

Code of Conduct for Staff & Volunteers

CODE OF CONDUCT

- **INTRODUCTION**

All actions concerning children must uphold the best interests of the young person as a primary consideration. Staff must always be mindful of the fact that they hold a position of trust and that their behaviour towards the children in their charge must be above reproach. This Code of Conduct is not intended to detract from the enriching experiences children gain from positive interaction with staff within the education sector. It is intended to assist staff in respect of the complex issue of child abuse, by drawing attention to the areas of risk for staff and by offering guidance on prudent conduct.

- **PRIVATE MEETINGS WITH PUPILS**

Staff should be aware of the dangers which may arise from being alone with or holding private interviews with individual pupils. It is recognised that there will be occasions when confidential interviews must take place. As far as possible, staff should conduct such interviews in a room with visual access and with the **door open**.

Where such conditions cannot apply, staff are advised to ensure that another adult knows that the interview is taking place.

Where possible another pupil or another adult should be present or nearby during the interview and the school should take active measures to facilitate this.

- **PHYSICAL CONTACT WITH PUPILS**

As a general principle, staff are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with pupils, especially any contact which would likely to be misinterpreted by the pupil, parent or observer. Following any incident where a member of staff feels that his/her actions have been, or may be, misconstrued, a written report of the incident should be submitted immediately to the principal.

Guidance on the use of restraint and seclusion in educational settings is provided in Circular 2021/13. The Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998, Article 4, outlines the powers a member of school staff can use in restraining pupils. However, schools are reminded that reasonable force/restraint should only be used as a measure of last resort. Staff of a grant-aided school may only use reasonable force/restraint:

- to prevent a pupil from committing an offence;
- to prevent a pupil causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any person (including the pupil himself);

- to prevent a pupil from engaging in any behaviour prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school or among any of its pupils.

The legislation extends to the premises of the school and when a member of school staff has lawful control or charge of the pupil concerned. DE Circular 1999/09 provides clarification and guidance on the use of reasonable force, by teachers and other authorised staff, to restrain or control pupils in certain circumstances. Further advice to schools on the use of reasonable force/restraint and positive behavioural management is set out in:

- Towards a Model Policy in schools on the use of reasonable force
- Regional Policy Framework on the use of reasonable force/safe-handling
- Pastoral care in schools: Promoting Positive Behaviour (education-ni.gov.uk)

Reasonable force/restraint should:-

- only be used as a measure of last resort;
- preserve the dignity and respect of all concerned;
- never be used as a form of punishment or to make a child behave; and
- never deliberately cause pain/injury to a pupil.

All instances of the use of reasonable force/restraint should be recorded using CPOMS. Parents/Carers should be informed and follow up support provided to the pupil and staff involved.

It is unrealistic and unnecessary, however, to suggest that staff should touch pupils only in emergencies. In particular, a distressed child, especially a younger child, may need reassurance involving physical comforting, as a caring parent would provide. Staff should not feel inhibited from providing this.

Staff should never touch a child who has clearly indicated that he/she would be uncomfortable with such contact, unless it is necessary to protect the child, others or property from harm.

Physical punishment is illegal, as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour, unless it is by way of necessary restraint.

Staff who have to administer first-aid to a pupil should ensure wherever possible that this is done in the presence of other children or another adult. (However, no adult should hesitate to provide first-aid in an emergency simply because another person is not present.)

Staff should not become friends with our pupils on social networking sites.

During swimming lessons, teachers stay outside changing cubicles and verbally encourage children to change quickly. Teachers should only enter the cubicles in case of emergency.

Staff should be particularly careful when supervising pupils in a residential setting, or in approved out of school activities, where more informal relationships tend to be usual and where staff may be in proximity to pupils in circumstances very different from the normal school/work environment.

- **CHOICE AND USE OF TEACHING MATERIALS**

Teachers should avoid teaching materials that might be misinterpreted and reflect upon the motives for the choice. If in doubt about the appropriateness of a particular teaching material, the teacher should consult the principal first.

- **RELATIONSHIPS AND ATTITUDES**

Within the Pastoral Care Policy of the school and the employing authority, staff should ensure that their relationships with pupils are appropriate to the age, maturity and sex of pupils, taking care that their conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Attitudes, demeanour and language all require care and thought, particularly when staff are dealing with children. Staff are role models for our pupils.

The following must also be considered:

1. Setting an Example

1.1 All staff and volunteers who work in schools set examples of behaviour and conduct which can be copied by pupils/students. Staff must therefore for example avoid using inappropriate or offensive language at all times.

1.2 All staff and volunteers must, therefore, demonstrate high standards of conduct in order to encourage our pupils/students to do the same.

1.3 All staff and volunteers must also avoid putting themselves at risk of allegations of abusive or unprofessional conduct.

1.4 This Code helps all staff and volunteers to understand what behaviour is and is not acceptable and regard should also be given to the disciplinary rules set out by the employing authority.

1.5 All staff and volunteers are expected to familiarise themselves and comply with all school policies and procedures.

2. Safeguarding Pupils/Students

2.1 All staff and volunteers have a duty to safeguard pupils/students from physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect and exploitation.

2.2 The duty to safeguard pupils/students includes the duty to report concerns about a pupil/student or colleague to a member of the school's Safeguarding

team (Designated Teacher (DT)/Deputy Designated Teacher (DDT) for Child Protection or the Principal).

2.3 The school's DT is Mr McSwiggan and the DDT's are Mr Terry Rodgers (Mainstream School) and Mrs O Conlon (SLC).

2.4 All staff and volunteers are provided with personal copies of the school's Child Protection Policy and Whistleblowing Policy and must be familiar with these documents and other relevant school policies eg e-Safety and Acceptable Use Policy.

2.5 All staff and volunteers should treat children with respect and dignity. They must not demean or undermine pupils, their parents, carers or colleagues.

2.6 All staff and volunteers should not demonstrate behaviours that may be perceived as sarcasm, making jokes at the expense of students, embarrassing or humiliating students, discriminating against or favouring students.

2.7 All staff and volunteers must take reasonable care of pupils/students under their supervision with the aim of ensuring their safety and welfare. Staff should also complete risk assessments where appropriate in accordance with school policies.

3. Relationships with Students

3.1 All staff and volunteers must declare any relationships that they may have with pupils/students outside of school; this may include mutual membership of social groups, tutoring, or family connections. Staff and volunteers should not assume that the school are aware of any such connections. A declaration form may be found in **Appendix 7** of this document.

3.2 Relationships with students must be professional at all times, sexual relationships with students are not permitted and may lead to an abuse of trust and criminal conviction.

4. Pupil/Student Development

4.1 All staff and volunteers must comply with school policies and procedures that support the well-being and development of pupils/students.

4.2 All staff and volunteers must co-operate and collaborate with colleagues and with external agencies where necessary to support the development of pupils/ students.

5. Honesty and Integrity

5.1 All staff and volunteers must maintain high standards of honesty and integrity in their work. This includes the handling and claiming of money and the use of school property and facilities.

5.2 Gifts from suppliers or associates of the school must be declared to the Principal with the exception of “one off” token gifts from students or parents. Personal gifts from individual members of staff or volunteers to students are inappropriate and could be misinterpreted and may lead to disciplinary action. A record will be kept of all gifts received.

6. Conduct Outside of Work

6.1 All staff and volunteers must not engage in conduct outside work which could seriously damage the reputation and standing of the school or the staff/ volunteers own reputation or the reputation of other members of the school community.

6.2 In particular, criminal offences that involve violence, possession or use of illegal drugs or sexual misconduct are to be regarded as unacceptable.

6.3 Staff may undertake work outside school, either paid or voluntary, provided that it does not conflict with the interests of the school. It should not contravene the working time regulations or affect an individual’s work performance in the school. Staff should seek advice from the Principal when considering work outside the school.

7. E-Safety and Internet Use

7.1 Staff must exercise caution when using information technology and be aware of the risks to themselves and others. Regard should be given to the schools’ E-Safety and ICT Acceptable Use Policy at all times both inside and outside of work.

7.2 Staff and volunteers must not engage in inappropriate use of social network sites which may bring themselves, the school, school community or employer into disrepute. Staff and volunteers should ensure that they adopt suitably high security settings on any personal profiles they may have.

7.3 Staff should exercise caution in their use of all social media or any other web based presence that they may have, including written content, videos or photographs, and views expressed either directly or by ‘liking’ certain pages or posts established by others. This may also include the use of dating websites where staff could encounter students either with their own profile or acting covertly.

7.4 Contact with students must be via school authorised mechanisms. At no time should personal telephone numbers, email addresses or communication routes via personal accounts on social media platforms be used to communicate with students. If contacted by a student by an inappropriate route, staff should report the contact to the principal immediately.

7.5 Photographs/stills or video footage of students should only be taken using school equipment for purposes authorised by the school. Any such use should always be transparent and only occur where parental consent has been given.

The resultant files from such recording or taking of photographs must be retained and destroyed in accordance with the schools Records Management Policy and Disposal Schedules.

8. Confidentiality

8.1 Members of staff and volunteers may have access to confidential information about students to undertake their everyday responsibilities. In some circumstances staff may be given additional highly sensitive or private information. They should never use confidential or personal information about a student or his family for their own, or others' advantage. Information must never be used to intimidate, humiliate, or embarrass the student.

8.2 Confidential information about students should never be used casually in conversation or shared with any person other than on a need-to-know basis. In circumstances where the student's identity does not need to be disclosed the information should be used anonymously.

8.3 There are some circumstances in which a member of staff may be expected to share information about a student, for example when abuse is alleged or suspected. In such cases, individuals have a duty to pass information on without delay, but only to those with designated child protection responsibilities.

8.4 If a member of staff is in any doubt about whether to share information or keep it confidential, he or she should seek guidance from a senior member of staff. Any media or legal enquiries should be passed to senior leadership.

8.5 Adults need to be aware that although it is important to listen to and support students, they must not promise confidentiality or request students to do the same under any circumstances.

8.6 Additionally concerns and allegations about adults should be treated as confidential and passed to a senior leader without delay.

9. Dress and Appearance

9.1 All staff and volunteers must dress in a manner that is appropriate to a professional role and promoting a professional image.

9.2 Staff and volunteers should dress in a manner that is not offensive, revealing or sexually provocative.

9.3 Staff and volunteers should dress in a manner that is absent from political or other contentious slogans.

10. Disciplinary Action

Staff and volunteers should be aware that a failure to comply with this Code of Conduct

could result in disciplinary action including but not limited to dismissal. All staff and volunteers must complete the form below to confirm they have read, understood and agreed to comply with the code of conduct. This form should then be signed and dated.

Confirmation of Compliance

I hereby confirm that I have read, understood and agree to comply with the school's code of conduct.

Name _____

Position/Post Held _____

Signed _____ Date _____

Once completed, signed and dated, please return this form to the Principal.