

STYAL PRIMARY SCHOOL



**Styal Primary School**



# Code of Conduct for Staff and Other Adults in School

September 2023

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### CODE OF CONDUCT FOR STAFF AND OTHER ADULTS IN SCHOOL

#### Introduction

This Code has been drawn up in consultation with the Cheshire Teachers' Panel and support staff unions, to assist all adults in schools in maintaining entirely proper and professional relationships with children. It relies heavily on the requirements of the Children Act 1989, Section 550A of the Education Act 1996, DfEE Circular 10/98 and the Conditions of Employment of School Teachers. It attempts to provide a clear and open picture of the boundaries of adults' roles and the use of power.

It is stressed that this Code is not a legal document but is intended to provide guidance to school staff and other adults in schools in carrying out their responsibilities.

As public employees, teachers and support staff are accountable to the public in their exercise of authority, their management of risk, the proper use of resources and the active protection of children from discrimination and avoidable harm. Similar duties rest on other adults in schools (e.g. volunteers, mentors, travelling artists, musician, actors etc) and, where appropriate in this document, the words "staff" and "employee" should be assumed to encompass all adults in schools. This document is designed both to be useful for adults in avoiding situations that might lead to allegations against them, and to reassure the public that a strategy exists to safeguard children.

Adults in schools need to be prudent about their own conduct and vigilant about the conduct of others, so that their relationships with children remain, and are seen to remain, entirely proper and professional. It is recognised that adults working with children are vulnerable to the possible consequences of their close professional relationships with children and to the potential for malicious and misplaced allegations being made by children either deliberately or innocently, arising from their normal and proper association with them.

#### Principles

The specific duties of teachers are to:

- teach children assigned to them according to the educational needs of those children;
- promote the general progress and well being of individual children and of any group or class of children assigned to them;
- ensure the health and safety of children whilst they are within the responsibility of teachers;
- provide guidance and advice to children on educational, personal and social matters including information about sources of more expert advice on specific questions;

- maintain good order and discipline among children and promote their development both when they are authorised to be on the school premises and when they are engaged in authorised school activities elsewhere.

The principles underpinning the relationship between an employee/adult and child are for the employee to give paramount consideration to the child's welfare by respecting and attempting to understand:

- the ascertainable wishes and feelings of the child concerned (considered in the light of their age and understanding);
- the child's physical, emotional and educational needs;
- the likely effect on the child of any change in their circumstances;
- the child's age, gender, background and any other relevant characteristics;
- any harm which the child has suffered or is at risk of suffering.

School staff and other adults are in a position of trust and they owe a duty of care to the children for whom they are responsible.

School staff and other adults should never seek gratification of their own emotional or physical needs in their personal relationships with children. The adult's affiliations with children must always be professional, appropriate and justifiable.

The Cheshire County Council Child Protection Procedures have primacy over other requirements. This document attempts to be supportive and complementary to those procedures. These Principles and subsequent Guidelines provide the basis for the employer and the public to identify inappropriate behaviour by adults and should therefore be accessible in all schools.

### **Physical Contact**

There are occasions when physical contact with a child may be proper or necessary.

For instance, there may be occasions when a child needs comfort or re-assurance which may include physical comforting such as a caring parent would give. Adults should use their discretion in such cases to ensure that what is normal and natural does not become unnecessary and unjustified contact, particularly with the same child over a period of time.

Some adults (e.g. teachers/sports coaches) are likely to come into physical contact with the children from time to time in the course of their teaching, for example when showing a child how to use a piece of apparatus or equipment or while demonstrating a move or exercise during Games or P.E. Adults should be aware of the limits within which such contact should properly take place and should consider the possibility of such contact being misinterpreted by the child.

Physical contact may be misconstrued by a child, parent/carer or observer. Such contact can include well intentioned informal and formal gestures such as putting a hand on the shoulder or

arm, which if repeated with an individual child could lead to serious questions being raised. Any such comforting gestures must always be acceptable to the child concerned, i.e. there should be no unwanted physical contact, however well intentioned. Therefore, as a general principle, adults should not have unnecessary physical contact with children and it is unwise to attribute touching to their teaching/caring style, their way of relating to children or their general disposition.

There may be some children for whom touching is particularly unwelcome. For example, some children may be particularly sensitive to physical contact because of their cultural background, or because they have been abused. It is important that all staff receive information on these children.

The school will need to develop clear common practice towards particular groups of children and events. There should be a common approach where adults and children are of different sexes.

Physical contact with children becomes increasingly open to question as children reach and go through adolescence, and adults should also bear in mind that even innocent and well-intentioned physical contact can sometimes be misconstrued.

When adults are working in rooms (this includes classrooms / the hall / Sparkle Room / staff room / Head teacher's Office) with only 1 child then the door must be kept open at all times – this is to protect both the pupil and the adult. Circumstances where this is not possible (for example a child who needs to discuss a safeguarding concern or a child who is struggling to de-escalate) then another adult must be called so that there is not a 1:1 situation.

### **The Practice of Physical Restraint**

Please refer to Positive Handling Policy November 2022.

### **Attacks on Staff**

Where an employee is the subject of a verbal, physical or on-line attack please refer to the Parent, Carer and Visitor Conduct Policy September 2023.

### **Sexual Contact**

There is no acceptable behaviour that has either explicit sexual connotations or innuendo. Any such behaviour will always be treated as extremely serious and must be reported to either the Headteacher or the Chair of Governors immediately.

### **Meetings with Children/Parents**

Adults must never interview individual children in private. It is recognised that there will be occasions when confidential interviews must take place, when this is necessary then another adult must be called so that there is never a 1:1 situation. Meetings with children away from the school premises should not take place unless the specific approval of the Headteacher has been obtained. Where such conditions cannot apply, adults are advised to ensure that another adult knows that the interview is taking place. The use of 'engaged' signs or lights is not advisable.

If it is necessary to detain a child for any length of time after the end of school hours, prior warning must be given to the child's parents or carers.

If a member of staff talks with parents or children in or out of school they should remain professional and ensure that they do not enter into any discussion that could be construed as gossip. If a comment/complaint is made about school they should refer the child/parent /carer to the headteacher or a member of the Senior Leadership Team and not comment personally.

### **Caring/First Aid**

If a child complains of an injury or sickness, a judgement should be made as to whether they should be referred to a qualified First Aider, advised to see their own Doctor, or an ambulance called. The child's parents / carers should also be informed. Child protection procedures may also need to be considered.

Adults who have to administer first aid should ensure wherever possible that another adult is present, if they are in any doubt as to whether necessary physical contact could be misconstrued. They should also follow the County Council's guidelines on Administration of Medicines ([See First Aid and Medicines Policy, May 2023](#)).

Wherever possible, adults who have to help children with toileting or personal care should be accompanied by another adult and children should wherever possible, be encouraged to deal with such matters themselves. ([See Intimate Care Policy September 2023](#))

Where it is necessary to restrain a child or assist with/supervise dressing or undressing, adults must be careful to protect the dignity of the child. ([See Positive Handling Policy November 2022](#))

### **Pastoral Role**

All staff have a pastoral responsibility for children and, in order to fulfil that role effectively, there will be occasions where conversations will cover particularly sensitive matters. Staff must, in these circumstances, use their discretion to ensure that, for example, any probing for details cannot be construed as unjustified intrusion.

Any adult may from time to time be approached by children for advice. Children may also appear distressed and adults may feel the need to ask if all is well. In such cases the adult must judge whether it is appropriate for them to offer counselling and advice and whether to inform an assigned mentor for that child. In certain circumstances, staff may need to refer the child to another specialist agency for advice or help.

In dealing with sensitive issues, adults must inform children at the start of the interview that they may have to disclose the information to another person, e.g. the Headteacher.

### **Extra Curricular Activities/Educational Visits/Residentials organised by the School**

Adults should follow existing relevant guidelines and be particularly careful when supervising children in a residential setting or off-site activities such as outdoor education, camp or extended

visit away from home, where more informal relationships tend to be usual and where they may be in proximity to children in circumstances very different from the normal school environment.

Adults must follow the agreed Risk Assessment at all times.

Adults must also be especially vigilant in relation to access by children to alcohol and of the possibility of substance misuse.

### **Home Visits (by Teachers)**

Good links with parents or carers are vital for effective learning. Teachers involved in home visits should consider whether a home visit is necessary and appropriate.

Plan all visits in advance, gathering any relevant information available from the school, including formal records.

They should consider whether there is likely to be any risk, including risk to themselves, before every visit, e.g. are there any new factors which may influence the visit such as changes to the child's family members or home environment?

If the teacher considers that the visit may involve a potential risk, then this should be discussed in advance with the Headteacher, and alternatives explored.

The number of teachers / staff conducting the visit should be considered. **The teacher is to be accompanied during the visit – one staff member should not visit alone.**

The school should take steps to ensure staff safety such as being clear about the timescale of the planned visit and ensuring that other staff back at the school are aware of this and any potential risks.

### **Social Contact**

Social contact with children, other than that which is school based or organised by the school, should be positively resisted.

It is recognised that there may be occasions when accidental or reasonable social contact may be unavoidable, e.g. meeting children in pubs, shops, at private parties, or at the houses of parents. In such circumstances, teachers and other staff should be mindful at all times of their professional relationship with children.

### **General Relationships with Children**

Adults should ensure that their relationships with children are appropriate to the age and gender of the children, taking care that their conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Attitudes, demeanour and language all require care and thought, particularly when dealing with adolescent boys and girls.

Comments by adults to children, either individually or in groups, can be misconstrued. As a general principle, adults must not make unnecessary comments to and/or about children which could be construed to have a sexual connotation. It is also unacceptable for adults to introduce or to encourage debate amongst children in class, or elsewhere, which could be construed as having a sexual connotation that is unnecessary given the context of the lesson or the circumstances. However, it is recognised that a topic raised by a child is best addressed rather than ignored.

Adults should be careful in their use of language/terminology which may be misconstrued.

The systematic use of insensitive or disparaging comments is unacceptable.

If adults at any time feel that their relationship with a child is developing into one which would be inappropriate between them and a child, it is their responsibility to discuss the situation with the Headteacher.

**This policy was reviewed in September 2023**

**To be reviewed in September 2024**

**Headteacher:** Louise Boardman

**Chair of Governors:** Lee Walsh

**Linked Policies:**

- Positive Handling Policy November 2022
- Parent, Carer and Visitor Conduct Policy September 2023
- First Aid and Medicines Policy May 2023
- Intimate Care Policy September 2023

Appendix 1

Table to illustrate What is Acceptable Behaviour by Adults Towards Children:

**WHAT IS ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR BY ADULTS TOWARDS CHILDREN?**

The table below provides some examples of types of behaviour. It is intended only as a guide and every situation must be considered on its merits and assessed carefully in the context within which it occurs.

BEHAVIOUR	PHYSICAL	SEXUAL
<b>FALLING WITHIN PERMITTED PROFESSIONAL OR DEPARTMENT LIMITS</b>	Appropriate physical restraint within permitted limits, where it is necessary for the protection of the child or the safety of others.	There can be no permissible behaviour which either implicitly or explicitly has sexual connotations.
<b>INAPPROPRIATE OR UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR</b>	Verbal abuse and/or threatening or degrading words or behaviour. Inappropriate use of force in control and restraint situations.	Lack of proper regard for privacy. Suggestive remarks, jokes etc. Physical contact which, although not overtly sexual, makes the child feel uncomfortable.
<b>ABUSE OR POTENTIALLY ABUSIVE BEHAVIOUR</b>	Persistent or repeated incidents of the type of inappropriate behaviour referred to above.  Deliberately assaultive behaviour.	Persistent or repeated incidents of the type of inappropriate behaviour referred to above.  Any overtly sexual contact.