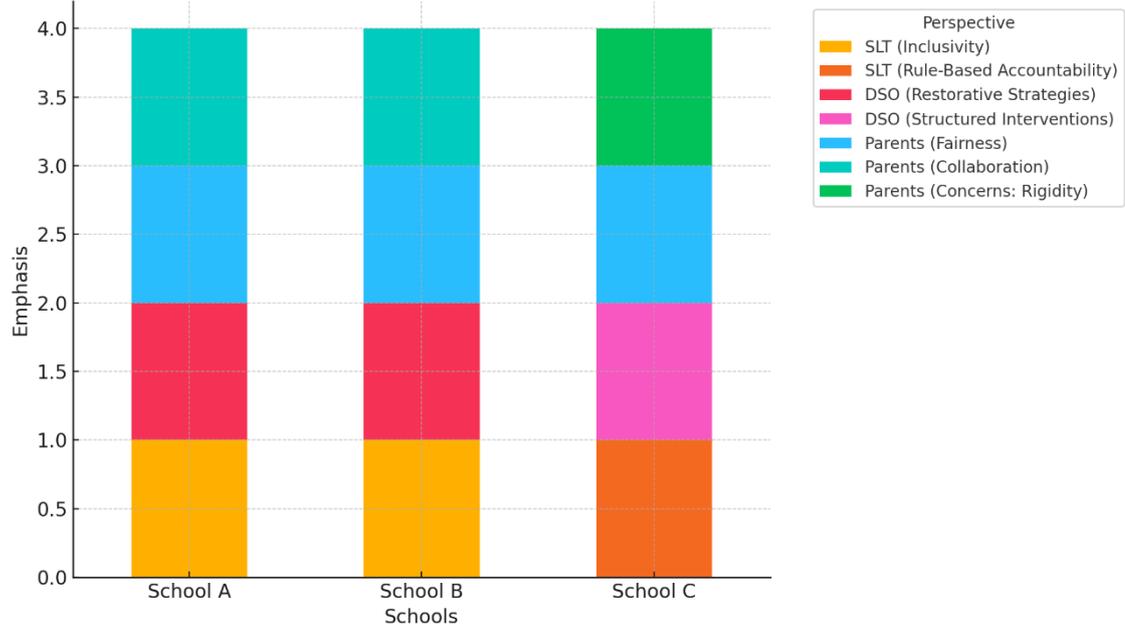
Figure 4.5: Comparison of Perspectives Among SLTs, DSOs, and Parents

# 4.4 Alignment with Theoretical Framework

The findings of this study align strongly with both the theoretical and Gospel frameworks that underpin its focus on behaviour management in Catholic primary schools. Restorative practices in Schools A and B resonate with Rogers' (1961) humanistic approach, which emphasises the importance of empathy and unconditional positive regard in fostering relationships. This approach also reflects Dewey's (1916) participatory ideals, advocating for inclusive, dialogic processes that empower stakeholders—both pupils and parents—to engage actively in behavioural discussions and solutions. The emphasis on restorative practices in these schools highlights a commitment to fostering a supportive environment that prioritises personal growth and reconciliation over punitive measures.

In contrast, School C's structured approach aligns more closely with Kohlberg's (1981) theory of moral development, which underscores the importance of accountability and ethical reasoning in guiding behaviour. By emphasising clear boundaries and consequences, School C exemplifies an approach that fosters principled moral reasoning, encouraging pupils to internalise values and understand the ethical implications of their actions. This structured approach ensures that behaviour policies

are perceived as fair and transparent, reflecting the school's commitment to fostering an accountable and respectful community.

A consistent theme across all three schools is the embedding of Gospel values—compassion, respect, and reconciliation—into their behaviour policies. These values reflect the core tenets of Pope Francis' (2013) vision for mercy-based education, which calls for schools to embody principles of love, forgiveness, and mutual respect in their interactions. The schools' focus on reconciliation and respect aligns with the broader Catholic mission to nurture holistic moral and spiritual development in pupils, integrating these values into everyday school practices and policies.

The alignment with theoretical frameworks and Gospel values underscores the adaptability of faith-based principles in shaping behaviour policies. By drawing on humanist, democratic, and moral development theories, the schools demonstrate a nuanced approach to behaviour management that is both contextually relevant and deeply rooted in their Catholic ethos. This integration highlights the transformative potential of Gospel values when operationalised within structured, inclusive, and reflective behaviour management practices.
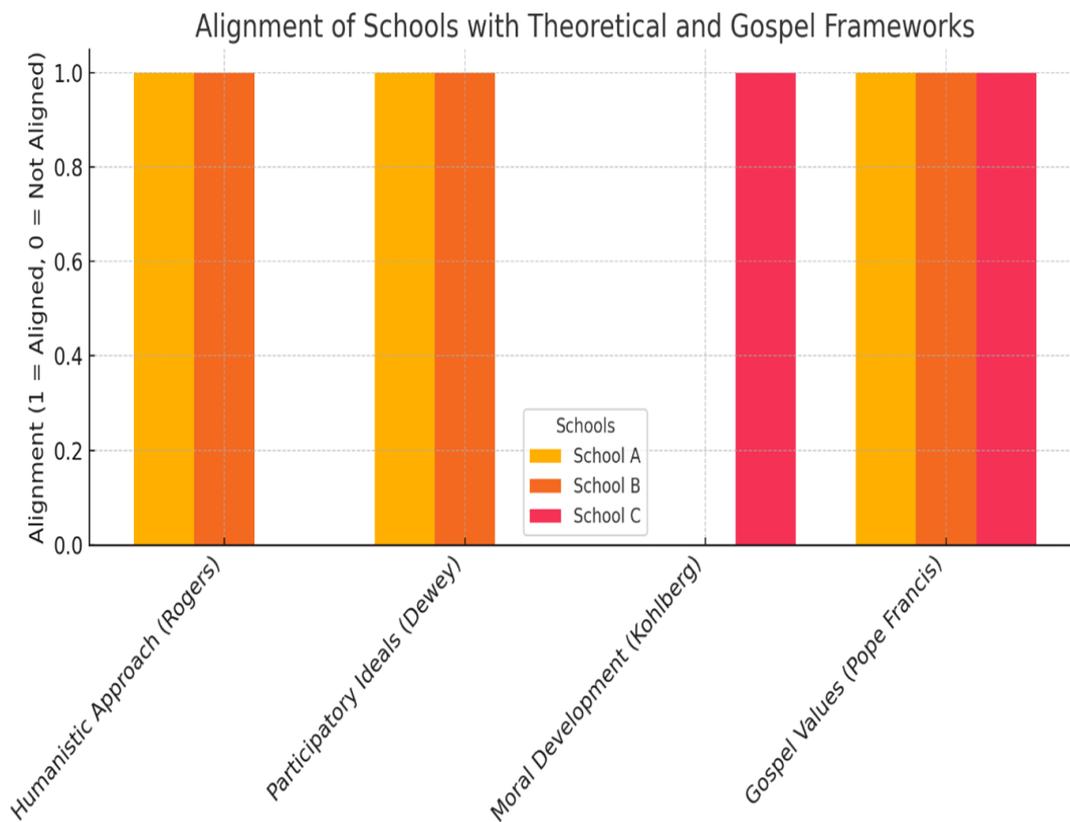
Figure 4.6: Alignment of Findings with Theoretical and Gospel Frameworks

## 4.5 Key Issues and Implications

The findings highlight a critical need for standardised and inclusive behaviour policies that align with Gospel values and address the multifaceted needs of the school community. Restorative practices, prominently implemented in Schools A and B, underscore the importance of reconciliation and personal accountability, reflecting Rogers' (1961) emphasis on empathy and unconditional positive regard. Such practices, when consistently applied, can create environments that foster trust and collaboration among pupils, staff, and parents. The integration of pupil feedback, as demonstrated in School B's use of the Student Council, illustrates the potential of participatory processes in enhancing policy effectiveness. Dewey's (1916) advocacy for participatory education supports this approach, highlighting the role of active engagement in fostering ownership and accountability.

Additionally, the findings emphasise the need to address external influences such as technology and family dynamics, which significantly impact pupil behaviour. For

instance, Schools A and C identified challenges related to unsupervised digital activities and family environments, aligning with Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, which stresses the role of external modelling in shaping behaviour. Addressing these challenges requires holistic approaches that extend beyond traditional disciplinary frameworks. Strategies such as digital literacy education, psychosocial support, and open communication with parents can foster a collaborative effort to mitigate these influences, aligning with the Maltese policy on managing behaviour in schools (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2015).
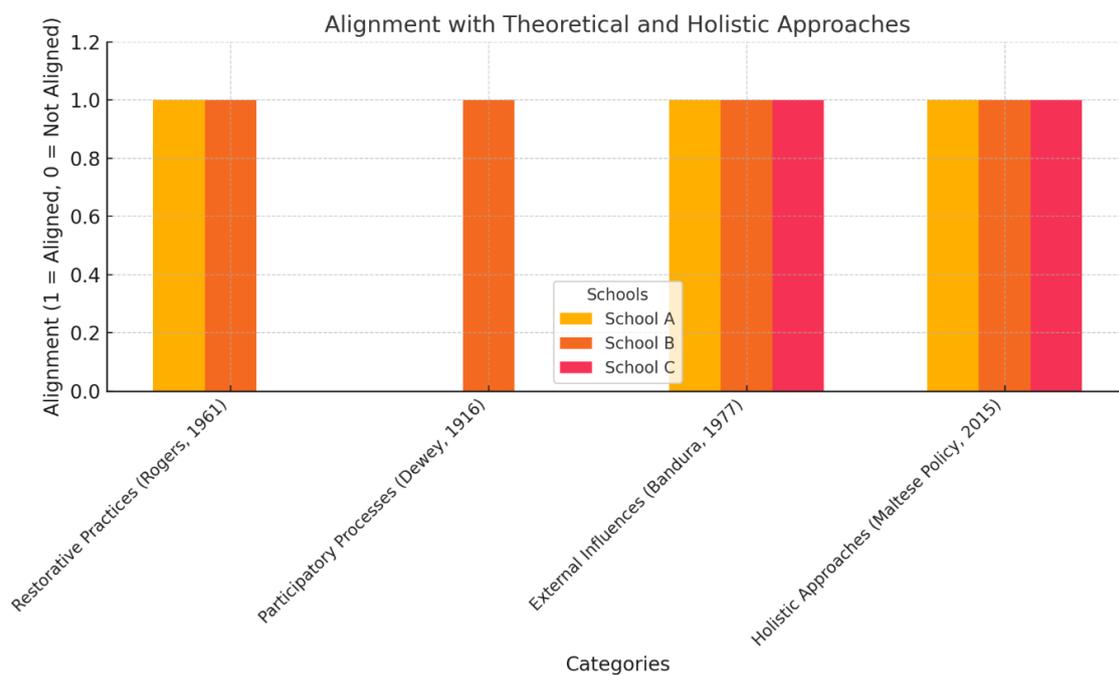


Figure 4.7 Alignment with Theoretical and Holistic Approaches

## 4.6. Broader Contributions

This study contributes to the broader discourse on behaviour management, particularly in faith-based education, by demonstrating how Gospel values can be lived in practical, meaningful ways. The integration of principles such as compassion, respect, and reconciliation into behaviour policies reinforces the dual importance of moral and academic development. Pope Francis' (2013) call for mercy-based education is

exemplified in the schools' commitment to these values, providing a model for faith-based and secular institutions seeking to embed holistic values into their policies.

Furthermore, the study offers insights into the role of restorative justice in fostering inclusive environments that prioritise growth over punishment, resonating with contemporary theories on equitable behaviour management (Cefai & Cooper, 2006). This approach not only aligns with Gospel teachings but also supports broader educational goals, such as creating safe and respectful communities conducive to learning.

## 4.7 Critical Reflection

This section discusses unexpected findings together with gaps and limitations identified in this study.

## 4.7.1 Unexpected Findings

An unexpected finding was the limited direct involvement of pupils in the policymaking process. Despite theoretical frameworks emphasising participatory education (Dewey, 1916), most schools involved pupils reactively rather than proactively, missing an opportunity to foster agency and accountability. This gap highlights a potential area for policy improvement, aligning with Vygotsky's (1978) emphasis on the co-construction of knowledge and values through collaborative engagement.

Additionally, instances of parental resistance revealed the complexities of aligning school and home values. While most parents valued the integration of Gospel principles into behaviour policies, some expressed concerns about communication gaps and perceived inconsistencies in implementation. These findings align with Epstein's (2011) emphasis on the importance of school-family partnerships in promoting shared goals and understanding.

## 4.7.2 Gaps and Limitations

The study's focus on three Catholic primary schools in Malta presents inherent limitations in generalisability. While the qualitative approach provided rich, context-specific insights, it limits the ability to extrapolate findings to broader populations. Moreover, the absence of direct pupil voices in the data collection process restricts the study's ability to capture the nuanced perspectives of a key stakeholder group. This omission contrasts with the participatory ideals advocated by Freire (1970) and underscores the need for more inclusive research designs.

Additionally, the reliance on qualitative methods, while valuable for depth, suggests the need for mixed methods approaches in future research to triangulate findings and enhance validity. Expanding the sample size to include diverse educational settings and examining longitudinal impacts of behaviour policies would further contribute to the field, addressing gaps identified in this study.

## 4.8 Contributions to Policy and Practice

This section discusses ways to improve school behaviour practices and embed Gospel values in school behaviour policies.

## 4.8.1 Improving Behaviour Practices

This study provides a robust framework for refining behaviour policies in Catholic primary schools, emphasising the use of restorative practices, structured systems for recognising positive behaviour, and enhanced training for educators. Restorative justice approaches, as demonstrated in Schools A and B, align with Rogers' (1961) humanist theory, which emphasises empathy and unconditional positive regard. These practices facilitate reconciliation and personal accountability, fostering a culture of trust and mutual respect. Such an approach aligns with the Maltese national policy on managing behaviour in schools, which underscores the importance of promoting respect and inclusivity (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2015).

Structured systems for recognising positive behaviour, such as the reward mechanisms in place at Schools A and B, further underscore the importance of consistency in behaviour management. These systems, rooted in Skinner's (1953) operant conditioning framework, utilise positive reinforcement to encourage desirable behaviours. However, the study also highlights the need to broaden recognition criteria to encompass non-academic achievements, thereby promoting inclusivity and equity, as advocated by Cefai and Cooper (2006).

## 4.8.2 Embedding Gospel Values in Behaviour Policies

The findings reveal the transformative potential of embedding Gospel principles of respect, compassion, and reconciliation into behaviour policies. By aligning disciplinary practices with these values, schools not only nurture moral growth but also create environments conducive to academic achievement. This reflects Pope Francis' (2013) vision of mercy-based education, which prioritises love and understanding over punitive measures. The restorative practices employed by the schools exemplify the operationalisation of these values, aligning with Kohlberg's (1981) theory of moral development, which emphasises ethical reasoning and accountability.

In School C, the structured approach to addressing misbehaviour further reflects Gospel values through its emphasis on justice and fairness, resonating with the principles of equity and transparency outlined in Maltese educational policies (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2015). This model of embedded ethical and moral principles provides a replicable model for other faith-based and secular schools striving to integrate values-driven behaviour management practices.

## 4.9 Strengthening Stakeholder Collaboration

The study underscores the pivotal role of stakeholder collaboration in effective behaviour management. Parent-teacher partnerships, as evidenced in all three schools, demonstrate the importance of shared ownership in policy development and implementation. Epstein's (2011) framework on school-family-community partnerships

supports this, emphasising that collaborative relationships enhance both policy effectiveness and student outcomes.

Structured feedback mechanisms and the use of digital tools, such as parent communication systems in School A, highlight innovative approaches to fostering transparency and engagement. These tools, when employed effectively, align with Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory, which underscores the importance of collaborative interactions in achieving shared goals. Furthermore, pupil engagement in behaviour policy discussions, as seen in School B's Student Council, illustrates the potential of participatory processes in fostering accountability and inclusivity, resonating with Dewey's (1916) democratic ideals.

The findings of this study underscore the transformative potential of integrating Gospel values into behaviour management while addressing practical challenges and limitations. By adopting holistic, inclusive, and participatory approaches, schools can create environments that nurture both moral and academic growth. This aligns with the broader educational discourse, which advocates for the integration of ethical principles into practical frameworks (Cefai & Cooper, 2006).

Moreover, the study reinforces the significance of stakeholder collaboration, emphasising the importance of parent-teacher partnerships and pupil engagement in fostering cohesive and effective behaviour policies. By leveraging restorative practices and structured recognition systems, schools can align their disciplinary practices with both Gospel values and contemporary educational theories.

These insights provide a foundation for refining behaviour policies in faith-based and secular educational contexts, ensuring they remain relevant and impactful in an evolving social landscape. By addressing emerging challenges such as technology misuse and fostering a culture of inclusivity, schools can lead the way in creating respectful, compassionate, and responsible communities equipped to navigate the complexities of the modern world.

## 4.10 Recommendations

This section discusses behaviour policy enhancements and practical improvements that schools might wish to consider.

## 4.10.1 Policy Enhancements

The study highlights the need for policy enhancements to ensure that behaviour management practices are both effective and aligned with Gospel values. Standardised frameworks should be established across schools to promote consistency in the implementation of behaviour policies. As emphasised by Bezzina (2013), clear and consistent guidelines foster transparency and trust among stakeholders, ensuring equitable treatment of pupils. Standardised policies can reduce discrepancies in the application and reinforce a unified approach to behaviour management.

Integrating pupil feedback into policy development is another critical recommendation. This participatory approach aligns with Dewey's (1916) democratic education theory, which advocates for the inclusion of student voices in decision-making processes. Engaging pupils in discussions about behaviour policies not only fosters a sense of ownership and accountability but also ensures that policies reflect the lived experiences of those they impact most directly. Such engagement supports the principles outlined in the Maltese *Managing Behaviour in Schools Policy* (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2015), which encourages inclusive and participatory practices in education.

## 4.10.2 Practical Improvements

The findings underscore the importance of practical improvements to enhance the effectiveness of behaviour policies. Training educators in restorative justice practices is paramount for promoting equity and accountability. Restorative approaches, as advocated by Hopkins (2004), emphasise dialogue and reconciliation, fostering an environment of mutual respect and understanding. By equipping educators with these

skills, schools can move beyond punitive measures to cultivate a culture of empathy and personal growth.

Expanding recognition systems to celebrate a broader range of achievements is another essential step. Current practices often focus narrowly on academic success, which may exclude pupils with diverse talents and strengths. By broadening the scope of recognition, schools can foster inclusivity and equity, as highlighted by Cefai and Cooper (2006), who emphasise the importance of acknowledging the holistic development of pupils. Recognising non-academic achievements can enhance pupils' sense of belonging and motivation, aligning with the principles of Gospel values.

Another practical recommendation is to leverage digital tools to improve communication with parents about behaviour policies and updates. As noted by Epstein (2011), effective communication between schools and families is critical for fostering collaborative relationships. Digital platforms can facilitate timely and transparent communication, ensuring that parents are well-informed and engaged in their children's behavioural development.

Addressing emerging issues such as technology misuse and cultural diversity requires dynamic and inclusive policy measures. The rapid integration of digital technologies and the increasing diversity in school populations present new challenges that traditional behaviour policies may not adequately address. As Suler (2016) suggests, the psychological implications of digital interactions necessitate comprehensive strategies to promote digital literacy and responsible online behaviour. Similarly, fostering cultural inclusivity aligns with the principles of equity and respect embedded in Gospel values and Maltese educational policies (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2014).

## 4.11 Future Research

Future research could prioritise longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of Gospel-centred behaviour policies on pupil development. Such studies could provide valuable insights into how these policies influence moral, social, and academic outcomes over time. Longitudinal approaches align with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological

systems theory, which emphasises the dynamic interplay between individuals and their environments across life stages.

Another critical avenue is broadening research to include diverse educational contexts, such as secondary schools and multicultural settings. The current study's focus on primary schools in Malta limits its generalisability. Expanding the scope to include various educational levels and socio-cultural contexts could enhance understanding and provide more comprehensive insights into the application of Gospel values in behaviour management.

Exploring the role of technology, including AI and social media, in shaping behavioural outcomes appears to be another pressing area for investigation. As digital technologies increasingly influence pupils' lives, understanding their impact on behaviour and integrating this knowledge into behaviour management strategies is becoming essential. This aligns with Freire's (1970) concept of critical consciousness, encouraging pupils to navigate digital landscapes ethically and responsibly.

# Conclusion

This study has critically examined the role of behaviour policies in Catholic primary schools, exploring their alignment with Gospel values, theoretical frameworks, and practical applications. By synthesising key findings, it underscores the potential of faith-based education to nurture moral and academic development simultaneously. The thematic consistencies across schools revealed a shared commitment to compassion, respect, and accountability, core principles of Gospel teachings (Pope Francis, 2013). Yet, divergences in implementation and stakeholder engagement highlight the complexities and challenges inherent in operationalising these values.

The findings reaffirm the importance of transparent, inclusive, and dynamic behaviour policies. Aligning with Dewey's (1916) democratic ideals and Rogers' (1961) emphasis on empathy, the study illustrates the value of restorative practices and participatory decision-making in fostering cohesive school environments. However, gaps in consistent policy application, limited pupil involvement, and occasional resistance from parents

emphasise the need for more collaborative and adaptable frameworks. These challenges are not unique to faith-based schools; they resonate with broader discussions in educational research, including the importance of holistic approaches that integrate moral, social, and academic growth (Bezzina, 2013; Cefai & Cooper, 2006).

Reflecting on the broader significance, this research contributes to the discourse on behaviour management in education by offering actionable insights into integrating ethical and moral values within practical frameworks. The embedding of Gospel principles, such as compassion, forgiveness, and accountability, provides a model that can benefit both faith-based and secular educational contexts. By addressing external influences, such as technology and family dynamics, the study highlights the need for schools to remain responsive to societal changes (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2014, 2015).

The findings emphasise the transformative potential of collaboration for educators, parents, and policymakers. Consistent with Epstein's (2011) theory of school-family-community partnerships, the study advocates for stronger engagement among stakeholders to ensure shared ownership of behaviour policies. Furthermore, the limited involvement of pupils in policymaking underscores the importance of adopting Dewey's (1916) participatory approach to empower students as active contributors to their learning environments.

Looking to the future, this study calls for a forward-thinking approach to shaping behaviour policies in schools. Addressing emerging challenges, such as technology misuse and cultural diversity, requires innovative and adaptive strategies that align with Gospel values while remaining relevant to contemporary contexts. By embracing stakeholder collaboration, fostering inclusivity, and leveraging restorative practices, schools could create environments that continue to prepare pupils to navigate a complex and diverse world with respect and compassion.

In conclusion, the findings of this study might offer a pathway for refining behaviour management practices in schools. Faith-based education, with its deep-rooted moral and ethical foundations, has the potential to lead transformative changes in educational practice. By addressing identified gaps and adopting the recommendations presented, schools might continue to embed Gospel values effectively, cultivating respectful,

compassionate, and accountable individuals ready to contribute positively to society. Through this holistic approach, Catholic schools can continue to serve as beacons of moral and academic excellence in an ever-evolving educational landscape.

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# Appendix 1 – Information and Consent SLT

6<sup>th</sup> June 2023


**Information about the study**


My name is Angele Calleja and I am a student at the University of Malta, reading for a Masters in Catholic School Leadership. I am presently conducting research as part of my dissertation titled A School Behaviour Policy that Bears Witness to Gospel Values; this is being supervised by Rev. Dr Alan Scerri (ascer01@um.edu.mt). Through my dissertation I intend to gather information as to how some primary church schools today are addressing pupil behaviour. This could serve as a guideline to other schools who wish to evaluate their policy in the light of today's challenges faced by school leaders.

**Your Participation**

Any data collected from this research will be used solely for purposes of this study.

Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to participate in an interview with other members of the School Leadership Team. The interview will be held at the school during a time slot which will be communicated at a later stage. The duration of the interview will be of not more than one hour.

Data collected will be gathered through use of a laptop and then it will be transcribed.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary; in other words, you are free to accept or refuse to participate, without needing to give a reason.

You are also free to withdraw from the study at any time, without needing to provide any explanation and without any negative repercussions for you. Should you choose to withdraw, any data collected from you will be erased as long as this is technically possible (for example, before it is anonymised or published.)

If you choose to participate, please note that there are no direct benefits to you.

Your participation does not entail any known or anticipated risks.

**Data Management**

The data generated will be treated confidentially and all the participants and school names will be pseudonymised. The personal data and the research data will be stored digitally for the duration of the research and will be accessed only by myself and my supervisor. All the data collected will be kept on an encrypted hard drive.

Please note also that, as a participant, you have the right under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and national legislation to access, rectify and where applicable ask for the data concerning you to be erased.

All data collected will be destroyed once the research is completed.

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Participant's consent

☐       I hereby declare to have read the information about the nature of the study, my involvement and data management.

☐       I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study and my questions have been satisfactorily answered.

☐       I declare that I am 18 years or older.

☐       I understand that should I have any further queries, I can contact Angele Calleja (angele.b.calleja.21@um.edu.mt) or Rev. Fr Dr Alan Scerri (ascer01@um.edu.mt)

☐       I agree to participate in this research study.


_____                    _____


Participant's name (in block)                                    Researcher's name (in block)


_____                    _____


Participant' signature                                                Researcher's signature


_____


Date

# Appendix 2 – Information and Consent Designated Safety Officer

6th June 2023

**Information about the study**

My name is Angele Calleja and I am a student at the University of Malta, reading for a Masters in Catholic School Leadership. I am presently conducting research as part of my dissertation titled A School Behaviour Policy that Bears Witness to Gospel Values; this is being supervised by Rev. Dr Alan Scerri (ascer01@um.edu.mt). Through my dissertation I intend to gather information as to how some primary church schools today are addressing pupil behaviour. This could serve as a guideline to other schools who wish to evaluate their policy in the light of today's challenges faced by school leaders.

**Your Participation**

Any data collected from this research will be used solely for purposes of this study.

Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to participate in an interview . The interview will be held at the school during a time slot which will be communicated at a later stage. The duration of the interview will be of not more than one hour.

Data collected will be gathered through use of a laptop and then it will be transcribed.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary; in other words, you are free to accept or refuse to participate, without needing to give a reason.

You are also free to withdraw from the study at any time, without needing to provide any explanation and without any negative repercussions for you. Should you choose to withdraw, any data collected from you will be erased as long as this is technically possible (for example, before it is anonymised or published.)

If you choose to participate, please note that there are no direct benefits to you.

Your participation does not entail any known or anticipated risks.

**Data Management**

The data generated will be treated confidentially and all the participants and school names will be pseudonymised. The personal data and the research data will be stored digitally for the duration of the research and will be accessed only by myself and my supervisor. All the  data collected will be kept on an encrypted hard drive.

Please note also that, as a participant, you have the right under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and national legislation to access, rectify and where applicable ask for the data concerning you to be erased.

All data collected will be destroyed once the research is completed.

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Participant's consent

☐	I hereby declare to have read the information about the nature of the study, my involvement and data management.

☐       I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study and my questions have been satisfactorily answered.

☐       I declare that I am 18 years or older.

☐       I understand that should I have any further queries, I can contact Angele Calleja (angele.b.calleja.21@um.edu.mt) or Rev. Fr Dr Alan Scerri (ascer01@um.edu.mt)

☐       I agree to participate in this research study.


_____         _____

Participant's name (in block)                    Researcher's name (in block)


_____         _____

Participant' signature                              Researcher's signature


_____

Date

# Appendix 3 - Information and Consent Parents

6th June 2023

**Information about the study**

My name is Angele Calleja and I am a student at the University of Malta, reading for a Masters in Catholic School Leadership. I am presently conducting research as part of my dissertation titled A School Behaviour Policy that Bears Witness to Gospel Values; this is being supervised by Rev. Dr Alan Scerri (ascer01@um.edu.mt). Through my dissertation I intend to gather information as to how some primary church schools today are addressing pupil behaviour. This could serve as a guideline to other schools who wish to evaluate their policy in the light of today's challenges faced by school leaders.

**Your Participation**

Any data collected from this research will be used solely for purposes of this study.

Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to participate in a focus group. This will be held at the school during a time slot which will be communicated at a later stage. The duration will be of not more than one hour.

Data collected will be gathered through use of a laptop and then it will be transcribed.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary; in other words, you are free to accept or refuse to participate, without needing to give a reason.

You are also free to withdraw from the study at any time, without needing to provide any explanation and without any negative repercussions for you. Should you choose to withdraw, any data collected from you will be erased as long as this is technically possible (for example, before it is anonymised or published.)

If you choose to participate, please note that there are no direct benefits to you.

Your participation does not entail any known or anticipated risks.

**Data Management**

The data generated will be treated confidentially and all the participants and school names will be pseudonymised. The personal data and the research data will be stored digitally for the duration of the research and will be accessed only by myself and my supervisor. All the data collected will be kept on an encrypted hard drive.

Please note also that, as a participant, you have the right under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and national legislation to access, rectify and where applicable ask for the data concerning you to be erased.

All data collected will be destroyed once the research is completed.

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Participant's consent

☐ I hereby declare to have read the information about the nature of the study, my involvement and data management.

☐ I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study and my questions have been satisfactorily answered.

☐ I declare that I am 18 years or older.

☐ I understand that should I have any further queries, I can contact Angele Calleja (angele.b.calleja.21¬¬¬@um.edu.mt) or Rev. Fr Dr Alan Scerri (ascer01@um.edu.mt)

☐ I agree to participate in this research study.


_____            _____

Participant's name (in block)                      Researcher's name (in block)


_____            _____

Participant' signature                             Researcher's signature


_____

Date

# Appendix 4 - FREC Approval Email

Carl-Mario Sultana <carl.m.sultana@um.edu.mt>

30 Nov 2023, 09:47

to frec.theology, me, Alan, Christabel

Dear Angele,

I am writing to you as Chairperson of FREC and in the absence of Ms Christabel Cassar who is on leave at the moment. In order not to create more disturbances to your research, I am granting approval on behalf of FREC after we saw that all the necessary documentation is present. The following is the result of the review of your application:

Approved by F/REC

The Faculty Research Ethics Committee has reviewed your application and has determined that your research is in conformity with the University of Malta's Research Code of Practice. You may therefore proceed with your research.

# Appendix 5 – SLT Interview Questions

1.What does your behaviour policy aim to achieve?

2, What school values are reflected in the policy?

3.How are parents involved in the implementation of the policy?

4.Are students involved in discussions about their behaviour?

5.Do you need further support to address challenging behaviour? What kind?

6. Are students involved in the policy document? How?

# Appendix 6 – Designated Safety Officer Interview Questions

1.What kind of discipline does the school advocate?

2.Do you think the causes of misbehaviour issues are effectively targeted?

3.What strategies are used with misbehaving pupils?

4.How are parents involved and how supportive of the policy are they?

5.Are pupils given the opportunity to discuss their misbehaviour and the way forward?

6. Are students involved in discussions about the policy?

# Appendix 7 – Parents Focus Group Interview Questions

1.Do you think the school values are reflected in the behaviour policy? How?

2. Do you think students are fairly treated? Why?

3.What do you consider misbehaviour at school?

4.What factors do you think affect student misbehaviour?

5.Do you think the policy is effective and can it be improved?

6.What feedback do you have from your children regarding the policy?

# Appendix 8 – SfCE Research Permit

**SECRETARIAT FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION**

16, The Mall, Floriana FRN1472, Malta
Tel. +356 27790060
www.csm.edu.mt

The Head

Ms Marjo Abela – Director – Student Services
Secretariat for Catholic Education

27th November 2023

Ms Angele Calleja, currently reading for a Masters Degree in Catholic School Leadership at the University of Malta, requests permission to conduct two interviews: one with the Senior Leadership Team and another one with the Anti-bullying Team. Furthermore, Ms Calleja will be conducting a focus group with parents of students at the above mentioned schools.

The Secretariat for Catholic Education finds no objection for Ms Angele Calleja, to carry out the stated exercises subject to adhering to the policies and directives of the schools concerned.

Dr Ian Mifsud
Director General
Secretariat for Catholic Education

# Appendix 9 – Information Letter for Head of School

The Head Teacher

25th March 2023

**Request for permission to conduct research in your school**

Dear Head Teacher,

My name is Angele Calleja and I am a student at the University of Malta, presently reading for a Masters in Catholic School Leadership. I am presently conducting a research study for my dissertation titled A School Behaviour Policy that Bears Witness to Gospel Values; this is being supervised by Rev. Dr Alan Scerri (ascer01@um.edu.mt). Through my dissertation I intend to gather information as to how some primary church schools today are addressing pupil behaviour. This could serve as a guideline to other schools who wish to evaluate their policy in the light of today's challenges faced by school leaders.

I am hereby seeking your permission to conduct the research in your Senior School. My data collection methods will involve one focus group and two interviews. The focus group will be held with parents of pupils from the school. The focus group will be held at the school and will last for not more than one hour. I would also like to hold two interviews: one with the Senior Leadership Team and another one with the school counsellor or prefect of discipline. The interviews will not take longer than one hour.

Participation will be entirely voluntary and participants will be free to withdraw at any point, without any repercussions. Data will be collected by means of a laptop and tablet

and once transcibed, all the participants and school names will be pseudonymised. <u>All the  data collected will be kept on an encrypted hard drive.</u> Once the dissertation is completed, all the data will be destroyed. Only my supervisor and I will have access to this data.

Should you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor; both our contact details are provided below.

Thank you for your kind consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Angele Calleja

295668M

Angele Calleja                                                          Rev. Dr Alan Scerri

angele.b.calleja.21@um.edu.mt                            ascer01@um.edu.mt