

GUIDE TO COMMANDING OFFICERS ON MANAGING BEHAVIOUR AND MAINTAINING DISCIPLINE AMONG CADETS

ASCR 7 2011

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Introduction

1. The SCC is a youth organisation based on the traditions and values of the Royal Navy. Discipline forms an important part of those traditions and values and will always play a vital role in Sea Cadet training.
2. There is a need, however, to clarify the term 'discipline'. The previous ASCR 7 described 'offences' and 'punishments', and sought to mimic some of the disciplinary procedures of the Royal Navy such as formal hearings involving witness statements and findings of 'guilty' or 'not guilty'. These procedures were designed for a military force whose personnel are subject to military law. They should not be used in a modern youth organisation.
3. The Sea Cadet Corps remains, however, a disciplined uniformed youth organisation. It is right that we maintain discipline for a number of reasons:
 - The outward image that is presented by the Sea Cadets through such things as Drill and Ceremonial is founded upon discipline. The ability to give and accept orders, respect for rank and precedence, smartness of appearance and a willingness to put one's own interests to one side for the benefit of the team are important aspects of this.
 - A principal aim of the Sea Cadets is 'to promote the development of young people in achieving their physical, intellectual and social potential as individuals and as responsible citizens'; the prevention and reduction of unacceptable/disruptive behaviour and the promotion of positive behaviour play a key role in achieving this aim.
 - Many of the activities of the Sea Cadets such as sailing, power boating, adventure training and shooting require a disciplined approach in order to ensure safety but also in order to get the most out of those activities and enjoy them to the full.
4. All adult instructors have the potential to influence the behaviour and conduct of cadets. This document is designed to assist them in using their influence positively and effectively.
5. This guide is intended for use at Unit level. Where incidents of unacceptable behaviour occur at a Sea Cadet activity which is not Unit led (ie, camp, training course, etc) then the CO of the activity or Training Centre should make a written report to the CO of the cadet's Unit who will deal with the matter in accordance with this guide, seeking further clarification if necessary. The CO of the activity or Training Centre should not take any formal action against the cadet but may debar him or her from elements of the activity or elect to send the cadet home. If the cadet is sent home then normal travel arrangements should be made and parents/guardians informed in advance.

The Prevention of Unacceptable Behaviour

6. The best way to prevent unacceptable behaviour is to reinforce good behaviour. The emphasis should be on reward and incentive rather than the use of sanctions. Rewards are important and help cadets to see that good behaviour is valued. The most common reward is praise; a simple acknowledgement is a very powerful motivator.
7. As an instructor, it is important not to assume that cadets automatically know how to behave whilst taking part in Sea Cadet activities; you will not be aware of the standards of behaviour they display at home, at school or in any other parts of their life. Neither can you be expected to fully understand all of the influences that act upon a child's behaviour.
8. It is also important to consider whether disruptive or unacceptable behaviour during an activity is related to the activity itself. Young people who are not fully engaged become bored and distracted very easily and this can lead to a breakdown of discipline. Young people will rarely act in a certain manner just because they are told to do so.
9. This does not mean that there should not be minimum standards of behaviour. Clearly defined and mutually understood boundaries can prevent unacceptable behaviour from occurring.

The boundaries are set out very clearly in ASCR 13, the Cadet Code of Conduct, which should be issued to cadets during induction. It is the responsibility of staff to ensure that a mutual understanding exists and that cadets feel a sense of ownership. A suggested way of achieving this is set out at Annex A to this document.

Involvement of Parents/Guardians

10. Where the actions of a cadet are causing concern then the CO/OIC should always consider inviting the parents or guardians to the Unit for a discussion. This may or may not coincide with disciplinary measures. The CO/OIC should outline those concerns and try to agree future courses of action.

Dealing with Unacceptable Behaviour

11. It is important that units:

- Signpost unacceptable behaviour to cadets clearly and effectively.
- Demonstrate that fair, consistent and proportionate consequences will be applied to instances of unacceptable behaviour.
- Discuss and agree on actions to be taken by cadets, instructors and parents/guardians to avoid unacceptable behaviour re-occurring and to improve the cadet's overall behaviour.

12. 'Unacceptable behaviour' can be broadly defined as a breach of ASCR 13. Such breaches can vary in their degree of seriousness and it is important that adults apply common sense and moderation. Often a mild rebuke may be all that is required. However, the following are examples of behaviour that are never acceptable and should be dealt with firmly:

- Bullying of any kind (including physical, emotional, cyber, etc)
- Intrusion on others' rights to privacy.
- Abusing ridiculing or being insensitive to others because of such things as colour, religion, gender, sexual orientation, abilities or disabilities.
- Using inappropriate or demeaning language – verbal, writing, phoning, email or internet.
- Engaging, or allowing/encouraging others to engage, in inappropriate behaviour or contact (ie, physical, verbal, sexual, including horseplay).
- Permitting or accepting abusive or discriminatory behaviour or peer-led activities such as initiation ceremonies, bullying, taunting or abusive text, emails and web postings.
- Making sexually suggestive comments.
- Using or being under the influence of, alcohol, illegal drugs or other such substances whilst attending Sea Cadet locations or undertaking Sea Cadet activities.
- Smoking in public whilst in Sea Cadet uniform.
- Trivialising, or letting allegations, suspicions or concerns about abuse go unreported.
- Leaving a Sea Cadet Unit or activity without permission from an appropriate SCC adult.

13. Where incidents of bad behaviour warrant only a mild and/or immediate rebuke this would be considered to be an 'informal' warning and should not be recorded. Where the breach is of sufficient gravity to warrant formal action then it should be reported to the First Lt or CO/OIC who may decide from a number of courses of action. Guidance is given in the following tables on whether such breaches should be considered minor, moderate or serious and on what actions might be taken. However, rarely are such instances cut and dried and the actions to be taken are subject to discretion. If in doubt then the advice of the DO should be sought. All 'formal' warnings, whether verbal or written, as well as any penalties given should be recorded in the Unit Discipline Record.

Table 1 - Minor Breaches		
<p>Minor breaches of the Code of Conduct will be dealt with by the First Lt. These might include: poor behaviour, absence from place of duty, creating a disturbance, minor dishonesty, smoking, use of inappropriate language, etc. In the case of repeated occurrences the CO/OIC should become involved.</p>		
First occurrence	Verbal warning	
Repeated occurrence	Verbal warning Invite parent/guardian	May be combined with the loss of a privilege such as not being able to enjoy 'stand-easy' and/or not taking part in a unit activity.
Consistent repeated occurrences	First Written warning Invite parent/guardian	Consider loss of a good conduct badge (to be restored to the cadet after three months providing the unacceptable behaviour has not been repeated).
Further occurrences	Further written warning Invite parent/guardian	Consider disrating or suspension from the unit or both. Inform DO.

Table 2 - Moderate Breaches		
<p>Moderate breaches of the Code of Conduct will be dealt with by the First Lt or the CO/OIC. They might include leaving the Unit without permission, minor bullying, verbal abuse, fighting (not resulting in injury), under-age drinking, minor theft, lying or dishonesty, disobedience of an order. In the case of repeated occurrences the CO/OIC should become involved.</p>		
First occurrence	Verbal Warning Invite parent/guardian	May be combined with the loss of a privilege such as not being able to enjoy 'stand-easy' and/or not taking part in a unit activity. Consider loss of a good conduct badge (to be restored to the cadet after three months providing the unacceptable behaviour has not been repeated).
Repeated occurrence	First Written Warning Invite parent/guardian Letter to parent/guardian	Consider disrating or suspension from the unit or both. Initial suspension period should be for two weeks but may be extended to one month by the CO/OIC depending upon the nature and severity of the breach. Inform DO.
Consistent repeated occurrences	Further written warning Letter to parent/guardian	Consider further suspension from the unit for up to 6 months. Consider dismissal in consultation with DO.

Table 3 - Serious Breaches

<p>A serious breach of the Code of Conduct should be dealt with by the CO/OIC. Breaches that would be considered serious might include drug and/or alcohol offences, vindictive and/or sustained bullying, fighting or assault resulting in injury, vandalism, theft, etc.</p> <p>Where it is considered that a criminal offence has taken place then the following does not apply. The matter should be reported to the Police and the AO, the cadet should be suspended immediately and parents/guardians informed. No further action is to be taken until any Police investigation is complete. Detailed instructions on the handling of such cases are contained in ASCR 8. The DO should be consulted if there is any doubt.</p>		
<p>First occurrence</p>	<p>First Written Warning Invite parent/guardian Letter to parent/guardian</p>	<p>Loss of a good conduct badge. Consider disrating or suspension from the unit or both. Suspension period may be for up to 6 months. May also consider immediate dismissal in consultation with DO.</p>
<p>Repeated occurrence(s)</p>	<p>Further written warning Invite parent/guardian Letter to parent/guardian</p>	<p>Consider disrating or further period of suspension. Consider dismissal in consultation with DO.</p>

Verbal Warnings

14. Formal verbal warnings should be conducted in private by the CO/OIC or First Lt and never in front of other cadets, though the cadet should be given the opportunity to have a friend present if he or she wishes. In addition there should be another adult present, ideally of the same gender as the cadet. This should be seen as a meeting rather than an interview and should not be conducted in an overly-formal manner. Cadets must not be overawed or intimidated by the process and the age of the cadet should be taken into account. Cadets should be put at ease, the nature of the misdemeanour explained and the cadet given every opportunity to explain, apologise or offer mitigating circumstances. Open questions may be used to establish or clarify facts but there should never be aggressive questioning, threats, tricks or coercion.

15. Parents/guardians should be informed in advance and invited to attend. If this is declined the fact should be recorded.

Written Warnings

16. Written warnings should:

- State clearly the nature of the misdemeanour.
- In the case of repeated misbehaviour refer to previous warnings issued.
- Detail any penalties awarded.
- State the consequences of further misbehaviour.

17. The warning should be handed to the cadet in the presence of an observer. The content should be explained so that the cadet fully understands its implications. The cadet should sign a copy to certify that he or she has received it and this should be retained on file. A copy should also be posted or handed to the parents/guardians together with a letter of explanation if necessary.

18. The number of warnings that may be issued is at the discretion of the CO; however, repeated warnings which do not have the desired effect become ineffectual and their value diminishes.

Three written warnings over a 2-year period should normally be the maximum before serious consideration is given to dismissal. Examples of written warnings are given at Annex B to this document.

Penalties

19. It is entirely appropriate for breaches of the Code of Conduct to be penalised. The penalty must always be proportionate to the misdemeanour and may be in the form of suspension, disrating, loss of privileges, loss of a good conduct badge, etc. In some cases additional duties may be given; however, such duties must never be demeaning or degrading. Penalties should always be recorded in the Unit Discipline Record.

20. If a cadet is to be dismissed from the Sea Cadets, a meeting should be arranged between the cadet and the parents or guardians to inform them of the decision and explain the reasons behind it. If they choose not to attend they should be informed of the decision in writing. If they wish to appeal then the matter should be referred to the DO who would act as deciding officer.

21. When a cadet responds positively to disciplinary action then that should always be acknowledged. As stated earlier, the best way to prevent unacceptable behaviour is to reinforce good behaviour.

Unit Discipline Record

22. Unless stated above a brief record of all disciplinary action taken and any penalties awarded should be recorded and retained in the Unit Discipline Record for a minimum of 2 years. A suggested layout for the Unit Discipline Record is as follows:

Date	Rate, Name & Initials	Occurrence	Outcome
12 Jan 11	AC Jones DR	Fighting	First Written Warning Letter to parents Extra work (polishing ship's bell) Loss of GC Badge for 3 months
12 Jan 11	AC Smith ES	Fighting	First Written Warning Letter to parents Extra work (polishing ship's bell) Loss of GC Badge for 3 months
15 Mar 11	Cdt Allen A	Late on parade (3 rd occurrence)	2 nd Verbal warning 3 weeks loss of privileges.
1 Jun 11	LC Saint ST	Bringing alcohol into unit. (2 nd Occurrence)	3 month Suspension 2 nd Written Warning Letter to parents Disrated to AC
12 Jun 11	POC Brown PA	Serious bullying of Cdt TM Green (2 nd occurrence)	Letter to parents Dismissed

23. The Unit Discipline Record is to be examined and signed monthly by the Commanding Officer.

Engaging with Cadets on the Code of Conduct.

ASCR 13, The Cadet Code of Conduct, clearly defines the standard of behaviour expected of young people during their involvement with the SCC.

It is important that cadets and adults fully understand the Code and the reasons for its existence. It is not there to impose a rigid disciplinary framework; it is there to establish a mutual understanding of what behaviours are and are not acceptable. This is a suggested means of achieving that.

- Set aside one session a year for this task.
- Gather all of the cadets and staff together.
- Prepare a board or flipchart on which to record suggestions.
- Ask cadets to think about behaviours that they feel are unacceptable within the unit and then feed these thoughts back to the group. Encourage cadets to mention any examples of behaviour that made their time at the unit less enjoyable. Record all of these ideas on the board. (If you are lucky enough to have sufficiently competent and mature senior cadets you might consider letting them take the lead).
- With each example of unacceptable behaviour discuss why it is unacceptable - is it dangerous, is it hurtful or upsetting to others, does it disrupt training, does it bring the Unit or the Corps into disrepute, might it result in cadets leaving the unit? Allow an open discussion with questions and criticisms.
- Compare the list with those set out in ASCR 13, The Cadet Code of Conduct, and discuss anything that was not included in the cadets' list. Ask the cadets why these items might be included.
- You might discuss the particular requirements of a disciplined, uniformed, youth organisation like the Sea Cadets and ask the cadets to explain why discipline is particularly important in such an organisation.
- Talk about teamwork and how disruptive behaviour damages not only themselves but the team that they should be proud to be a part of.
- Ask the cadets how breaches of the code of conduct should be dealt with and talk through some of the penalties that might be awarded. Ask the cadets' views on these and the possible effects.
- Ensure that all cadets have copies of the code of conduct.

By effectively engaging with cadets and involving them in this activity, you are gaining 'buy in' and agreement on clearly defined boundaries and expectations. The intended outcome should be that the cadets themselves are investing in the high standards of the Sea Cadet Corps.

Example texts for Written Warnings

Produced on unit letter headed paper and signed by CO or 1st Lt. A copy should be handed to or posted to the parents/guardians and a further copy retained on file.

These are examples only as each case may require a different approach; however, as stated in para 16, a written warning must at the very least:

- State clearly the nature of the misdemeanour.
- In the case of repeated misbehaviour refer to previous warnings issued.
- Detail any penalties awarded.
- State the consequences of further misbehaviour.

Able Cadet Marshall

On 5 April 2011 you were once again late on parade. This is now a regular occurrence, you have failed to identify a reason for your consistent lateness and you received a verbal warning from the First Lieutenant on 21 March 2011.

ASCR 13, the Cadet Code of Conduct, expects cadets to attend Sea Cadet Unit parade nights at specified times and on a regular basis. You are clearly failing to meet that expectation. As a result you will lose your good conduct badge. This will be restored to you 3 months from the date of this letter on condition that you show a significant improvement in your punctuality.

In all other respects your performance as a cadet has been excellent but if your punctuality does not improve you will be disgraced to Ordinary Cadet and I may consider a period of suspension.

Yours faithfully

Cadet Harrison

On 5 April 2011 you were involved in a fight with Cadet Brown during a parade night. Fighting on board is in breach of ASCR 13, the Cadet Code of Conduct, and will not be tolerated at this Unit.

As a result of your actions you will lose your good conduct badge. This will be restored to you 3 months from the date of this letter on condition that your behaviour during that period remains at the standard expected of a Sea Cadet. In addition, for the next 2 parade nights you will not be permitted a 'stand easy' and may be asked to perform additional duties during that period.

Any further breaches of the Cadet Code of Conduct will be dealt with firmly and may result in you being suspended from the Corps.

Yours faithfully

Leading Cadet Smith

On 5 April 2011 you were seen smoking in uniform on the corner of Tomkins Street and Dale Lane. This was on a parade night and during a stand easy.

This action amounts to 2 clear breaches of ASCR 13, the Cadet Code of Conduct:

Smoking in public whilst in Sea Cadet uniform.

Leaving the Unit without permission.

To your credit you have admitted the offence and apologised; however, as a Leading Cadet I expect you to set a good example to younger cadets and you have clearly failed to do that. As a result of your actions you are suspended from the Unit for 2 months from the date of this letter. During that time you will not be permitted to enter the Unit nor will you be allowed to take part in any Sea Cadet activities.

In addition, you will lose your good conduct badge. This will be restored to you 3 months following your return to the Unit on condition that your behaviour during that period remains at the standard expected of a Leading Cadet.

Any further breaches of the Cadet Code of Conduct will be dealt with firmly and may result in you being dismissed from the Corps.

Yours faithfully

