




South Lee Prep School  
Bury St Edmunds

## Code of Conduct Policy September 2024

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Signed: 	Steve Honeywood, Chair of Governors 5/09/24
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## **Code of Conduct for Staff**

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

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy (including Prevent)
- Physical Restraint and Use of Reasonable Force Policy
- Searching and Confiscation Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Cyberbullying Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Digital Devices Guidelines for Staff
- Intimate Care Policy
- Safer Recruitment Policy
- Use of Mobile Phone Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Staying Safe Guidance for Staff and Children on Overnight or Extended Trips and Tours
- First Aid & Medical Welfare Policy

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers and contractors, paid and unpaid, working in the school including governors. All School Policies referred to in this document are available in the staff handbook and hard copies can be obtained from the Business Manager.

### **Principles**

- The welfare of the child is paramount (Children Act 1989).
- Staff should understand their responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- Staff are responsible for their own actions and behaviour and should avoid any conduct which could 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 behave professionally, treat all pupils with respect and ensure that their behaviour does not inadvertently lay them open to allegations of abuse.

- The same professional standards should always be applied regardless of culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief or sexual identity.
- Staff should continually monitor and review their practice to ensure they follow the guidance contained in this code.

### **Propriety and Behaviour**

- Staff are expected to adopt high standards of personal conduct in order to maintain the confidence and respect of all those with whom and for whom they work.
- Staff have an individual responsibility at all times to ensure appropriate use of school property and resources.
- Staff should understand the need to act as good role models for pupils. This includes their work in school and on school trips. They also have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of pupils.
- Staff should understand and be aware that safe practice also involves using judgement and integrity about behaviours outside the work setting. Behaviour in their personal lives may impact on their work with pupils and the reputation of the school.
- Staff conduct and performance must not be adversely impacted by alcohol or drugs when undertaking their duties (including on school trips). Illegal drugs are prohibited on site. Consumption of alcohol is not permitted on site except at school functions or when otherwise agreed by the Headmistress that modest amounts of alcohol may be consumed. Smoking or the use of e-cigarettes, PVs (personal vaporisers) or ENDS (electronic nicotine delivery systems) are not permitted on site.
- Staff should be aware that any unlawful discriminatory behaviour or other conduct that brings the school or profession into disrepute will result in disciplinary action.

### **Attendance and Punctuality**

- Staff should make every effort to attend when required to do so. If a member of staff is going to be unavoidably late/delayed or is ill, they must report the absence as soon as possible to the appropriate Manager.
- In the case of planned absence, authorisation must be sought from the Headmistress.

### **Dress and Appearance**

- Dress should be smart, appropriate to the role and not likely to be viewed as offensive, revealing or sexually provocative. It should not distract, cause embarrassment or give rise to misunderstanding. Denim is not permitted.
- Games staff should be in smart clothing when not on the games field.

### **Health and Safety and First Aid**

- All Staff have a duty to ensure that a safe working environment exists. Fire and evacuation procedures must be adhered to and Staff are required to familiarise

themselves with the procedures and their responsibilities as set out in the Health and Safety Policy and the First Aid and Medical Welfare Policy

### **Transporting Pupils**

- Staff should not transport pupils in their own vehicle other than on approved school business with permission of the parents or in the case of emergency.
- A member of staff should never be alone in a vehicle with a pupil.
- Wherever possible and practicable, transport should be in a vehicle other than a private vehicle, with at least one adult additional to the driver acting as an escort.

### **Accident and Incident Reporting**

- An accident report form should be completed for all accidents on site. A copy of the form should be given to the School Nurse as appropriate to the circumstances.
- In the case of a serious accident or incident the school is aware of the need to report it following 'Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations' (RIDDOR).

### **External Activity**

- Any outside work or activity which may conflict with the interests of the school or which makes use of school resources or property must always be agreed in advance with the Head. The use of school resources and property for personal purposes is not permitted unless agreed by the Headmistress.

### **Use of Personal Mobile Phones**

***The school recognises that personal mobile phones have the potential to be used inappropriately. Where possible contact the school office to arrange for a member of staff to use the school phone to take photos or videos if promoting the school.***

See **Use of Mobile Phones Policy**

The term 'phone' in this policy denotes mobiles phones, iPods, iPads, MP3, MP4 players, cameras, smart watches and any similar portable electronic devices. This policy also contains guidance specific to EYFS.

Use of Technology, Electronic Communications and Storage of Images

- **The Acceptable Use Policy** should be followed at all times.

- Staff must ensure that they establish safe and responsible behaviours in their use of electronic communications and when online. All staff must have read and signed the **Acceptable Use Policy**.
- Staff are expected to use Information Technology in the course of any lesson only as an aid to teaching. Staff should not be sending or receiving work or personal emails or accessing the internet other than for the purpose of teaching. On the rare occasions when teacher input may not be needed by children (e.g. during a test) a teacher's paramount duty is to supervise the children. Use of email or the internet for work purposes may be undertaken only if the supervision of the children remains secure. Staff should not at any time use personal devices, e.g. mobile phones or tablets, to access the internet during lesson times.
- Staff should have a thorough knowledge of the school's **Cyberbullying Policy**.
- Staff must log off when they leave a computer.
- Staff must never allow visitors to use their log on details.
- Staff should keep social networking profiles private and refrain from joining groups that are directly linked to South Lee School.
- Staff should refrain from making comments about South Lee School or discussing South Lee School on their personal social media networks.
- Pupils and ex pupils under the age of 18 should not be 'friends' or 'contacts'.
- Staff should have no online contact with ex pupils under the age of 18.
- Staff with their own website should keep private details off the website and guard against giving out information which could bring the school into disrepute.
- Email exchanges with pupils should be for professional purposes only, using the school email system alone, with the use of appropriate formal language and salutations. Staff should be aware that any email can be forwarded (or if deleted can be retrieved), so should think before sending.
- When using e-mail, Staff need to be aware of the less formal style that can characterise this form of communication and ensure that e-mails do not convey an inappropriate tone.
- Staff should never photograph pupils using their own devices unless this is unavoidable because, for example, they are out on a trip. If this happens, staff should inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead that they have used their own device and the photographs need to be uploaded onto the school system and deleted from the personal device within 24 hours. Best practice is to book a device in advance or arrange for photographs to be taken by the school photographer. All photographs taken of the children should be uploaded on school computers only. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will undertake spot checks on devices used to photograph the children.
- It is not appropriate for Staff to take images of pupils for their personal use. However, working with pupils may involve the taking or recording of images. Any such work should take place with due regard to the law and the need to safeguard the privacy, dignity, safety and well-being of pupils.
- When taking photographs, Staff need to remain sensitive to pupils who appear uncomfortable and should recognise the potential for such activities to raise concerns or lead to misunderstandings.

- Images should be stored securely on school hardware and be used only by Staff authorised to do so. When images are used, the pupils in them should **not** be named fully.

### **Whistleblowing**

- The school has a **Whistleblowing Policy**. Where a member of staff has good reason for concern regarding the conduct or competence of a colleague, they should follow the procedures in the policy. This is particularly important where the welfare of children may be at risk.
- All staff have a duty to report themselves if there is any reason why they may not be able to carry out their duties effectively or if there is anything that may affect their ability to work safely with children.
- Staff need to be aware of their responsibilities under PREVENT. Any worries about pupils should be viewed as safeguarding issues and reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead following the procedures set out in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. Any worries about colleagues should be reported under Whistleblowing.

### **Professional Judgement**

- On very rare occasions, there may be a time when staff must make a judgement in the best interests of the pupils in their charge which contravenes this guidance or for which no guidance exists. Such judgements should always be recorded and shared with the Head and Deputy Head immediately. The parent or carer must also be informed where necessary. In doing so, individuals will be seen to be acting reasonably. Staff should always consider whether their actions are warranted, proportionate and safe, and applied equitably.

### **Confidentiality**

- Staff may have access to confidential or personal information about pupils or colleagues in the process of undertaking their everyday responsibilities. They should never use this information for their own or others' advantage (including that of partners, friends, relatives or other schools/services). Confidential information about a pupil should never be used casually in conversation or shared with any person other than on a need-to-know basis and never be used to intimidate, humiliate or embarrass the pupil.
- Information about pupils, parents or colleagues must never be disclosed to telephone enquirers. Staff should ask the enquirer to put the request in writing so that it can be dealt with appropriately.
- There are some circumstances in which a member of staff may be expected to share information about a pupil, for example when abuse is alleged or suspected. In such cases, individuals have a duty to pass on information without delay, but only to those with designated child protection responsibilities. If in doubt about whether to share

information or keep it confidential, staff should seek guidance from the Head or the Deputy Heads.

### **Good Practice**

Staff must be prepared to provide support and comfort to children during times when there may be stress at school, worry about problems at home or homesickness. We need to attend to a child's welfare and needs without becoming unduly concerned that we may be doing the wrong thing. Nevertheless, the boundaries of what is acceptable without being over-intimate need to be clear and the following guidance is offered to staff:

### **Communication and Contact with Pupils**

- All communication and contact between pupils and adults should take place within clear and explicit professional boundaries.
- Staff should also be circumspect in their communications and contact with pupils so as to avoid any possible misinterpretation of their motives or any behaviour that could be construed as grooming.
- Staff should share concerns with the appropriate member of staff, usually the tutor and/or Deputy Head. The **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy** and procedures should be followed in all cases relating to safeguarding issues including Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), child on child abuse and Prevent.

### **Language**

- Staff should not swear, blaspheme or use offensive language in front of pupils.
- Staff should not use language which is discriminatory and demeaning in relation to gender, identity, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability or age.
- Staff should not make sexual innuendos or any comments of a sexual nature (other than in the context of RSE in the PSHEE curriculum), nor make any comments trivialising alcohol or drug abuse.
- The use of sarcastic, demeaning or insensitive comments towards young people can also be regarded as a form of abuse which is potentially very damaging and must be avoided.
- It is recognised that, in order to discharge particular pastoral responsibilities, staff may from time to time need to engage in conversation with children that covers sensitive matters. Staff must use their professional judgement to ensure that they are not drawn into areas inappropriate to their duties or their relationship with the pupils concerned. In circumstances where such conversations occur, staff must let the Head and/or the Deputy Head know immediately.

## **One-to-One Situations**

- One-to-one situations have the potential to make pupils more vulnerable to harm by those who seek to exploit their position of trust.
- Staff may also be more vulnerable to unjust or unfounded allegations being made against them.
- When one-to-one situations occur, reasonable and sensible precautions must be taken to ensure the safety and security of pupils and staff alike.
- Teachers of individual lessons, i.e. music, LAMDA and individual development (including SEND) should endeavour to ensure that their teaching takes place where visual contact with others can be maintained.
- Permission for private tuition both on and off site must be sought from the Head. This is an extra layer of protection for both the child and the member of staff.
- Staff should **never** invite a child into their room/accommodation when on overnight or extended trips.

## **Avoiding Misinterpretation**

Staff should:

- Try to model appropriate boundaries regarding personal space.
- Model appropriate boundaries in relationship to use of language (eg be careful of banter and language which could be misconstrued)
- Avoid special relationships or rumours of having 'favourites'.
- Avoid spending unequal amounts of time with a given child or group of children.
- Be wary of forming 'special' relationships with particular children's families that might compromise them professionally.
- Be aware of how their actions may be interpreted by others looking in from outside.
- Be observant of the behaviour of colleagues and, if they feel that their actions could be seen by others as inappropriate, tell them or the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

## **Interviewing Children and Dealing with an Unhappy Child**

- If it is necessary to be alone with a child, this should, ideally, be in a place in full view of others.
- If a child is injured or upset, appropriate comforting is a natural reaction. In full view of others, this is fine but staff should be aware that in a one to one situation, such comforting may be open to misinterpretation.
- Be aware that an upset child might readily misconstrue a situation and, if possible, always ensure that the child is accompanied by a friend.
- When investigating allegations of e.g. bullying, it is wise to invite another pupil to attend, so that the child feels supported. This will also act as protection from misinterpretation.



- In responding to individual children’s distress, staff will need to consider carefully whether they should offer advice, sympathy or counselling if a discussion enters a sensitive area or, alternatively, refer them to a colleague or agency better placed to offer appropriate advice.

### **Behaviour Management**

- All pupils have a right to be treated with respect and dignity even in those circumstances where they display difficult and challenging behaviour.
- Staff should not use any form of degrading treatment to punish a pupil. The use of sarcasm, demeaning or insensitive comments is not acceptable in any situation. Any sanctions or rewards used should be part of recognised systems and procedures as set out in the **Behaviour Policy**.
- Any incidents of bullying should be dealt with swiftly in accordance with the **Anti-bullying Policy** and **Cyberbullying Policy**. Any incident of suspected bullying will be logged on the ‘Dealing with and Incident of Bullying’ template and fully investigated by the Deputy Head.

### **Physical Contact with Pupils**

Given the age of the pupils, physical contact between pupils and staff may be appropriate. Staff must exercise common sense when with the children in their care and should make sure any physical contact is appropriate to the situation. Staff should never have any physical contact with a child that could be misinterpreted. Some incidences where physical contact may be necessary/unavoidable are:

- Intimate care of children in the EYFS which is age appropriate (eg changing nappies etc).
- Contact in PE/Swimming. It should, however, be seen as appropriate by others.
- Physical contact may be necessary in Drama and in some forms of skills coaching – e.g. in instrumental music lessons. Any such contact should likewise be seen as appropriate.
- First Aid – staff who administer First Aid should, where possible, ensure that another adult is present if there is any doubt over the possibility of any physical contact being misconstrued.
- Teachers of individual instrumental music lessons should teach only in the designated space where all teaching rooms are clearly visible from the outside and should avoid unnecessary physical contact.
- Comforting a child who is upset or unwell.
- Helping a child who has soiled their clothing.

If a child needs to be restrained, the school’s **Physical Restraint and Use of Reasonable Force Policy** should be followed.

## Physical Intervention

- All staff with responsibility for children's safety and welfare must deal professionally with all incidents involving aggressive behaviour and only use physical intervention as a last resort, always ensuring minimal risk of injury to pupils and staff.
- Corporal punishment and the threat of corporal punishment are prohibited. Staff must never shout at, humiliate or use sarcasm with pupils.
- Staff must follow the guidelines set out in the **Physical Restraint and Use of Reasonable Force Policy** and incidents of the use of physical restraint will be recorded.

## Changing

- PE, Games or other changing supervision needs to be visible and protective but also non-intrusive and discreet. Staff should announce their intent to enter, before entering the changing rooms.
- Where possible, more than one member of staff should be in charge of changing, to avoid the potential for compromising circumstances and to remove as far as possible any opportunity for abuse.
- When it is not possible for more than one member of staff to be in attendance, staff need to be particularly alert to the potential hazards of being the sole member of staff in charge of changing. At such times, a member of staff should ensure that a group of children is present and should avoid being alone in the changing room with an individual child.
- Any concerns with regard to the supervision of changing should be addressed to one of the Designated Safeguarding Leads.
- Any other events – e.g. theatrical productions – that require changing arrangements should follow the above guidance.
- Staff should avoid changing in the presence of children.

## Searching and Confiscation

- There may be times when a member of staff needs to search a pupil or a pupil's belongings because something has gone missing and there are reasonable grounds to conduct a search. In such circumstances staff must follow the guidelines set out in the **Searching and Confiscation Policy**.

## Intimate Care

There may be occasions when a member of staff needs to undertake personal care tasks with children but particularly to those who are in the Early Years and Foundation Stage. The normal

range of development for this group of children indicates that they may not be fully toilet trained. In addition to this there are other vulnerable groups of children and young people that may require support with personal care on either a short, longer term or permanent basis due to SEN and disability, medical needs or a temporary impairment. Examples of these may be children who have limbs in plaster or are temporarily wheelchair bound. In such circumstances staff must follow the guidelines set out in the **Intimate Care Policy**.

### **Social Contact with Pupils**

- 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.
- If a pupil or parent seeks to establish social contact, or if this occurs coincidentally, the member of Staff should exercise his or her professional judgement in making a response.
- Some social contacts will be easily recognised and openly acknowledged, for example when the parent and Staff are part of the same social circle. Nevertheless, Staff should be aware that some social contacts that are not common knowledge can be misconstrued as being part of a grooming process.
- It is recognised that Staff can support a parent who may be in particular difficulty; however, care needs to be exercised in situations where the parent comes to depend on the member of staff for support outside their professional role. These situations should be discussed with the Headmistress, the Deputy Head or the Designated Safeguarding Lead and, where necessary, referrals made to the appropriate support agency.

### **Contact with Pupils Out of School**

- Staff should never arrange meetings with individual pupils off the school premises without the prior approval of the Head.
- Staff should never take children on overnight trips alone.
- Staff should not arrange private tuition of any of the school's pupils, in school or beyond, during term time or holiday time, without the prior approval of the Head.
- Staff should not arrange tuition on the school's premises of any pupil from beyond the school without the prior approval of the Head.
- Staff should not give pupils their home address, home telephone number, mobile phone number, or non-School e-mail address.
- Staff should not make arrangements to meet pupils, individually or in groups, outside School other than on School trips authorised by the Head and Trips organiser.
- Staff are advised not to attend private pupil parties and should be aware of their professional standing and responsibilities when attending parties arranged by parents at which pupils are also present.

## Gifts, Rewards and Favours

- Staff should be aware that consistently conferring special attention and favour upon a child might be construed as being part of a 'grooming' process and as such will give rise to concerns about their behaviour.
- Staff should not give presents to an individual pupil outside of the school rewards system. This could be a form of grooming.
- Staff should take care to ensure they do not accept any gift that might be construed as a bribe or lead the giver to expect preferential treatment.
- It is unacceptable to receive gifts on a regular basis or of any significant value.
- Staff should exercise care when selecting pupils for school teams, productions, trips and/or specific work tasks in order to avoid perceptions of favouritism or injustice.
- Similar care should be exercised when pupils are excluded from an activity. No child should be excluded from an activity without prior consultation with the Head or Deputy Head.

## Relationships

- Staff should understand that they are in a position of trust in relation to pupils, giving them influence and power by virtue of the knowledge they have and/or the authority invested in their role.
- Staff should ensure that their relationships with pupils clearly take place within the boundaries of a respectful professional relationship and avoid behaviour which might be misinterpreted by others.
- A relationship between an adult and a pupil is not a relationship between equals and there is a potential for exploitation and harm of vulnerable young people.
- Staff have a responsibility to ensure that an unequal balance of power is not used for personal advantage or gratification.

## Infatuations

Occasionally, pupils may develop an infatuation for a member of staff. In such situations the advice of the Head **must** be sought.

- Staff 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 beyond reproach.
- Other members of staff have a part to play in alerting a colleague to the possibility of an infatuation in order that appropriate steps can be taken to minimise hurt and distress and the risk to the member of staff concerned.
- Whilst the risk of infatuation is not limited to younger members of staff, they must recognise their particular vulnerability to adolescent infatuation. If a member of staff is concerned that he/she is developing a friendship with a pupil that would have the

potential to become an unacceptable relationship, he/she must ensure that the relationship does not develop further.

- Staff have a responsibility to 'whistleblow' on themselves or a colleague immediately in such circumstances.

### **Sexual Contact**

- Staff should not have any form of communication with a pupil that could be interpreted as sexually suggestive or provocative i.e. verbal comments, letters, texts, emails or physical contact.
- Staff should not make sexual remarks to, or about a pupil, discuss their own sexual relationships with or in the presence of pupils or have sexual relationships with pupils. It is an offence for a member of staff to engage in sexual activity with or in the presence of a pupil or to cause or incite that pupil to engage in or watch sexual activity.
- Any sexual activity between a member of staff and a pupil may be regarded as a criminal offence and will always be a matter for disciplinary action.

### **Grooming**

A child abuser may spend a great deal of time and energy 'grooming' a child and thereby creating an opportunity for abuse. Such grooming will involve gaining the child's confidence and trust and may also involve gaining the trust of the child's family and/or of other adults associated with the child.

Within the context of a school, it is essential to be aware of possible warning signs of grooming and to raise any concerns in this regard with the Designated Safeguarding Lead or the Head. Such warning signs may include spending excessive amounts of time with a particular child or group of children, arranging to meet with children outside of school, albeit in the company of their parents or e.g. by arranging holiday tuition (often with the parents' full support), breaching guidelines with regard to being alone with children or using inappropriately sexual language with children. All of these behaviours are dealt with in the guidance above and staff should feel comfortable that, by following the guidance, they will avoid arousing unjustified suspicions.

In recent times, internet grooming has become an increasing concern. The school's ICT policies provide safeguards against such activity within school, but staff should take seriously and report to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or the Headmistress any concern that a child may at home be engaged in unsuitable internet activity. Staff who identify a pupil who is at risk of being drawn into terrorism must challenge extremist ideas and pass their concerns on immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. The **Acceptable Use Policy** along with **Safeguarding and Child Protection** must be referred to in this case.

*Staff who contravene any of the above guidelines or, in retrospect, feel that an action could be seen as inappropriate, should discuss the matter immediately with the Designated*

*Safeguarding Lead or the Head so that notes can be made and securely kept should reference need to be made to them in the future.*