



A Code of Conduct for All Staff

To be reviewed: 2024/25

Introduction

Staff have a crucial role to play in shaping the lives of young people. They have a unique opportunity to interact with children and young people in ways that are both challenging and inspiring. This guidance has been produced to help staff establish the safest possible learning and working environments. The aims are to safeguard young people and reduce the risk of staff being accused of improper or unprofessional conduct. They apply to all adults in school, whatever their position, role or responsibility.

Teachers and other education staff are accountable for the way in which they exercise authority; manage risk; use resources; and protect pupils from discrimination and avoidable harm.

All staff, whether paid or voluntary, have a duty to keep young people safe and to protect them from physical and emotional harm. This duty is in part exercised through the development of respectful, caring and professional relationships between staff and pupils and behaviour by staff that demonstrates integrity, maturity and good judgement.

ELBs, school and parents have legitimate expectations about the nature of professional involvement in the lives of pupils. When individuals accept a role that involves working with children and young people, they need to understand and acknowledge the responsibilities and trust inherent in that role. As adults, staff should

- Always act, and be seen to act, in the child's best interest
- Avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions
- Take responsibility for their own actions and behaviour,
- Understand the responsibilities which are part of their employment or role, and be aware that sanctions will be applied if these provisions are breached.

This code is not "another" new set of requirements and regulations. It is a supportive document which aims to clarify good practice in order to keep both pupils and staff safe. It is not intended to detract from the enriching experiences children and young people gain from positive interaction with staff, rather 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.

It cannot provide a complete checklist of what is, or is not, appropriate behaviour for staff. There will be occasions and circumstances in which staff have to make decisions or take action in the best interests of the child or young person which could contravene this guidance or where no guidance exists. Individuals are expected to make judgements about their behaviour in order to secure the best interests and welfare of the children in their charge and in so doing, will be seen to be acting reasonably.

The aims of this code are:

- To keep pupils safe
- To reduce the risk of allegations against staff so:
 - ☆ Staff should always report to a Senior member of staff anything of concern about a pupil's safety or their own.
 - ☆ All staff have a duty to keep pupils safe and to protect them from physical and emotional harm
 - ☆ All staff must be aware of the school's Child Protection Policy and procedures (Staff Handbook).

- ☆ If child abuse is suspected, staff have a duty to pass information without delay to Designated Teacher for Child Protection or the Principal or the Deputy Designated Teacher.
- ☆ Staff also have a duty to take care of themselves.

Positions of Power and Trust

As a result of their knowledge, position and/or the authority invested in their role, all adults working with children and young people in education settings are in positions of trust in relation to the young people in their care. A relationship between a member of staff and a pupil cannot be a relationship between equals. There is potential for exploitation and harm of vulnerable young people and staff have a responsibility to ensure that an unequal balance of power is not used for personal advantage or gratification.

Wherever possible, staff should avoid behaviour, which might be misinterpreted by others, and report and record any incident with this potential. In other words staff should:

- Not use their position to gain access to information for their own advantage or to a pupils or family's detriment.
- Not use their power to intimidate, threaten, coerce or undermine pupils.
- Not engage in any relationship outside of school or sexual activity with a pupil, or cause or invite a pupil to engage in or watch any kind of sexual activity. Their consent is irrelevant.
- Consider their attitudes, demeanour and language with care and thought.
- Be aware how their actions may be viewed by others. Do not be seen to be paying special attention to a particular pupil. Always ask 'Are my actions fair, reasonable, warranted, proportionate, measured, safe and applied equitably?'

Confidentiality

Members of staff may have access to confidential information about pupils in order to undertake their every day responsibilities. In some circumstances staff may be given additional highly sensitive or private information, some of which may need to be kept confidential to protect the child. Staff should never use confidential or personal information about a pupil or his/her family for their own, or others advantage (including that of partners, friends, relatives or other organisations). Information must never be used to intimidate, humiliate, or embarrass the pupil. This means that staff should:

- Not share confidential information about a pupil with any person, other than on a professional need-to-know basis.
- Never promise complete confidentiality to a pupil prior to, during or after a disclosure.
- Never pass on confidential information to outsider, press, police, social services etc without first seeking guidance from a Senior member of staff.
- Not share information about other staff with pupils.

Propriety and Behaviour

All staff have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of children and young people. They should adopt high standards of personal conduct in order to maintain the confidence and respect of their peers, pupils and the public in general.

Social Contact

Staff should not establish or seek to establish social contact with pupils for the purpose of securing a friendship or to pursue or strengthen a relationship. Even if a young person seeks to

establish social contact, or if this occurs coincidentally, the member of staff should exercise his/her professional judgement in making a response and be aware that such social contact could be misconstrued.

It is important for staff to remember that they:

- Understand the need to maintain appropriate boundaries in their dealings with pupils
- Do not try to establish social contact with pupils for friendships or a relationship.
- Do not give personal details to pupils, e.g. home/mobile phone numbers, home or email address, unless checked with and agreed by senior staff.
- Ensure that any contact with parents or pupils by email is by school email only (c2kni.net)
- Ensure that any unwelcome communications to staff, be they written or visual, from pupils or parents is reported immediately.

Physical Contact

There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for staff to have physical contact with pupils, but it is crucial that they only do so in ways appropriate to their professional role.

It is not possible to be specific about the appropriateness of each physical contact, since an action that is appropriate with one child in one set of circumstances may be inappropriate in another, or with a different child. Staff should therefore, use their professional judgement at all times.

a) Physical Contact

As a general rule, do not touch pupils. Physical contact should never be:

- Secretive or for personal gratification
- Of a type which may be considered indecent.
- ☆ There are occasions when it is appropriate and proper for staff to have physical contact with pupils, but they should only touch when it is appropriate and proper to do so in their professional judgement. Physical contact should be in response to a child's needs at the time, be of limited duration and be appropriate given their age, stage of development, gender and background.
- ☆ Some staff (e.g. PE, Drama, Music and SEN staff) may need to initiate physical contact, e.g. in order to support a child so they can perform a task safely, to demonstrate a particular piece of equipment/apparatus/instrument or assist them with an exercise. This should be done with the pupil's understanding of the reason and their consent, and in an 'open' environment. E.g. "do you mind if I move your arm?"
- ☆ Do not indulge in horseplay or fun fights
- ☆ Use extra caution when it is known that a pupil has suffered previous abuse or neglect.

Staff should report immediately to the designated teacher, any physical contact which concerns them, or which they believe may have been misconstrued and may result in a child responding inappropriately.

b) Pupils in distress

- ☆ There may be rare occasions when a very distressed pupil needs comfort and reassurance as a caring parent would provide - staff should not feel inhibited from providing this. However, members of staff should use their discretion in such areas to ensure that what is, and what is seen by others present to be

normal and natural, does not become unnecessary and unjustified contact, particularly with the same child over a period of time.

- ☆ Be self-aware, avoid any contact which may be instructive or open to misinterpretation.
- ☆ Staff should tell a colleague if they have offered comfort to a distressed pupil.

Control and physical intervention

Always try to defuse situations without physical intervention. We do not expect staff to put themselves at physical risk, but they may intervene to prevent a pupil from injuring themselves or others. They may use only reasonable force. There is no legal definition of reasonable force, but they must be sure that any physical intervention is warranted of the circumstances of the particular incident (i.e. not in response to a trivial action), and that the degree of force used is in proportion to the seriousness of the behaviour, or the consequences it is intended to prevent. Any force used should be the minimum to achieve the desired result. Further guidance on the use of reasonable force to restrain or control pupils is in the DENI circular 1999/9. Following any incident where a member of staff feels that his/her actions involving physical contact, have been, or may be misconstrued, or when a member of staff has had to physically restrain a pupil, a written report of the incident should be submitted immediately to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection, the Principal or the Deputy Designated Teacher.

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

Behavioural Management

All pupils have a right to be treated with respect and dignity. Corporal punishment is unlawful in all schools. Equally, staff should not use any form of degrading treatment to punish a pupil. Staff must remember that they should:

- Not use physical intimidation or invade a pupil's space_
- Not use force as a form of punishment
- They should be alert to the risk of emotional abuse such as the use of vindictive sarcasm, verbal bullying, severe and persistent demeaning or insensitive comments or actions, particularly when directed consistently at a single or small group of pupils.

Such behaviour is unacceptable.

- Following an incident of poor behaviour, always try to remain calm. Take steps to try to defuse situations before they escalate.
- Not leave a pupil out of sight and unsupervised in the corridor/room/store, rather send them to another member of staff (accompanied by another pupil) or keep them separate from the other pupils but within your sight.
- Never try to bar a pupils 'way' or to physically prevent a pupil from leaving a room or a situation, unless of course they may constitute a threat to themselves or others. Calmly advise them that leaving against your instructions constitutes defiance and they will have to face the consequences of their actions.

One to One Situations

Staff working in one to one situations with children and young people may be more vulnerable to allegations. Teachers and other should recognise this possibility and plan and conduct such meetings accordingly. Every attempt should be made to ensure the safety and security needs of both staff and pupils are met.

This means that staff should:

- Not hold meetings with pupils in remote, secluded areas of school
- Ensure there is visual access and/or an open door in one to one situations
- Inform other staff of the meeting beforehand, assessing the need to have them present or close by

- It may be necessary to indicate that the room is in use, but staff should not use 'engaged' or equivalent signs. Such signs may create an opportunity for secrecy or the interpretation of secrecy.
- If they have reason to be concerned about a one-to-one meeting in advance, because of a pupil's previous behaviour or vulnerability, arrange for a colleague to be present, especially where there is a gender difference.
- Best avoid one to one detentions/subject support

Transportation of Pupils

If at all possible, transportation of pupils in staff cars should be avoided. It may however be necessary in some cases. Where this is the case:

- Staff should not transport pupils in their own vehicle, especially one-to-one, without the consent of the parent and senior teacher.
- Staff must always have valid insurance for this purpose.
- Staff must ensure that pupils wear seat belts and that the maximum capacity of the car is not exceeded.
- When transporting a pupil e.g. to hospital, it is best to take 2 additional pupils or another member of staff so that the driver is not left alone with a pupil. If this is unavoidable the pupil should travel in the back seat.

Educational Visits and After School Clubs etc.

Staff should take particular care when supervising pupils in the less formal atmosphere of a residential setting or after-school activity.

During school activities that take place off the school site or out of hours, a more relaxed discipline or informal dress code may be acceptable. However, staff remain in a position of trust and need to ensure that their behaviour cannot be interpreted as seeking to establish an inappropriate relationship or friendship. They must remain professional at all times.

Where out of school activities include overnight stays, careful consideration needs to be given to sleeping arrangements. Pupils, staff and parents should be informed of these prior to the start of the trip.

Health and safety arrangements require members of staff to keep colleagues/Senior staff aware of their whereabouts, especially when involved in and out of school activity.

First Aid and Administration of Medication

All schools must have trained first aiders/appointed persons. Teachers may volunteer to undertake this task but it is not a contractual requirement. Staff should receive appropriate training before administering first aid or medication.

- No medicine should be given by the school without written parental consent. This includes aspirin, paracetamol etc.
- Staff are not expected to administer or to supervise the taking of medicines unless specifically authorised and/or trained to do so and on receipt of a written request from parent/guardians indicating the amount and frequency.
- Pupils needing medication regularly should have a health care plan drawn up by the school nurse/SENCO in consultation with parents.
- Wherever possible, first aid should only be given by our trained volunteer staff and by staff of the same gender if possible. Try to ensure that another adult or pupil is present, or at least aware, when first aid is administered. In exceptional emergency

circumstances it may be necessary for an untrained member of staff to intervene. If so, do the minimum required whilst awaiting specialist support.

- Always report any accident or first aid administration to the school first aider as parents must be informed. When injury occurs as the result of an accident, always complete an Accident Report form as soon as possible (available from office)
- A member of staff should always accompany a child taken to hospital, and should stay until the parent arrives.

Intimate Care

All Children have a right to safety, privacy and dignity when contact of an intimate nature is required (for example assisting with toileting or removing wet/soiled clothing). A care plan should be drawn up and agreed with parents for all children who require intimate care on a regular basis.

This means that staff should:

- Adhere to the school's intimate care guidelines
- Explain to the child what is happening
- Consult with colleagues where any variation from agreed procedure/care plan is necessary
- Record the justification for any variations to be agreed procedure/care plan and share this information with parents.

See Intimate Care policy for further details.

Dress and Appearance

A person's dress and appearance are matters of personal choice and self-expression. However staff should consider the manner of dress and appearance appropriate to their professional role which may be different to that adopted in their personal life. All staff should ensure they are dressed decently, safely and appropriately for the tasks they undertake. Those who dress or appear in a manner which could be considered as inappropriate could render themselves vulnerable to criticism or allegation:

This means that all staff should dress in a way which:

- Promotes a positive and professional image
- Is appropriate to their role
- Is not likely to be viewed as offensive, revealing, or sexually provocative
- Does not distract, cause embarrassment or give rise to misunderstanding
- Is absent of any political or otherwise contentious slogans.

Gifts

Staff need to take care that they do not give or accept any gift that might be construed as a bribe by others, or lead the pupils to expect preferential treatment.

Remember:

- Do not accept any gift which might be construed by others as a bribe, or lead the giver to expect preferential treatment.
- Small 'thank yous' are OK, but do not receive gifts on a regular basis or of any significant value.
- Generally only give gifts to a pupil as part of our agreed reward systems. In any other context, ensure that any gifts given are of significant value and given to all children equally.
- If concerned, discuss the issue with a senior member of staff.

Infatuations

Staff need to be aware that it is not uncommon for pupils to be strongly attracted to a member of staff and/or develop a heterosexual or homosexual infatuation. All situations should be responded to sensitively to maintain the dignity of all concerned. Staff should also be aware that such circumstances always carry a high risk of words or actions being misinterpreted and for allegations to be made against staff. To avoid hurt and distress for all concerned staff should report immediately to a senior member of staff any indications (verbal, written or physical) that suggests a pupil may be infatuated with them, or with a colleague.

Social networking websites and Communication Technology

Social Networking

Social networking is everywhere. It is common to find parents, children, co-workers and others on such sites. With social networks people across the world have access to tools and options that were previously non-existent. However, there are now just as many new opportunities to connect as there are to get into potential danger. One thing we often forget while having fun on social networks is that almost anybody can see what we are doing. While we are tagging photos for our friends or are posting comments to them, it can be easy to forget that someone else who has been invited onto a social networking site can also view them.

Once something appears on the Internet, it's almost impossible to remove. As these sites continue to grow in popularity, so does the value of the information on them to parties other than those directly involved. Social networking users need to take a step back and think about just what they are posting onto the Internet.

Guidelines

People who work with children and young people should always maintain appropriate professional boundaries, avoid improper contact or relationships and respect their position of trust.

With regard to relationships, individuals who work with children and young people should not attempt to establish, an inappropriate relationship which might include:

- Communication of a personal nature
- Inappropriate dialogue through the internet
- The sending of emails or text messages of an inappropriate nature

Individuals, who work with children and young people, should be extremely careful in corresponding with people on social networking sites. Staff relationships with children and young people should at all times remain professional and they should **not** correspond with children or young people through such site or add them as 'friends'. It is worth bearing in mind that on such sites an inappropriate or even misconstrued communication may have the potential to impact upon careers or even result in criminal investigation.

In addition staff should bear in mind who may access their own profiles on such websites and should therefore take care as to the information they display about themselves and their personal lives. They should also ensure that they have installed and are using the appropriate privacy settings.

Individuals who work with children and young people, should not make, view or access illegal or inappropriate images of children.

Individuals who work with children and young people and others, with whom they may be in a position of trust, should exercise caution when using social networking sites and avoid inappropriate communication of any kind.

If you are a member of Facebook or any similar social networking site, never post information regarding 'All Children's'.

Staff need to take proper responsibility for any comments, or contacts they post on such sites.

Any formal communication with parents must be through the office, by phone or by letter if seen and approved by the Principal.

Internet Use

Under no circumstances should adults in school access inappropriate images. Accessing child pornography or indecent images of children on the internet, and making, storing or disseminating such material, is illegal and, if proven, will invariably lead to the individual being barred from work with children and young people.

- Staff must follow the school policy on the use of IT equipment and the Internet
- Staff must not use the school IT equipment to access pornography or any inappropriate website, on or off site.

Photographic and video images

It is very good practice at times to record photographic and video images of pupils, or to allow pupils to record such images of each other, e.g. to assist teaching and learning, to celebrate achievement, for publicity.

Because of the potential for images of children to be misused for pornographic or grooming purposes, staff should follow this code:

- Only record images when there is a justifiable need.
- Be clear to pupils about why the images are being recorded and what will happen to them.
- Ensure that a more senior colleague is aware that you are recording images.
- Ensure that all images recorded are available for scrutiny, in order to screen for acceptability.
- Avoid making images in one-to-one situations.
- Avoid storing photographs in a shared documents area after you have finished using them with a class, as others can have access to them.
- Images of pupils should not be displayed on websites, in publications or in a public place without the consent of the pupil and parent/carer. Existing parents are consulted to allow them to indicate that they do not wish their child to be photographed. Unless they so indicate, we will deem that it is acceptable to record images for legitimate purposes. Parents of new intakes/new admissions will routinely be asked to give such general consent.
- Teachers have access to a list of pupils whose parents have not given permission for **photographs/videos** to be taken for various uses. Please consult this before taking photographs.
- It is forbidden for anyone to use mobile phones to record photographs or video footage of pupils or staff in school or at out of school activities.

Responsibilities

- Staff should report to a senior member of staff any behaviour by colleagues which gives cause for concern in relation to safeguarding the wellbeing of pupils.
- If any incident occurs which may result in action being misinterpreted and/or an allegation being made against a member of staff, then the relevant information should be recorded promptly and reported to the Designated/Deputy Designated teacher or the Principal.
- Staff who are the subject of allegations are advised to contact their professional association.

Conclusion

It would be impossible and inappropriate to lay down hard and fast rules to cover all the circumstances in which staff interrelate with children and young people, or where opportunities for their conduct to be misconstrued might occur.

In all circumstances, employees' professional judgement will be exercised and for the vast majority of employees this Code of Conduct will serve only to confirm what has always been their practice. If employees have any doubts about points in the Code of Conduct, or how they should act in particular circumstances, they should consult the Principal, the designated teacher for Child Protection or a representative of their professional association.

From time to time, it is prudent for all staff to reappraise their teaching styles, relationships with children/young people and their manner and approach to individual children/young people, to ensure that they give no grounds for doubt about their intentions, in the minds of colleagues, of children/young people or of their parents/guardians.