

THE SILENT AUTHORITY

LAWFUL LEARNER DISCIPLINE

AUTHORITY & IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

South African public-school framework | Verified September 2026

This version is deliberately structured consequence-by-consequence. For every measure it separates: what the measure is, what the official source supports, what an individual teacher may do, what SMT/principal may do, what requires the SGB/HOD or another formal body, how the school should implement it, and the exact policy pages to verify.

IMPORTANT TERMINOLOGY: Do not use 'expulsion from class'. Expulsion means removal from the school and, in a public school, is a statutory HOD decision. For class-level exclusion use 'temporary removal from class' or 'suspension from class' only where the school's Code and applicable provincial procedure authorise it.

1. The authority ladder - who actually has power?

LEVEL	ROLE	CORE POSITION
1	Teacher / educator	May correct behaviour and apply classroom-level corrective measures only within the school's Code of Conduct, adopted discipline system and any valid delegation. Serious misconduct must be referred upward.
2	SMT / principal	Coordinates professional management and implementation of school policy. The principal assists the SGB with learner discipline and may exercise powers assigned by legislation, provincial rules or the school's Code. 'SMT' as a group has no unlimited standalone punishment power.
3	Disciplinary committee / SGB	The SGB adopts the Code of Conduct and holds statutory powers for public-school suspension. School disciplinary structures may impose sanctions authorised by the Code and procedure.
4	Head of Department (provincial)	Only the HOD may expel a learner from a public school after the statutory disciplinary process.

Current statutory anchor: SASA s 8 requires the governing body to adopt the learner Code of Conduct, and s 8(5) requires due process that is age-appropriate, fair and reasonable. SASA s 9 governs suspension/expulsion. SACE regulates educator ethics; it is not the primary source of learner-sanction powers.

2. Consequence-by-consequence authority guide

A. Verbal warning / reprimand

WHAT IT IS

A direct, proportionate correction telling the learner what conduct is unacceptable and what must change.

WHAT THE POLICY/LAW SUPPORTS

The 1998 national Code-of-Conduct Guidelines expressly list a verbal warning or written reprimand by an educator or principal as a minor-offence corrective measure. The DBE Example Code also uses verbal warnings and graded discipline.

TEACHER: WHAT YOU MAY DO

A teacher may give a verbal warning/reprimand for classroom misconduct where it is consistent with the school's Code and classroom rules. Keep it factual, private where practicable, and non-humiliating.

SMT / PRINCIPAL: WHAT THEY MAY DO	SMT/principal may reinforce the warning, record it, move the matter to a higher intervention, and ensure consistency with the Code.
SGB / HOD / FORMAL BODY	The SGB's role is to ensure the Code contains a fair graded disciplinary structure. No HOD involvement is normally required for an ordinary warning.
HOW A SCHOOL SHOULD IMPLEMENT IT	Define when a verbal warning becomes a written warning; record repeat misconduct; identify who issues formal written/final warnings; give fair notice of escalation.
WHERE TO VERIFY IT	GN 776 of 1998: PDF p.10, para 10.1(a). DBE Example Code: PDF pp.16-18.

B. Written warning / final written warning

WHAT IT IS	A documented disciplinary warning used when conduct is more serious or repeats.
WHAT THE POLICY/LAW SUPPORTS	The DBE Example Code uses written and final written warnings as part of graded disciplinary procedures. National guidelines also permit written reprimands for minor offences.
TEACHER: WHAT YOU MAY DO	A teacher may issue a written warning only if the school's Code/disciplinary system assigns that function to the teacher. Otherwise the teacher records and refers.
SMT / PRINCIPAL: WHAT THEY MAY DO	Grade head/HOD/principal may issue or administer formal warnings where the Code allocates that role and must keep records and communicate with parents where required.
SGB / HOD / FORMAL BODY	A disciplinary committee may impose warnings as part of a formal hearing if authorised by the Code. The SGB should define warning validity, recurrence and appeal/review procedures.
HOW A SCHOOL SHOULD IMPLEMENT IT	Use a standard form; state the factual conduct, rule breached, date, required correction, consequence of recurrence, signature/refusal-to-sign procedure and retention period.
WHERE TO VERIFY IT	DBE Example Code: PDF p.16 (graded warning sequence), pp.17-18 (interventions), p.33 onward (warning templates). GN 776: PDF p.10.

C. Detention

WHAT IT IS	A supervised period in which a learner loses discretionary/free time and completes constructive work or another authorised corrective activity.
WHAT THE POLICY/LAW SUPPORTS	Detention is not prohibited nationally. DBE's Example Code repeatedly lists detention as a corrective sanction. The older DBE 'Alternatives to Corporal Punishment' booklet lists detention among classroom disciplinary actions by a class educator.
TEACHER: WHAT YOU MAY DO	A teacher should impose detention only where the school's Code expressly provides for it and the teacher has been authorised to use it. The existence of detention in a DBE exemplar is not, by itself, a blanket power for every teacher.
SMT / PRINCIPAL: WHAT THEY MAY DO	SMT/principal may run or supervise the school's detention system, allocate detention under the Code, deal with missed detention and ensure transport/supervision arrangements.
SGB / HOD / FORMAL BODY	The SGB should authorise detention in the Code and define the procedure. Formal committees may impose it where the Code allows.
HOW A SCHOOL SHOULD IMPLEMENT IT	Specify: which offences; who may assign it; maximum duration; when it occurs; supervision; constructive activity; parent notification where necessary; transport/safety arrangements; missed-detention escalation; recordkeeping. Never use detention to deny toilets, food, medical care or safety.
WHERE TO VERIFY IT	DBE Example Code: PDF p.29 (late-coming/truancy examples), pp.30-32 (offence/sanction matrix). DBE Alternatives to Corporal Punishment: PDF p.24.
TSA CAUTION	The older Alternatives booklet is guidance, not current legislation. Use it together with the current SASA and the school's current Code.

D. Community service / supervised corrective school work

WHAT IT IS	Supervised, age-appropriate work intended to repair harm, contribute to the school community or reinforce responsibility.
WHAT THE POLICY/LAW SUPPORTS	GN 776 expressly supports supervised school work that contributes to learner progress or improvement of the school environment, provided parents are informed timeously and the child's security is assured. DBE's Example Code repeatedly lists community service. The Alternatives booklet also identifies community service

TEACHER: WHAT YOU MAY DO	as a disciplinary measure. A teacher may use a corrective task only where the Code and school procedure authorise the teacher to do so. The safest teacher-level form is a short, supervised, non-degrading task directly connected to restoring the classroom/school environment. Do not invent compulsory labour outside the Code.
SMT / PRINCIPAL: WHAT THEY MAY DO	SMT/principal may assign or coordinate school-authorised community-service programmes, supervision and parent communication, subject to the Code and applicable provincial requirements.
SGB / HOD / FORMAL BODY	The SGB should define community service in the Code: authorised tasks, age limits, duration, supervision, safety exclusions, parent notice, refusal procedure and recordkeeping. If provincial permission is required for a particular form of service, obtain it.
HOW A SCHOOL SHOULD IMPLEMENT IT	Use only safe, constructive, non-humiliating tasks. Examples: supervised organisation of books/resources, restoring an area the learner disrupted, or another Code-approved school-improvement task. Never use hazardous cleaning, dangerous tools, excessive physical exertion or degrading work.
WHERE TO VERIFY IT	GN 776: PDF p.10, para 10.1(b)-(c). DBE Example Code: PDF pp.30-32. DBE Alternatives to Corporal Punishment: PDF p.16 and pp.24-25.
TSA CAUTION	The Alternatives booklet contains older wording indicating provincial permission for some community-service use. Because provincial requirements differ, TSA should not tell a teacher that community service is automatically available everywhere.

E. Constructive additional work / corrective academic task

WHAT IT IS	Extra work that is educational and connected to the misconduct rather than physical punishment.
WHAT THE POLICY/LAW SUPPORTS	DBE's Alternatives to Corporal Punishment lists additional constructive work, possibly related to the misconduct, among classroom actions by a class educator. GN 776 also supports supervised school work contributing to learner progress.
TEACHER: WHAT YOU MAY DO	A teacher may assign reasonable, educationally constructive work when authorised by the Code/classroom rules. It must not be excessive, degrading or designed to inflict pain/discomfort.
SMT / PRINCIPAL: WHAT THEY MAY DO	SMT may standardise the measure across departments and intervene if it becomes disproportionate or conflicts with assessment policy.
SGB / HOD / FORMAL BODY	The SGB should ensure the Code distinguishes corrective work from formal academic assessment and prevents arbitrary punitive workloads.
HOW A SCHOOL SHOULD IMPLEMENT IT	Make the task relevant and finite; do not manipulate formal marks unless assessment policy permits it; record repeated use and escalate if behaviour persists.
WHERE TO VERIFY IT	DBE Alternatives to Corporal Punishment: PDF p.24. GN 776: PDF p.10.

F. Restitution / repair / replacement / agreed compensation

WHAT IT IS	A restorative consequence aimed at putting right damage or loss caused by the learner.
WHAT THE POLICY/LAW SUPPORTS	GN 776 lists tasks assisting the offended person, agreed affordable compensation and replacement of damaged property. DBE's Example Code includes repair/replacement for property-related misconduct.
TEACHER: WHAT YOU MAY DO	A teacher may require the learner to stop the conduct, preserve evidence, record damage and initiate the school's restitution process. A teacher should not personally impose or collect arbitrary money.
SMT / PRINCIPAL: WHAT THEY MAY DO	SMT/principal may investigate, contact parents, arrange repair/replacement and administer the school's authorised process.
SGB / HOD / FORMAL BODY	The SGB/disciplinary body may impose restorative sanctions within the Code. Any compensation should be agreed/authorised and procedurally fair.
HOW A SCHOOL SHOULD IMPLEMENT IT	Record what was damaged, evidence, estimated loss, learner/parent response, agreement and completion. Distinguish accidental damage from deliberate misconduct.
WHERE TO VERIFY IT	GN 776: PDF p.10, para 10.1(c)-(e). DBE Example Code: PDF pp.28, 30 and 32.

G. Loss or restriction of a school privilege / suspension from some activities

WHAT IT IS	Temporary restriction of a genuine privilege or optional activity as a consequence.
WHAT THE POLICY/LAW	GN 776 expressly lists suspension from some school activities, such as sport or cultural activities, as a

SUPPORTS	possible minor-offence corrective measure. The DBE Example Code also uses activity-related sanctions.
TEACHER: WHAT YOU MAY DO	A teacher may only restrict a privilege the teacher is authorised to control. A teacher should not exclude a learner from ordinary curriculum access, meals, toilets, safety or other basic rights.
SMT / PRINCIPAL: WHAT THEY MAY DO	SMT/principal may administer activity restrictions under the Code and coordinate with activity organisers and parents.
SGB / HOD / FORMAL BODY	The SGB should define which activities are privileges, who may restrict participation, duration, proportionality and exceptions.
HOW A SCHOOL SHOULD IMPLEMENT IT	Make the restriction relevant, time-limited and recorded. Do not use an activity restriction if it would unlawfully deny the learner basic education or another protected entitlement.
WHERE TO VERIFY IT	GN 776: PDF p.10, para 10.1(f). DBE Example Code: PDF p.12 and sanction tables.

H. Temporary removal from class / 'suspension from class'

WHAT IT IS	A structured temporary placement away from the normal classroom while supervision and continued learning are maintained. It is not the same as expulsion.
WHAT THE POLICY/LAW SUPPORTS	The DBE Example Code lists 'suspension from class/School' for some serious or ongoing disruptive conduct. Gauteng's serious-misconduct regulations define suspension broadly enough to include not attending a class. However, current SASA reserves formal public-school suspension powers to the governing body.
TEACHER: WHAT YOU MAY DO	A teacher may take immediate classroom-management steps such as ending an argument, changing a seating/working position where reasonable, and requesting authorised removal/support. A teacher should not invent an unsupervised corridor exclusion or personally declare a formal suspension from class unless the school's Code and lawful delegation clearly permit it.
SMT / PRINCIPAL: WHAT THEY MAY DO	SMT/principal may operate an authorised removal room/support process, ensure supervision, schoolwork, documentation and reintegration. For serious misconduct, the principal should trigger the formal process required by provincial rules and the Code.
SGB / HOD / FORMAL BODY	Where the measure amounts to formal suspension under SASA/provincial law, the SGB/formal disciplinary authority must act within its statutory powers. Expulsion remains an HOD decision.
HOW A SCHOOL SHOULD IMPLEMENT IT	The Code should state: triggers, who authorises removal, destination, supervision, continuation of work, maximum period, parent notice, record, reintegration, and when the matter becomes formal suspension. Never simply send a learner out with no supervision plan.
WHERE TO VERIFY IT	DBE Example Code: PDF p.30 (ongoing disruptive behaviour; suspension from class/School) and p.31. Gauteng Misconduct Regulations: definition of 'suspension' and serious-misconduct procedure. Current SASA: s.9, PDF pp.21-24.
TSA CAUTION	Use the phrase 'temporary removal from class' for ordinary school-managed removal. Reserve 'suspension' for the meaning assigned by the Code/statute/provincial regulation.

I. Parent / guardian contact and formal parent meeting

WHAT IT IS	A structured intervention that brings the parent into the corrective process and records agreed actions.
WHAT THE POLICY/LAW SUPPORTS	DBE's Example Code repeatedly uses parent contact as part of discipline and states the school will contact parents when learner behaviour becomes a concern. SACE ethics require educators, where appropriate, to recognise parents as partners and keep them adequately informed.
TEACHER: WHAT YOU MAY DO	A teacher may contact a parent through approved school channels, explain factual conduct, state interventions already attempted, request cooperation and record the interaction.
SMT / PRINCIPAL: WHAT THEY MAY DO	SMT/principal may convene formal meetings, chair difficult interactions, set behavioural agreements and handle aggressive or disputed meetings.
SGB / HOD / FORMAL BODY	The SGB/disciplinary committee may require parent participation in hearings or formal interventions according to the Code and due-process rules.
HOW A SCHOOL SHOULD IMPLEMENT IT	Record date, method, person contacted, facts discussed, parent's response, agreements, non-response/refusal and follow-up date. For hostile or high-risk interactions, use a formal meeting with appropriate support.
WHERE TO VERIFY IT	DBE Example Code: PDF p.8 and sanction tables. SACE Code of Professional Ethics: PDF p.3, educator-parent provisions. Current SASA s.8(6), PDF pp.17-18, for parent accompaniment in disciplinary proceedings.

J. Formal disciplinary hearing

WHAT IT IS	A due-process proceeding used for serious misconduct or repeated misconduct that has escalated beyond ordinary classroom correction.
WHAT THE POLICY/LAW SUPPORTS	SASA s.8 requires due process. The DBE Example Code provides a model disciplinary-hearing structure. Gauteng has provincial serious-misconduct regulations governing formal proceedings.
TEACHER: WHAT YOU MAY DO	The teacher may report the matter, produce a factual incident statement, preserve evidence, identify witnesses and participate in the process in the role assigned by policy. The teacher should not act as investigator, prosecutor and decision-maker simultaneously unless the applicable procedure lawfully assigns roles that way.
SMT / PRINCIPAL: WHAT THEY MAY DO	The principal/SMT may institute or coordinate proceedings where provincial rules and the Code allocate those functions, ensure notice and evidence handling, and support the disciplinary structure.
SGB / HOD / FORMAL BODY	The disciplinary committee/SGB exercises the formal role given by the Code and statute. Decisions must comply with natural justice, fairness, reasonableness and applicable provincial procedure.
HOW A SCHOOL SHOULD IMPLEMENT IT	Use written charges, proper notice, impartial decision-makers, evidence/witness procedure, learner/parent participation, written outcome, reasons and appeal/review route.
WHERE TO VERIFY IT	Current SASA: s.8(5)-(6), PDF pp.17-18. DBE Example Code: PDF pp.20-22. Gauteng Misconduct Regulations: disciplinary-proceedings provisions.

K. Suspension from school

WHAT IT IS	Temporary exclusion from attending the public school under the statutory disciplinary framework.
WHAT THE POLICY/LAW SUPPORTS	Current SASA s.9 gives the governing body the power to suspend a learner from attending school, subject to the statutory conditions and process. This is not an ordinary teacher or SMT sanction.
TEACHER: WHAT YOU MAY DO	A teacher cannot suspend a learner from school. The teacher reports, documents, protects safety and follows the escalation procedure.
SMT / PRINCIPAL: WHAT THEY MAY DO	The principal/SMT may manage the case, notify relevant parties and assist the SGB, but should not represent themselves as holding an unlimited independent statutory suspension power where SASA assigns it to the governing body.
SGB / HOD / FORMAL BODY	The SGB may suspend in terms of s.9 and the applicable process. Provincial rules govern serious-misconduct procedure. The HOD becomes involved where expulsion is recommended or where the Act assigns a decision.
HOW A SCHOOL SHOULD IMPLEMENT IT	Follow current s.9 exactly, including the applicable opportunity for representations, hearing timelines and continued education arrangements required by law/policy.
WHERE TO VERIFY IT	Current SASA: s.9, PDF pp.21-24. Gauteng Misconduct Regulations for Gauteng public schools.
TSA CAUTION	Older DBE exemplars may use principal/deputy language that predates later statutory amendments. Current SASA controls if there is a conflict.

L. Expulsion from a public school

WHAT IT IS	Permanent removal of a learner from a particular public school after a lawful serious-misconduct process.
WHAT THE POLICY/LAW SUPPORTS	Current SASA is explicit: a learner at a public school may be expelled only by the provincial Head of Department and only after being found guilty of serious misconduct following the required disciplinary proceedings.
TEACHER: WHAT YOU MAY DO	A teacher cannot expel or threaten to expel a learner. The teacher's role is factual reporting, evidence preservation and participation in the formal process.
SMT / PRINCIPAL: WHAT THEY MAY DO	SMT/principal cannot make the final expulsion decision. They may manage and support the formal school process.
SGB / HOD / FORMAL BODY	The SGB may make the statutory recommendation where applicable. The HOD decides whether to expel.
HOW A SCHOOL SHOULD IMPLEMENT IT	The school's documents and staff training should make the chain explicit: report/investigate -> fair disciplinary process -> SGB recommendation where applicable -> HOD decision. Never label a classroom removal as 'expulsion'.
WHERE TO VERIFY IT	Current SASA: s.9(2), PDF p.23; s.9(1D)-(1E), PDF p.23.

M. Counselling / support / behavioural intervention

WHAT IT IS	A corrective/support pathway aimed at addressing causes of misconduct and preventing recurrence.
WHAT THE POLICY/LAW SUPPORTS	Current SASA s.8 requires the Code to provide support measures or structures for counselling learners involved in disciplinary proceedings. Older national guidelines also encourage support/referral where a learner struggles to adjust.
TEACHER: WHAT YOU MAY DO	A teacher may refer through the school's support structures, record observable concerns and implement agreed classroom supports without diagnosing the learner.
SMT / PRINCIPAL: WHAT THEY MAY DO	SMT/principal/SBST may coordinate parent engagement, counselling referral and support plans.
SGB / HOD / FORMAL BODY	The SGB's Code should contain support structures alongside sanctions; external/provincial services may be used where appropriate.
HOW A SCHOOL SHOULD IMPLEMENT IT	Keep support separate from diagnosis. Record the referral, agreed interventions, review date and whether behaviour changes.
WHERE TO VERIFY IT	Current SASA: s.8(5)(b), PDF p.17. GN 776: PDF p.9.

3. Measures that TSA must never present as teacher-level 'consequences'

- Corporal punishment or any deliberate punishment that inflicts pain or physical discomfort.
- Humiliation, degrading treatment, threats, retaliation or abusive language.
- Formal suspension from attending a public school by an individual teacher.
- Expulsion by a teacher, principal, SMT or SGB acting as the final decision-maker; in a public school the HOD makes the expulsion decision.
- Unsupervised exclusion from class where the learner is left in a corridor or unsafe area.
- Arbitrary confiscation/search powers beyond what current law and school policy authorise.
- Dangerous, excessive, physically punitive or degrading 'community service'.
- Unilateral financial fines or compensation collected personally by an educator.

4. Official source pack - what to send and what pages to mark

DOCUMENT	STATUS	PAGES TO MARK	OFFICIAL LINK
1. South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, as amended by BELA Act 32 of 2024	PRIMARY CURRENT LAW	PDF pp.17-18: s.8 Code of Conduct and due process. PDF pp.21-24: s.9 suspension/expulsion. PDF p.24: s.10 corporal punishment. PDF p.33: principal's professional-management/disciplinary-support duties.	https://www.education.gov.za/Portals/0/Documents/Legislation/Acts/SASA%20as%20amended%20by%20BELA2024.pdf
2. Guidelines for Governing Bodies in Adopting a Code of Conduct for Learners - GN 776 of 1998	NATIONAL GOVERNMENT NOTICE	PDF p.3: educator discipline according to the Code and proportionality. p.7: consequences in classroom rules and grading for repeat offences. p.9: educator responsibility, serious misconduct referral and stronger corrective measures for recurrence. p.10: warnings, supervised school work, restorative tasks, compensation, replacement and activity restrictions.	https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/18900.pdf
3. DBE Example of a Code of Conduct for a School (2008)	OFFICIAL DBE EXEMPLAR - NOT A UNIVERSAL SCHOOL CODE	PDF p.16: teacher responsibility and graded offences. pp.18-22: interventions/hearings. p.29: detention for lateness/truancy examples. pp.30-32: detention, community service, suspension from class/School,	https://www.education.gov.za/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=jNSIEoVBgl4%3D&mid=7618&portalid=0&tabid=335

4. DBE Alternatives to Corporal Punishment	OFFICIAL DBE GUIDANCE - HISTORICAL, READ WITH CURRENT SASA	repair/replacement and other offence-specific sanctions. PDF p.16: community service as a disciplinary measure. PDF p.24: classroom actions listed for a class educator, including warnings, community service, demerits, constructive additional work, small corrective tasks and detention. pp.25-26: higher-level disciplinary measures and procedure.	https://www.education.gov.za/Portals/0/Documents/Publications/alternatives_corporal_punishmen.pdf
5. Gauteng Misconduct of Learners at Public Schools and Disciplinary Proceedings, as amended by Notice 2591 of 2001	GAUTENG PROVINCIAL REGULATIONS	Use for Gauteng serious misconduct, the provincial meaning of suspension and formal disciplinary procedure. Read together with current SASA where the statute has since changed.	https://cmbinary.gauteng.gov.za/Media?Item=29665&Location=%2Feducation&Type=Documents&path=education%2FDocuments%2FRegulations%2F2001%2FMisconduct+of+Learners+at+Public+Schools+and+Disciplinary+Proceedings+-+as+amended+by+Notice+2591+of+2001.pdf
6. SACE Code of Professional Ethics and Disciplinary Procedures	EDUCATOR ETHICS - NOT THE SOURCE OF LEARNER-SANCTION POWERS	PDF p.3: dignity, constitutional rights, compassion, no humiliation/abuse, safety and appropriate language. PDF p.4: parent/colleague/employer duties. Use this to test whether the educator's conduct is professionally acceptable.	https://www.sace.org.za/assets/documents/uploads/sace_22098-2025-03-17-SACE_Booklet_Yellow_BOOK_OF_CODE_OF_ETHICS.pdf

TSA VERIFIED POSITION: 'TSA aligns educator conduct with SACE professional ethics, while learner disciplinary powers and consequences are grounded primarily in SASA, applicable national and provincial education policy, and the school's adopted Code of Conduct.'

5. Quick implementation checklist for a school

- ☐ Put each permitted consequence into the adopted Code of Conduct.
- ☐ State exactly who may impose it: teacher, grade head/HOD, principal, disciplinary committee/SGB, or provincial HOD.
- ☐ Match the consequence to seriousness and recurrence; do not restart at a first warning forever.
- ☐ Create a serious-misconduct fast track so violence/threats are not treated like ordinary defiance.
- ☐ Define supervision, duration, parent notice, documentation and appeal/review requirements.
- ☐ Ensure every consequence is safe, non-degrading, age-appropriate, fair and reasonable.
- ☐ Train staff on the authority boundaries; 'the school allows it' does not automatically mean every individual teacher may impose it.
- ☐ Review the Code against current SASA and the applicable provincial regulations before implementation.

THE SILENT AUTHORITY
Classroom Response & Professional Protection for Teachers