



Trinity St Stephen Church of England (Aided) First School

Staff Code of Conduct

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Louise Lovegrove'.

Headteacher

March 2025

Full Governing Body review due – March 2028

Code of Conduct for all Staff at Trinity St Stephen Church of England First School.

Rationale

This code of conduct has been created through discussion with Governors and consultation with all staff members. It is aimed at helping us strive towards our vision of being a Christian learning community where all are supported and challenged to achieve and thrive. Our work in school is always guided by our Christian Values of friendship, trust, wisdom, compassion, peace and fellowship.

This Code of Conduct should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Behaviour Policy;
- Intimate Care Policy;
- Child Protection Policy;
- E Safety Policy;
- Dress Code; and
- Visitors Policy.

The adults who work with children in education settings are expected to act professionally. They seek to provide a safe and supportive environment, which secures the well-being and very best outcomes for children in their care. It is recognised that achieving these aims is not always straightforward. Much relies on pupil and staff interactions, where tensions and misunderstandings can occur. It is here that staff behaviours can give rise to allegations being made against them. Allegations may be genuine, malicious or misplaced. They may arise from differing perceptions of the same event, but when they occur, they are inevitably distressing and difficult for all concerned. To this end this Code of Conduct should outline what behaviour is expected by staff in our school.

Underpinning Principles

- The welfare of the child is paramount (Children Act 1989). Children are very vulnerable as they assume all adults in the school are trustworthy.
- Staff are responsible for their own actions and behaviour and should avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions.
- Staff should work, and be seen to work in an open and transparent way.
- Staff should discuss and/or take advice promptly from their line manager or another senior member of staff over any incident, which may give rise to concern.
- Records should be made of any such incident and of decisions made/further actions agreed, in accordance with school policy for keeping and maintaining records.
- All staff should know the name of the designated person/s for child protection (in our school it is the Headteacher (Mrs Lovegrove) and the Head of KS1 (Miss Pugh), or if in the event that the concerns relate to the designated person/s, the Chair of Governors), be familiar with child protection arrangements and understand their responsibilities to safeguard and protect children.
- Staff should be aware that breaches of the law and other professional guidelines could result in criminal or disciplinary action being taken against them.

As a result of their knowledge, position and/or the authority invested in their role, all adults working with children are in positions of trust. 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.

Exercise of professional judgement

This guidance cannot provide a complete checklist of what is, or is not, appropriate behaviour for staff. It does highlight however, behaviour that is illegal, inappropriate or inadvisable. There will be occasions and circumstances in which staff have to make decisions or take action in the best interests of the child 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.

Staff should:

- discuss the circumstances that informed any actions they took, or their proposed action, with a senior colleague. This will help to ensure that the safest practices are employed and reduce the risk of actions being misinterpreted;
- always discuss any misunderstanding, accidents or threats with a senior manager; and
- always record any discussions and actions taken together with their justifications.

Power and Position of Trust

Staff should not:

- use their position to gain access to information for their own advantage and/or a child's or family's detriment;
- use their power to intimidate, threaten, coerce or undermine pupils; and
- use their status and standing to form or promote relationships with children, which are of a sexual nature.

Confidentiality

This means that staff:

- are expected to treat information they receive about children in a discreet and confidential manner;
- in any doubt about sharing information they hold or which has been requested of them, should seek advice from a senior member of staff;
- need to be cautious when passing information to others about a child; and
- should avoid “loose” talk among other members of staff.

Propriety and Behaviour

Staff should not:

- behave in a manner which would lead any reasonable person to question their suitability to work with children or act as a role model;
- make sexual remarks to a pupil (including email, text messages, phone or letter);
- discuss their own sexual relationships with, or in the presence of, pupils; and
- make (or encourage others to make) unprofessional personal comments which scapegoat, demean or humiliate, or might be interpreted as such.

Dress and Appearance

Staff should wear clothing which:

- promotes a positive and professional image;
- is appropriate to their role;
- is not likely to be viewed as offensive;
- is not revealing, or sexually provocative;
- does not distract, cause embarrassment or give rise to misunderstanding; and
- is absent of any political or otherwise contentious slogans.
- follows the school dress code

Gifts

Staff should:

- ensure that gifts received or given in situations which may be misconstrued, are declared
- only give gifts to an individual young person as part of an agreed reward system; and
- ensure that gifts are of insignificant value and given to all children equally.

Infatuations

Staff should:

- report any indications (verbal, written or physical) that suggest a pupil may be infatuated with them.

Social Contact (this may include contact via social media)

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 and/or their parent seeks to establish social contact, or if this occurs coincidentally, the member of staff should exercise her/his professional judgement in making a response and be aware that such social contact could be misconstrued. Where staff are also parents at the school they should be aware that this may put them in a difficult position with other parents. They must always be aware that they may be questioned about school matters out of the school setting. Any matters should always be dealt with by referring the parent to the correct school channels during school time. Staff who are also parents should equally be aware that if they have concerns regarding their own children these must be dealt with through the correct channels as any other parent, for example asking to meet with the class teacher at a mutually convenient time to discuss the matter.

Staff should:

- always approve any planned social contact with pupils and/or their parents with senior colleagues;

- advise senior management of any regular social contact they have with a pupil which may give rise to concern;
- report and record any situation, which they feel, might compromise the school or their own professional standing.

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. A 'no touch' approach is impractical and may in some circumstances be inappropriate.

When physical contact is made with pupils this should be in response to their needs at the time, of limited duration and appropriate given their age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity and background. Appropriate physical contact in school may occur most often with younger pupils e.g. sitting on laps for short periods of time to comfort a distressed child, or to respond to a hug initiated by a child (a one armed hug is more appropriate). 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.

Physical contact should never be secretive, or for the gratification of the adult, or represent a misuse of authority. If a member of staff believes that an action could be misinterpreted, the incident and circumstances should be recorded as soon as possible and, if appropriate, a copy placed on the child's file.

Physical contact, which occurs regularly with an individual child or young person, is likely to raise questions unless the justification for this is part of a formally agreed plan (for example in relation to pupils with SEN or physical disabilities). Any such contact should be the subject of an agreed and open school policy and subject to review. Where feasible, staff should seek the child's permission before initiating contact. Staff should listen, observe and take note of the child's reaction or feelings and – so far as is possible - use a level of contact which is acceptable to the child, for the minimum time necessary.

Staff should:

- be aware that even well intentioned physical contact may be misconstrued by the child, an observer or by anyone to whom this action is described;
- never touch a child in a way which may be considered indecent;
- always be prepared to explain actions and accept that all physical contact be open to scrutiny; and
- never indulge in horseplay, tickling or fun fights.

Control and Physical Intervention

The circumstances in which staff can intervene with a pupil are covered by the Education Act 1996. Staff may legitimately intervene to prevent a pupil from committing a criminal offence, injuring themselves or others, causing damage to property, engaging in behaviour prejudicial to

good order and to maintain good order and discipline. Staff should have regard to the health and safety of themselves and others.

Under no circumstances should physical force be used as a form of punishment. The use of unwarranted physical force is likely to constitute a criminal offence. In all cases where physical intervention is deemed necessary, the incident and subsequent actions should be documented and reported.

Changing for PE

Staff should:

- avoid unnecessary physical contact when children are in a state of undress; and
- avoid any visually intrusive behaviour.

Behaviour Management

All pupils have a right to be treated with respect and dignity. Staff should not use any form of degrading treatment to punish a pupil. The use of humour can help to defuse a situation, however the use of sarcasm, demeaning or insensitive comments towards pupils is not acceptable in any situation.

Staff should:

- not use force as a form of punishment;
- try to defuse situations before they escalate;
- keep parents informed of any sanctions; and
- adhere to the school's Behaviour Policy.

Sexual Contact with Young People

Where a person aged 18 or over is in a position of trust with a child under 18, it is an offence for that person to engage in sexual activity with or in the presence of that child, or to cause or incite that child to engage in or watch sexual activity. There are occasions when adults embark on a course of behaviour known as 'grooming' where the sole purpose is to gain the trust of a child, and manipulate that relationship so sexual abuse can take place. Staff should be aware that conferring special attention and favour upon a child might be construed as being part of a 'grooming' process, which is an offence.

Staff should:

- not pursue sexual relationships with children and young people either in or out of school; and
- avoid any form of communication with a child or young person which could be interpreted as sexually suggestive or provocative ie verbal comments, letters, notes, electronic mail, phone calls, texts and physical contact.

One to One Situations

Staff should:

- avoid 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;
- avoid use of 'engaged' or equivalent signs wherever possible. Such signs may create an opportunity for secrecy or the interpretation of secrecy;
- always report any situation where a child becomes distressed or angry to a senior colleague; and
- consider the needs and circumstances of the child/children involved.

Transporting Children

Wherever possible and practicable it is advisable that transport is undertaken other than in private vehicles, with at least one adult additional to the driver, acting as an escort. In certain situations e.g. out of school activities, staff or volunteers may agree to transport children. A designated member of staff should be appointed to plan and provide oversight of all transporting arrangements and respond to any difficulties that may arise. Staff should ensure that their behaviour is safe and that the transport arrangements and the vehicle meet all legal requirements. They should ensure that the vehicle is roadworthy and appropriately insured and that the maximum capacity is not exceeded.

Educational Visits and After School Clubs

Adults should:

- always have another adult present in out of school activities, unless otherwise agreed with senior staff in school;
- undertake a risk assessment;
- have parental consent to the activity; and
- ensure that their behaviour remains professional at all times.

See RBWM Offsite and Hazardous Activities Policies and Procedures

Whistleblowing

Staff should:

- report any behaviour by colleagues that raises concern.

See Whistleblowing Policy for more information.

For more information consult: **Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who work with Children and Young People in Education Settings (2009)**. This DCSF practice guidance provides

clear advice on appropriate and safe behaviours for all adults working with children in paid or unpaid capacities, in all settings and in all contexts. It is relevant to both individuals and schools/services working with or on behalf of pupils.

Acknowledgement is made that this Code of Conduct is based on the Code of Conduct from Kings Court First School, Windsor.