



Staff Code of Conduct Policy

Review of Policy	September 2022
Ratification of Policy by the Board of Governors	October 2022
Next Review Date	September 2026

In St. Mary's P.S. Cabragh we want all our pupils and staff to feel happy, safe and secure so that they can benefit fully from their time in school and be enabled to contribute wholeheartedly to the educational experience which our school offers.

We aim, at all times, to behave appropriately and warmly towards each other and to support one another both personally and professionally.

We value greatly the easy relationships which exist between staff and students in St Mary's and we would wish to see those maintained. It is always necessary, however, to ensure that these relationships are appropriate and professional so that the warm and caring atmosphere which is an integral part of the community of St. Mary's and which is so nourishing for everyone, is enabled to flourish.

All actions concerning children and young people 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 and young people in their charge must be above reproach. This Code of Conduct is not intended to detract from the enriching experiences children and young people gain from positive interaction with all staff in our school. 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.

We subscribe to the following good practice in this area:

Private Meetings with Pupils

1.1 Staff should be aware of the dangers which may arise from private interviews with individual pupils. It is recognised that there will be occasions when confidential interviews must take place. When the need arises to interview a pupil alone, employees should conduct such interviews in a room with visual access or with the door open.

1.2 Staff are advised to ensure that another adult knows that the meeting is happening and where it will be taking place.

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

Physical Contact with Pupils

As a general principle, staff are advised that it is good practice to avoid unnecessary physical contact with pupils.

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

2.1 Where a pupil indicates that he/she is uncomfortable with any such contact, it should never take place unless it is necessary to protect the child, others or property from harm.

(DENI Circular 1999/9, on the use of reasonable force, gives guidance on Article 4 of the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 (Power of a member of staff to restrain pupils), (DENI Circular 2003/13 Welfare and Protection of Pupils).

2.2 Where physical contact is required to maintain the safety of a pupil or others around them, that safety must take precedence over all other considerations (Reasonable force and Safe Handling Policy).

2.3 Physical punishment is illegal, as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour, whatever the provocation.

2.4 Trained staff required to administer first-aid to a pupil should ensure wherever possible that this is done in the presence of other children or another adult. The welfare of the pupil is however paramount, hence no member of staff should hesitate to provide first-aid in an emergency simply because another person is not present.

2.5 Any physical contact which would be likely to be misinterpreted by the pupil, parent or other casual observer should be avoided.

2.6 Following any incident where an employee feels that his/her actions have been or may be misconstrued, a written report of the incident should be submitted immediately to the Principal.

2.7 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 employees may be in proximity to pupils in circumstances very different from the normal school/work environment

Choice and Use of Teaching Materials

3.1 It is inevitable that some of our teaching will involve the use of sensitive materials and it is very difficult to anticipate when these might impact negatively on our students. If the material to be used is very contentious, and if there are concerns about any students in a class in relation to it, it is good practice to consult, in the first instance, with the School Principal / Designated Teacher for Child Protection. Teachers should avoid teaching materials, the choice of which might be misinterpreted and reflect upon the motives for the choice.

3.2 When using teaching materials of a sensitive nature, a teacher should be aware of the danger that their application, either by pupils or by the teacher, might be criticised after the event. Educational establishments have already received advice on the value of consulting parents and Governors when proposing to use materials in connection with sex education programmes.

Relationships and Attitudes

4.1 Relationships with pupils must be professional at all times.

4.2 Staff should ensure that all verbal exchanges are conducted in a calm and professional manner. Only in unusual circumstances, for example in emergency situations or when attracting attention in large areas, will voices be raised. Sarcastic, threatening or demeaning verbal interaction is not acceptable. Furthermore, verbally humiliating or frightening pupils as a means of punishment is not acceptable. The use of humour can be helpful in diffusing situations but the humour used must be understood and appropriate.

E- Safety and Internet Use

5.1 Staff must exercise caution when using information technology and be aware of the risks to themselves and to others. Regard should be given to the school's E-safety and ICT Acceptable Use Policy at all times both inside and outside of work.

5.2 At no time should personal telephone numbers, email addresses or communication routes via personal accounts on social media platforms be used to communicate with pupils. If contact via mobile phone is necessary eg on a school trip, a mobile phone (or a SIM card) provided by the school should be used. All electronic communications with pupils should be via the official school e mailing system or in a safe learning environment such as Google Classroom. If contacted by a pupil by an inappropriate route, staff should report the contact to the Principal immediately.

5.3 Social Networking Sites present particular difficulties for staff in all schools. Staff and volunteers must not engage in inappropriate use of social network sites which may bring themselves, the school and the school community into disrepute. Great care must be taken to ensure that appropriate boundaries are maintained between staff and students in this arena, as in all others. It is **strongly recommended** that all staff using social networking sites use the highest available privacy settings and that staff do not communicate with pupils via personal social networking sites. Information directly related to the school community should never be posted on personal social networking sites. Staff should also be mindful of content attributable to them, posted on others sites (eg. Friends and family) who may not have the privacy settings recommended.

5.4 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.

5.5 All staff are required to leave their personal mobile phones in the staffroom during the school day.

Safeguarding Pupils/Students

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

6.2 The duty to safeguard pupils includes the duty to report concerns about a pupil or colleague to a member of the school's Safeguarding team (Designated Teacher(DT)/Deputy Designated Teacher (DDT) for Child Protection or the Principal).

6.3 The school's DT is Miss Lauren Cush and the DDT is Mrs Donna Quinn

6.4 All staff and volunteers are provided with personal copies of the school's Child Protection Policy and must be familiar with this document and other relevant school policies eg e-Safety and Acceptable Use Policy and Intimate Care Policy .

Confidentiality

7.1 Members of staff and volunteers 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. They should never use confidential or personal information about a pupil or his family for their own, or others' advantage. Information must never be used to intimidate, humiliate, or embarrass the pupil.

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

7.3 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.

7.4 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.

7.5 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.

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

Pupil/Student Development

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

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

Honesty and Integrity

9.1 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.

Conduct Outside of Work

10.1 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.

Relationships with Students Outside of Work

11.1 Staff must declare any relationship outside of school that they may have with students. For example, private tutoring.

11.2 No private tutoring is to take place on the school premises.

Dress and Appearance

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

Disciplinary Action

13.1 Staff and volunteers should be aware that a failure to comply with this Code of Conduct could result in disciplinary action.

Compliance

14.1 All staff and volunteers must sign and date to confirm they have read, understood and agreed to comply with the code of conduct.