



## **Stockport School**

### **Staff Code of Conduct**

This policy and procedure should be read in conjunction with the School's Safeguarding Policy and the Department for Education's Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance.

#### **Code of Conduct for Teaching and Support Staff**

##### **I. Overview**

Stockport School seeks to provide a safe and supportive environment, which secures the well-being and very best outcomes for students in our care. Our values are set out in the Statement of Values.

This document should clarify what is expected in terms of professional behaviour; it gives clear advice about what constitutes illegal behaviour and what might be considered as misconduct. It also describes safe practice and which behaviours should be avoided.

If a member of staff does not follow this code of conduct this may lead to disciplinary procedures.

There may be times when professional judgements are made in situations not covered by this document, or which directly contravene the guidance given by the school. It is expected that in these circumstances staff will always advise their senior colleagues of their justification for any such action already taken or proposed.

##### **II. Core Principles**

The welfare of students is paramount.

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. Staff should apply the same professional standards in keeping with the school's Equality Policy.

All staff should know the name of the designated person (s) for Child Protection (Jude Norman, Designated Safeguarding Lead, supported by John Warren, Senior Deputy Head and Hilary Thorley, Head of Year), be familiar with child protection arrangements and understand their responsibilities to safeguard and protect students.

Staff should be aware that breaches of the law and other professional guidelines could result in criminal or disciplinary action being taken against them.

## **Safe Working Practices for the Protection of Students and Staff at Stockport School**

### **1. Introduction**

This guidance has been produced to help all staff establish the safest possible learning and working environments. The aims are to safeguard young people and reduce the risk of staff being falsely accused of improper or unprofessional conduct.

This means that these guidelines apply to all adults working in education settings whatever their position, roles, or responsibilities.

### **2. Duty of Care**

Teachers and other staff are accountable for the way in which they exercise authority; manage risk; use resources; and protect students 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 students and behaviour by staff that demonstrates integrity, maturity and good judgement.

There are legitimate high expectations about the nature of the professional involvement of staff in the lives of students. 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.

Employers have a duty of care towards their employees which requires them to provide a safe working environment for staff and guidance about safe working practices.

This means that staff should:

- understand the responsibilities, which are part of their employment or role, and be aware of consequences should these provisions be breached
- always act, and be seen to act, in the child's best interests
- avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions
- take responsibility for their own actions and behaviour

This means that Stockport School should:

- ensure that safeguarding procedures are in place and reviewed
- ensure that systems are in place for concerns to be raised
- ensure that adults are not placed in situations which render them particularly vulnerable

### **3. 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 students 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.

This means that where no specific guidance exists staff should:

- discuss the circumstances that informed their action, 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 member of SLT
- always record discussions and actions taken with their justifications

#### **4. Power and Positions of Trust**

All adults working with students 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 student cannot be a relationship between equals. There is 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.

Staff should always maintain appropriate professionalism and wherever possible, they should avoid behaviour which might be misinterpreted by others, and report and record any incident with this potential.

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. Where a person aged 18 or over is in a position of trust established with a person who has only recently left the school, any attempt to engage in sexual activity with that person will be a cause for concern and will be treated as a breach of trust established in that prior relationship.

This means that staff should not:

- use their position to gain access to information for their own advantage and/or a student's or family's detriment
- use their power to intimidate, threaten, coerce or undermine students
- use their status and standing to form or promote a relationship with a student, which is of a sexual nature.
- attempt to initiate a relationship with a recent ex-pupil, which is of a sexual nature.

#### **5. Confidentiality**

Members of staff may have access to confidential information about students in order to undertake their everyday responsibilities. In some circumstances staff may be given additional highly sensitive or private information. They should never use confidential or personal information about a student or his family for their own, or others' advantage.

Information must never be used to intimidate, humiliate, or embarrass the student.

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

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.

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 SLT.

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.

Additionally, concerns and allegations about adults should be treated as confidential and passed to SLT without delay.

This means that staff:

- are expected to treat information they receive about students 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 student.
- need to know to whom any concerns or allegations should be reported

## **6. Propriety and Behaviour**

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

This means that staff should not:

- behave in a manner which would lead any reasonable person to question their suitability to work with students or act as a role model.
- make (or encourage others to make) unprofessional personal comments in any form of communication (e-mail, conversations or social networking comments)

Staff must:

- be aware that their behaviour in their personal lives may impact upon their work with students.

An individual's behaviour, either in or out of the workplace, should not compromise her/his position within the work setting so it is important to exercise due care and attention when outside of the school environment.

Membership of organisations whose goals are in conflict with the values and equality policies of the school is not acceptable.

## **7. Dress and Appearance**

Staff should consider the manner of dress and appearance appropriate to their professional role. We require students to be smart in their uniform. Smart and professional appearance is expected at all times for staff. 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. Appropriate personal presentation is expected of staff.

This means that staff should ensure their appearance and clothing:

- 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

## **8. Gifts**

Staff should be aware of the school's policy regarding arrangements for the declaration of gifts received and given.

Staff need to take care that they 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 students or parents wish to pass small tokens of appreciation to staff, for example at Christmas 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. Any member of staff concerned about whether they or their colleagues may be at risk of giving or receiving a bribe (financial or otherwise) should contact the school's Finance Officer. Any member of staff receiving gifts or entertainment valued at more than £100 must disclose this to the Business and Finance Manager.

Members of staff may not give personal gifts to students. It is acceptable for staff to offer prizes of small value in certain tasks or competitions.

This means that staff should:

- ensure that gifts received or given in situations which may be misconstrued are declared
- ensure that gifts of significant value are declared.
- generally, only give gifts to an individual young person as part of an agreed reward system
- where giving gifts other than as above, ensure that these are of insignificant value and given to all students equally.

## **9. Infatuations**

Staff need to be aware that it is not uncommon for students to be strongly attracted to a member of staff and/or develop an infatuation. Staff should be aware that such circumstances always carry a high risk of words or actions being misinterpreted and for allegations to be made against staff.

A member of staff who becomes aware that a student may be infatuated with themselves or a colleague should discuss this at the earliest opportunity with a senior colleague so that appropriate action can be taken. In this way, steps can be taken to avoid hurt and distress for all concerned.

This means that staff should:

- report to senior colleagues any indications (verbal, written or physical) that suggest a student may be infatuated with a member of staff.
- be mindful if they are alone in a room with a student. Leave the door open if you have to.

## **10. Personal Living Space**

No student 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 and SLT or the home has been designated by the organisation or regulatory body as a work place e.g. child- minders, foster carers.

This means that staff should:

- be vigilant in maintaining their privacy and mindful of the need to avoid placing themselves in vulnerable situations
- be mindful of the need to maintain professional boundaries

### **11. Communication with students** (including the use of technology)

Communication between students 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, social networking sites, online gaming and blogs. Adults should not share any personal information with a student. They should not request, or respond to, any personal information from the student, 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 students 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 students including e-mail, home or mobile telephone numbers, unless the need to do so is agreed with SLT and parents. E-mail or text communications between an adult and a student outside agreed protocols may lead to disciplinary and/or criminal investigations. This also includes communications through internet based web sites, such as social networking, instant messaging or gaming.

Communication with ex-students who are over 18 is left to staff discretion. Please be conscious of the fact that ex-students may be in contact with current students.

Be aware that actions that bring the school into disrepute could lead to disciplinary procedures being taken.

### **12. Social Contact**

Staff should not establish or seek to establish social contact with students, or their families, 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 her/his professional judgement in making a response but should always discuss this with SLT. Staff must be aware that social contact, in certain situations, could be misconstrued as grooming.

Staff should not give their personal details such as their home or e-mail address; social network sites, gamer tags or web pages to students unless the need to do so is agreed with SLT. If students do become aware of your gamer tag you must change it.

This means that staff should:

- have no secret social contact with students
- consider the appropriateness of the social contact according to their role and nature of their work
- always approve any planned social contact with senior colleagues, for example when it is part of a reward scheme or pastoral care programme
- advise SLT of any regular social contact they have with a student or parent which may give rise to concern
- report and record any situation, which they feel, might compromise the school or their own professional standing.

### **13. Social Networking Sites and Online Gaming**

Stockport School staff may use social networking sites for personal use. However, the school

requires that profile and photos of the member of staff are 'locked down' as private so that students or parents do not have access to your personal data or images.

Staff must deny current students access to your profile so you do not put yourself in a vulnerable position.

Staff should be aware that they leave themselves open to a charge of professional misconduct if images of a member of staff in a compromising situation are made available on a public profile by anyone.

If a student does gain access to the profile of a member of staff by fraudulent means (impersonation or hacking) SLT should be informed immediately.

Where relationships exist between staff and those who are also parents at the school, or personal friends who are parents at the school, social networking is acceptable but caution must be exercised so that professional standards are maintained and staff do not compromise themselves or the school.

This means that staff should:

- lock down their profile to ensure that data and images are not freely available. Seek advice if you are unsure how to do this.
- do not permit current students or parents to have access to your profile.
- ensure all your passwords are kept strong and secure
- be aware that images of others should be protected and be treated as carefully as you would your own

As soon as a member of staff becomes aware that they are in an online game with a student of the school, the member of staff should cease to play against that student and should not enter any games containing that player as part of the group.

Under no circumstances should staff seek out students and/or share their own gamer tags/ID with students, or use school equipment to play online games.

#### **14. Physical Contact**

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

#### **15. Physical Education and other activities which require physical contact.**

Some staff, for example, those who teach PE and games, or who offer music tuition, will on occasions have to initiate physical contact with students in order to support a student so they can perform a task safely, to demonstrate the use of a particular piece of equipment/instrument or assist them with an exercise. This should be done with the student's agreement.

This means that staff should:

- consider alternatives, where it is anticipated that a student might misinterpret any such contact, perhaps involving another member of staff, or a less vulnerable student in the demonstration.
- always explain to a student the reason why contact is necessary and what form that
- contact will take unless their safety is at immediate risk
- Contact under these circumstances should be for the minimum time necessary to complete the activity and take place in an open environment

Staff should remain sensitive to any discomfort expressed verbally or non-verbally by the student.

## **16. Showers and Changing**

Young people are entitled to respect and privacy when changing clothes or taking a shower. However, there needs to be an appropriate level of supervision in order to safeguard students, satisfy health and safety considerations and ensure that bullying or teasing does not occur. This supervision should be appropriate to the needs and age of the students concerned and sensitive to the potential for embarrassment.

Staff therefore need to be vigilant about their own behaviour, ensure they follow agreed guidelines and be mindful of the needs of the students.

## **17. Students in Distress**

There may be occasions when a distressed student needs comfort and reassurance. This may include age - appropriate physical contact. Staff should remain self-aware at all times in order that their contact is not threatening, intrusive or subject to misinterpretation.

Where a member of staff has a particular concern about the need to provide this type of care and reassurance s/he should seek further advice from a senior manager.

This means that staff should:

- consider the way in which they offer comfort to a distressed student
- always tell a colleague when and how they offered comfort to a distressed student
- record situations which may give rise to concern.

## **18. Behaviour Management**

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

This means that staff should:

- not use force as a form of punishment
- try to defuse situations before they escalate
- keep parents informed of any sanctions
- adhere to Stockport School's Behaviour policy.

## **19. Care, Control and Physical Intervention**

Staff may legitimately intervene to prevent a student 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.

This means that staff should:

- always seek to defuse situations
- always use minimum force for the shortest period necessary.



## **20. Sexual Contact with Students**

Any sexual behaviour by a member of staff with or towards a student is both inappropriate and illegal. Students are protected by the same laws as adults in relation to non-consensual sexual behaviour. They are additionally protected by specific legal provisions regardless of whether the child or young person consents or not. This includes the prohibition on adults in a position of trust (see Section 5).

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.

## **21. One to One Situations**

Staff working in one to one situations with children and young people are more vulnerable to allegations. Teachers and others 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 students are met.

Pre-arranged meetings with students away from the school premises should not be permitted unless approval is obtained from their parent and the Headteacher or other senior colleagues with delegated authority.

## **22. Transporting Children**

In certain situations, for example 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.

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. The driver must also have appropriate insurance.

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.

This means that staff should:

- plan and agree arrangements with all parties in advance, responding sensitively and flexibly to disagreements
- ensure that they are alone with a child for the minimum time possible
- be aware that the safety and welfare of the child is their responsibility until this is safely passed over to a parent/carer
- report the nature of the journey, the route and expected time of arrival in accordance with agreed procedures
- ensure that their behaviour and all arrangements ensure vehicle, passenger and driver safety
- take into account any specific needs that the child may have.

## **23. Extra-curricular activities**

Staff should take particular care when supervising students 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 school hours, a more relaxed

discipline or informal dress and language 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.

Where out of school activities include overnight stays, careful consideration needs to be given to sleeping arrangements. Students, 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/employers aware of their whereabouts, especially when involved in an out of school activity.

This means that staff should:

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

#### **24. First Aid and Administration of Medication**

The school has an administration of medication policy, which must be adhered to at all times.

#### **25. Curriculum**

Many areas of the curriculum can include or raise subject matter which is sexually explicit, or of an otherwise sensitive nature. Care should be taken to ensure that resource materials cannot be misinterpreted and clearly relate to the learning outcomes identified by the lesson plan. This plan should highlight particular areas of risk and sensitivity.

The curriculum can sometimes include or lead to unplanned discussion about subject matter of a sexually explicit or otherwise sensitive nature. Responding to students' questions can require careful judgement and staff may wish to take guidance in these circumstances from a senior member of staff.

Care should also be taken to abide by the governing body's required policy on sex and relationships education and the wishes of parents. Parents have the right to withdraw their children from all or part of any sex education provided (but not from the biological aspects of human growth and reproduction necessary under the science curriculum).

#### **26. Photography, Videos and other Creative Arts**

Many school activities involve recording images. These may be undertaken as part of the curriculum, out of school activities, for publicity, or to celebrate achievement.

Staff need to be aware of the potential for these aspects of teaching to be misused. Careful consideration should be given as to how these activities are organised and undertaken.

This means that staff should:

- be clear about the purpose of the activity and about what will happen to the photographs when the lesson/activity is concluded
- ensure that a senior member of staff is aware that the photography/image equipment is being used and for what purpose.
- ensure that all images are available for scrutiny in order to screen for acceptability
- be able to justify images of children in their possession
- avoid making images in one to one situations.

Using images of children for the school's publicity purposes has already had the consent of parents through the Home-School Agreement. Images should not be displayed on other websites, in publications or in a public place without additional consent.

This means that staff should not:

- have images of students stored on personal cameras, devices or home computers.
- make images of students available on the internet, other than through the school network/website with permission from parents and senior teachers.

## **27. Internet Use**

Stockport School has a clear policy about access to and the use of the Internet. Please refer to the E-Safety policy for staff for further guidance. During the timetabled day staff should use their time as appropriate to their paid employment in school and not engage in activities of a personal nature or ones that would elicit personal gain, financial or otherwise.

Using school equipment to access inappropriate or indecent material, would normally lead to disciplinary action. Students must not be exposed to inappropriate or indecent material.

## **28. Whistleblowing**

Whistleblowing is the mechanism by which staff can voice their concerns, made in good faith, without fear of repercussion. Please refer to the School Whistle Blowing Policy.

Staff should acknowledge their individual responsibilities to bring matters of concern to the attention of senior leadership and/or relevant external agencies. This is particularly important where the welfare of children may be at risk.

This means that staff should:

- report any behaviour by colleagues that raises concern.

## **29. Sharing Concerns and Recording Incidents**

All staff should be aware of the School's child protection procedures, including procedures for dealing with allegations against staff. Staff who are the subject of allegations are advised to contact their professional association.

In the event of an incident occurring, which may result in an action being misinterpreted and/or an allegation being made against a member of staff, the relevant information should be clearly and promptly recorded and reported to senior staff. Early discussion with a parent could avoid any misunderstanding.

Members of staff should feel able to discuss with their line manager any difficulties or problems that may affect their relationship with students so that appropriate support can be provided or action can be taken.

This means that staff:

- should take responsibility for recording any incident, and passing on that information where they have concerns about any matter pertaining to the welfare of an individual in the school or workplace. – See Safeguarding Policy for further information.

**Reviewed – October 2023**

**Review date – October 2025**