

ST CHARLES R.C VA PRIMARY SCHOOL.



Staff Code Of Conduct Policy

Policy Author	Date Published	Date for Review	Reviewer
M Hulme	Jan 2016	Jan 2018	M Hulme

Our Mission Statement:



St Charles' RC Primary School operates a rigorous and robust recruitment process that gathers evidence about candidates' suitability to work with children as well as their suitability for the post and has proactive safeguarding procedures in place that address inappropriate behaviour.

We take our safeguarding responsibilities very seriously and whilst acknowledging that the majority of adults behave in an appropriate manner we also understand that, when working with children, tensions and misunderstandings can occur.

It is here that the behaviour of adults can give rise to allegations of abuse being made against them. Allegations may be 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. Equally, it must be recognised that some allegations will be genuine and there are adults who will deliberately seek out, create or exploit opportunities to abuse children. It is therefore essential that all possible steps are taken to safeguard children and ensure that the adults working with them are safe to do so.

Concerns about the potential vulnerability of adults in school are understandable and our Code of Conduct is intended to support adults and children by:

- clarifying which behaviours constitute safe practice and which behaviours should be avoided;
- assisting adults working with children to work safely and responsibly and to monitor their own standards and practice;
- supporting the Headteacher in setting clear expectations of behaviour and/or codes of practice relevant to the services being provided;
- supporting the Headteacher in giving a clear message that unlawful or unsafe behaviour is unacceptable and that, where appropriate, disciplinary or legal action will be taken;
- supporting safer recruitment practice;
- minimising the risk of misplaced or malicious allegations made against adults who work with children,
- reducing the incidence of positions of trust being abused or misused.

Power and position of trust

A relationship between an adult and a child cannot be a relationship between equals and there is potential for exploitation and harm of vulnerable children. Adults must ensure that an unequal balance of power is not used for personal advantage or gratification.

Adults should always maintain appropriate professional boundaries and avoid behaviour which might be misinterpreted by others. They should report and record any incident with this potential.

Propriety and behaviour

All adults working with children have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of children. It is therefore expected that they will adopt high standards of personal conduct in order to maintain the confidence and respect of the public in general and all those with whom they work.

There may be times, for example, when an adult's behaviour or actions in their personal life come under scrutiny from local communities, the media or public authorities. This could be because their behaviour is considered to compromise their position in their workplace or indicate an unsuitability to work with children. Misuse of drugs, alcohol or acts of violence would be examples of such behaviour.

Adults in contact with children should therefore understand and be aware, that safe practice also involves using judgement and integrity about behaviours in places other than the work setting.

The behaviour of an adult's partner or other family members may raise similar concerns and require careful consideration by the Headteacher as to whether there may be a potential risk to children in the workplace.

Dress and Appearance

A person's dress and appearance are matters of personal choice and self-expression. However adults should dress in ways which are appropriate to their role and this may need to be different to how they dress when not at work.

Adults who work with children should ensure they take care to ensure they are dressed appropriately for the tasks and the work they undertake.

Those who dress in a manner which could be considered as inappropriate could render themselves vulnerable to criticism or allegations.

Personal Living Space

No child or young person should be in or invited into, the home of an adult who works with them, unless the reason for this has been firmly established and agreed with parents/ carers and Head / Deputy Headteacher.

Under no circumstances should children assist with chores or tasks in the home of an adult who works with them. Neither should they be asked to do so by friends or family of that adult.

Gifts, rewards and favouritism

The giving of gifts or rewards to children should be part of an agreed policy for supporting positive behaviour or recognising particular achievements. In some situations, the giving of gifts as rewards may be accepted practice for a group of children, whilst in other situations the giving of a gift to an individual child or young person will be part of an agreed plan, recorded and discussed with the Headteacher / Deputy Headteacher and parent / carer.

It is acknowledged that there are specific occasions when adults may wish to give a child a personal gift. This is only acceptable practice where, in line with the agreed policy, the adult has first discussed the giving of the gift and the reason for it, with the Headteacher / Deputy Headteacher and/or parent or carer. Any gifts should be given openly and not be based on favouritism. Adults need to be aware however, that the giving of gifts can be misinterpreted by others as a gesture either to bribe or groom a young person.

Adults should exercise care when selecting children for specific activities or privileges to avoid perceptions of favouritism or unfairness. Methods and criteria for selection should always be transparent and subject to scrutiny. Care should also be taken to ensure that adults do not accept any gift that might be construed as a bribe by others, or lead the giver to expect preferential treatment.

There are occasions when children or parents / carers wish to pass small tokens of appreciation to adults e.g. on special occasions or as a thank-you and this is acceptable. However, it is unacceptable to receive gifts on a regular basis or of any significant value.

Infatuations

Occasionally, a child may develop an infatuation with an adult who works with them. These adults should deal with these situations sensitively and appropriately to maintain the dignity and safety of all concerned. They should remain aware, however, that such infatuations carry a high risk of words or actions being misinterpreted and should therefore make every effort to ensure that their own behaviour is above reproach.

An adult, who becomes aware that a child is developing an infatuation, should discuss this at the earliest opportunity with the Headteacher / Deputy headteacher and parent/carer so appropriate action can be taken to avoid any hurt, distress or embarrassment

Behaviour Management

All children have a right to be treated with respect and dignity and St Charles' RC Primary School's Policy to promote Positive Behaviour, including rewards and sanctions, should be followed consistently by all staff.

Inappropriate language

Sometimes staff will try to relate to children by adopting their mannerisms, using slang, treating them as peers or sharing inappropriate comments or humour. This kind of behaviour is inappropriate and does not build an appropriate relationship despite what the member of staff might think. It erodes the basis of a professional relationship in which the adult is expected to behave objectively in the best interest of the child and blurs the boundary between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour and leaves the member of staff in an extremely vulnerable position.

Adults should not use any form of degrading treatment to punish a child. The use of sarcasm, demeaning or insensitive comments towards children is not acceptable in any situation.

Role Models

Adults should be role models. They should not model their behaviour on that of the children nor should they follow their lead. Overfamiliarity or befriending behaviour could be construed as 'grooming' and leaves adults open to allegations.

Positive Intervention

The use of physical intervention should, wherever possible, be avoided. It should only be used to manage a child's behaviour if it is necessary to prevent personal injury to the child, other children or an adult, to prevent serious damage to property or in what would reasonably be regarded as exceptional circumstances. When physical intervention is used it should be undertaken in such a way that maintains the safety and dignity of all concerned.

Where a child has specific needs in terms of particularly challenging behaviour, a positive handling plan may be drawn up and agreed by all parties. Only in these circumstances should an adult deviate from St Charles' RC Primary School's Policy to Promote Positive Behaviour.

The scale and nature of any physical intervention must be proportionate to both the behaviour of the individual to be controlled and the nature of the harm they may cause. The minimum necessary force should be used and the techniques deployed in line with the school's positive intervention procedures.

In all cases where physical intervention is employed the incident and subsequent actions should be documented and reported. St Charles' RC Primary School's Policy for Care and Control offers more detailed guidance to adults.

Educational Visits

Adults should take particular care when supervising children during educational visits where the setting is less formal than the usual workplace. Adults remain in a position of trust and need to ensure that their behaviour remains professional at all times and stays within clearly defined professional boundaries.

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

Transporting children

There may be occasions when adults are asked to transport children as part of their duties. Staff are discouraged from transporting children unaccompanied. It is inappropriate for adults to offer lifts to a child outside their normal working duties, unless this has been brought to the attention of the Head / Deputy Headteacher and has been agreed with the parents/carers.

There may be occasions where the child requires transport in an emergency situation or where not to give a lift may place a child at risk. Such circumstances must always be recorded and reported to the Head / Deputy Headteacher and parents/carers.

Staff must comply with current health and safety regulations and, in interest of their own safety, are discouraged from transporting children in the front seat of their car.

Communication (including the use of IT)

Communication between children and adults, by whatever method, should take place within clear and explicit professional boundaries. This includes the wider use of technology such as mobile phones text messaging, e-mails, digital cameras, videos, web-cams, websites, blogs and social networking sites. Adults should not share any personal information with a child. They should not request, or respond to, any personal information from the child, other than that which might be appropriate as part of their professional role. Adults should ensure that all communications are transparent and open to scrutiny.

Adults should also be circumspect in their communications with children so as to avoid any possible misinterpretation of their motives or any behaviour which could be construed as grooming. They should not give their personal contact details to children including e-mail, home or mobile telephone numbers, unless the need to do so is agreed with the Headteacher / Deputy Headteacher and parents/carers. E-mail or text communications between an adult and a child outside agreed protocols may lead to disciplinary and/or criminal investigations. This also includes communications through internet based web sites / social network sites.

Home Visits

Prior to any home visit it is important that appropriate risks are considered. Where there is cause for concern or where little or no information is available, visits should not be made alone.

Under no circumstances should an adult visit a child in their home outside agreed work arrangements or invite a child to their own home or that of a family member, colleague or friend. If in an emergency, such a one-off arrangement is required, the adult must have a prior discussion with the Headteacher / Deputy Headteacher and the parents or carers and a clear justification for such arrangement is agreed and recorded.

Social Contact

Adults who work with children should not have social contact with them or their families, unless the reason for this contact has been firmly established and agreed with Headteacher / Deputy Headteacher. If a child or parent seeks to establish social contact, or if this occurs coincidentally, the adult should exercise her/his professional judgement in making a response but should always discuss the situation with their Headteacher / Deputy Headteacher or with the parent of the child. Adults should be aware that social contact in certain situations can be misconstrued as grooming.

Where social contact is an integral part of work duties, care should be taken to maintain appropriate personal and professional boundaries. This also applies to social contacts made through interests outside of work or through the adult's own family or personal networks.

It is recognised that some adults may support a parent who may be in particular difficulty. Care needs to be exercised in those situations where the parent comes to depend upon the adult for support outside their professional role. This situation should be discussed with the Headteacher / Deputy Headteacher and where necessary referrals made to the appropriate support agency

Physical Contact

Work within schools sometimes requires physical contact with children. However, it is crucial that in all circumstances, adults should only touch children in ways which are appropriate to their professional or agreed role and responsibilities.

Not all children feel comfortable about physical contact, and adults should not make the assumption that it is acceptable practice to use touch as a means of communication.

When physical contact is made with a child this should be in response to their needs at the time, of limited duration and appropriate to their age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity and background. Adults should use their professional judgement at all times, observe and take note of the child's reaction or feelings and - so far as is possible - use a level of contact and/or form of communication which is acceptable to the child for the minimum time necessary.

Physical contact which occurs regularly with an individual child is likely to raise questions unless there is explicit agreement on the need for, and nature of, that contact. This would then be part of a formally agreed plan. Any such arrangements should be understood and agreed by all concerned, justified in terms of the child's needs, consistently applied and open to scrutiny.

Physical contact should never be secretive, or for the gratification of the adult, or represent a misuse of authority. If an adult believes that their action could be misinterpreted, or if an action is observed by another as being inappropriate or possibly abusive, the incident and circumstances should be reported to the Child Protection Co-ordinator and in her absence the Headteacher / Deputy Headteacher. Where a child seeks or initiates inappropriate physical contact with an adult, the situation should be handled sensitively and care taken to ensure that contact is not exploited in any way. Careful consideration must be given to the needs of the child and advice and support given to the adult concerned.

It is recognised that some children who have experienced abuse may seek inappropriate physical contact. Adults should be particularly aware of this when it is known that a child has suffered previous abuse or neglect. In the child's view, physical contact might be associated with such experiences and lead to some actions being misinterpreted. In all circumstances where a child initiates inappropriate physical contact, it is the responsibility of the adult to sensitively deter the child and help them understand the importance of personal boundaries. Such circumstances must always be reported and discussed with the Child Protection Co-ordinator or in her absence the Headteacher / Deputy Headteacher and the parent/carer.

Other Activities that require Physical Contact

There are other times, eg sports activities, when adults will have to initiate some physical contact with children to demonstrate technique in the use of a particular piece of equipment, adjust posture, or perhaps to support a child so they can perform an activity safely or prevent injury. Such activities should be carried out in accordance with existing codes of conduct, regulations and best practice.

Physical contact should take place only when it is necessary in relation to a particular activity. Guidance and protocols around safe and appropriate physical contact are provided by national organisations, for example sports governing bodies or major arts organisations, and should be understood and applied consistently. Any incidents of physical contact that cause concern or fall outside of these protocols and guidance should be reported to the Child Protection Co-ordinator and in her absence the Headteacher / Deputy Headteacher and parent or carer.

Children in Distress

There are times, where adults are involved in managing significant or regular occurrences of distress and emotional upset in children. In these circumstances professional guidance should be followed and adults should be aware of what is and what is not acceptable behaviour when comforting a child or diffusing a situation. This is particularly important when working on a one-to-one basis.

For all other adults working with children there will be occasions when a distressed child needs comfort and reassurance and this may involve physical contact. Young children, in particular, may need immediate physical comfort, for example after a fall, separation from parent etc. Adults should use their professional judgement to comfort or reassure a child in an age-appropriate way whilst maintaining clear professional boundaries.

Where an adult has a particular concern about the need to provide this type of care and reassurance, or is concerned that an action may be misinterpreted, this should be reported and discussed with the Headteacher / Deputy Headteacher and parents/carers.

Intimate Care

Some roles necessitate intimate physical contact with children on a regular basis, for example assisting with toileting, providing intimate care for children with disabilities or in the provision of medical care. The nature, circumstances and context of such contact should comply with professional codes of practice or guidance and/or be part of a formally agreed plan, which is regularly reviewed. The additional vulnerabilities that may arise from a physical or learning disability should be taken into account and be recorded as part of an agreed care plan. The emotional responses of any child to intimate care should be carefully and sensitively observed, and where necessary, any concerns passed to the Headteacher /Deputy headteacher and/or parents/carers.

All children have a right to safety, privacy and dignity when contact of a physical or intimate nature is required and depending on their abilities, age and maturity should be encouraged to act as independently as possible.

The views of the child should be actively sought, wherever possible, when drawing up and reviewing formal arrangements. As with all individual arrangements for intimate care needs, agreements between the child, parents/carers and the school should be recorded.

First Aid and Administration of Medication

It is expected that adults working with children should be aware of basic first aid techniques. When administering first aid, wherever possible, adults should ensure that another adult is aware of the action being taken.

In circumstances where children need medication regularly a health care plan should have been established to ensure the safety and protection of children and the adults who are working with them. Depending upon the age and understanding of the child, they should where appropriate, be encouraged to self administer medication or treatment including, for example any ointment, use of inhalers.

Personal Care

Children are entitled to respect and privacy at all times and especially when in a state of undress, changing clothes, bathing or undertaking any form of personal care. There are occasions where there will be a need for an appropriate level of supervision in order to safeguard children and/or satisfy health and safety considerations. This supervision should be appropriate to the needs and age of the child concerned and sensitive to the potential for embarrassment.

Adults need to be vigilant about their own behaviour, ensure they follow agreed guidelines and be mindful of the needs of the children with whom they work.

One to One Situations

It is not realistic to state that one to one situations should never take place but it is important to have explicit safeguards in place. One to one situations have the potential to make children more vulnerable to harm by those who seek to exploit their position of trust. It should be recognised that when one to one situations are unavoidable, reasonable and sensible precautions are taken. Every attempt should be made to ensure the safety and security of children and the adults who work with them, including the undertaking of risk assessments and child specific support plans.

The school has in place a specific Policy to support Lone Working which may be referred to.

Whistle Blowing Policy

Whistle blowing is the mechanism by which adults can voice their concerns, made in good faith, without fear of repercussion. St Charles' RC Primary School supports the Hull City Council Whistle Blowing Policy (all staff have signed and read this)

What to do if you have concerns or are worried?

Adults have a duty to report any child protection or welfare concerns to Mrs Margaret Green (Child Protection Co-ordinator.) In her absence this should be reported to Mrs Maureen Hulme and in her absence to Mrs Margaret Green.

Remember -

"I acted with the best of intentions" is no excuse.

How would your behaviour or actions be viewed by an outsider?