

Staff Code of Conduct

Introduction

This policy provides guidance on what is expected in terms of behaviour from the adults in the school; its aim is to make all staff aware of what is considered appropriate and thereby minimise the risk of inappropriate conduct.

School staff are in a position of trust and have a strong influence on children and students; we all have a duty to ensure that the way we conduct ourselves is, as far as possible, worthy of their imitation or respect.

Staff also have an individual responsibility to consider their own reputation and that of the school.

In light of increasing concerns regarding potential “grooming” environments in the Class Teacher system, staff are urged to be conscious of this, observe the guidelines in this policy and ensure that their conduct is beyond reproach at all times.

All staff should sign the hard copy of this code of conduct at the beginning of the school year to confirm that they have read it.

This policy applies to all staff and volunteers in the school regardless of their position, role or responsibility. References to ‘staff’ throughout the policy relate to all of the following:

- Teachers
- Administrative and support staff
- Volunteers
- Trustees
- Temporary and supply staff
- Teacher training students on placements
- Any other adults visiting during the school day or while pupils are present

This code of conduct is not an exhaustive list of acceptable and unacceptable standards of behaviour. In situations where guidance does not exist in this policy, staff are expected to exercise their professional judgement and act in the best interests of the pupils and the school.

Professional and Contractual Responsibilities

Every member of staff is expected to fulfil the professional responsibilities of their position according to the contract of employment, including attendance and punctuality.

Frequent absences or lateness undermine the quality of the education we offer and present a poor model of adult behaviour for the pupils.

Absence or lateness for legitimate reasons should be managed according to the Staff Absence Policy and procedure.

Professional Behaviour and Conduct

Staff are expected to conduct themselves consistently with honesty and integrity and to treat each other, pupils, parents, visitors and the wider community with dignity and respect at all times.

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Staff must act in accordance with their duty of care to pupils with regard to their safety and welfare.

Staff must have regard for the ethos and values of the school and must not do or say anything which may bring the school into disrepute.

Care should be taken by staff that they consider any conflict of interest that may arise between the activities they undertake outside school and their responsibilities within the school.

When at school or on school trips, staff are expected to understand and act in accordance with the school's policies and procedures at all times.

With regard to conduct, staff should take note of the Code of Conduct for pupils and the Anti-Bullying Policy; adults can be bullies/bullied as well as children.

Dress and Appearance

We recognise that dress and appearance are matters of personal choice. However, all staff must dress in a manner that is appropriate to their professional role, i.e.

- in a manner that is not offensive or revealing and is free from political, offensive or contentious slogans.
- safely and appropriately for the tasks they undertake.

Smoking, Alcohol and Other Substances

It is against the law to smoke anywhere on school premises at any time.

Staff must refrain from the consumption of alcohol and other mind-altering substances (i.e. drugs) at events where pupils or parents are present or likely to be present (i.e. Leaving parties, fairs, school trips) either on school premises or not, or when they are representing the school in any capacity.

Relationships with Pupils/Students and Parents

Staff must maintain professional boundaries with pupils, colleagues and parents appropriate to their position.

Staff should act in an open and transparent way that would not lead any reasonable person to question their actions or intent. It is important that staff think carefully about their conduct so that misinterpretations are minimised.

Staff should be aware that to establish or seek to establish social contact with pupils or their parents could be misconstrued. In situations where social contact is sought by parents or pupils, (e.g. invitations to parties) staff should use their professional judgement.

Staff must not make sexual remarks to a pupil, discuss their own sexual relationships with, or in the presence of, pupils or discuss a pupil's sexual relationships in an inappropriate context.¹

Staff must have regard for the school's Safeguarding Policies, including the Policy for the Use of Electronic Media.

Staff should be mindful of The Sexual Offences Act (2003), and in particular the sections that refer to abuse of positions of trust. The Act is available here:

¹ An appropriate context would be something like reporting a concern to the DSL

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<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/42/contents>

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) is also helpful:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

Infatuations

Sometimes pupils, or their parents, develop infatuations towards members of staff. All such situations must be responded to sensitively to maintain the dignity of those concerned.

Staff should also be aware that in such situations, there is a high risk of words or actions being misinterpreted and for allegations to be made against them.

Any indications of an infatuation towards yourself or another member of staff should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

Dependence

Sometimes pupils or parents may become overly dependent on a member of staff, for example, they may phone, text or send emails very frequently and expect a response in the evenings, at weekends and in the holidays. If you find yourself in this situation, speak to your mentor or contact the DSL for advice.

Physical Contact with Pupils

Physical contact between people is part of healthy relationships of all kinds. It is not possible to be specific about the appropriateness of all physical contact; what is appropriate for one child or staff member in one situation may be inappropriate for another. Staff should therefore use their professional judgement at all times and be mindful that physical contact with a pupil is appropriate to:

- their professional role
- the given situation
- the age, stage of development, gender, culture, religion and background of the pupil
- the individual pupil's personality, needs, personal boundaries etc.

Staff should be sensitive to the pupil's reaction and ensure that the physical contact is not unwelcome; even well-intentioned physical contact may be misconstrued by the child, an observer or by anyone to whom this action is described.

Staff should never touch a child in a way which may be considered indecent. Always be prepared to explain actions and accept that all physical contact is open to scrutiny.

Extra caution should be exercised where a child is known to have suffered abuse or neglect. Such experiences may sometimes make a child exceptionally needy and demanding of physical contact and staff should respond sensitively by helping them to understand the importance of personal boundaries.

There may be occasions when a pupil is in distress and in need of comfort as reassurance. This may include age-appropriate physical contact. Staff should be mindful at all times that their contact is not threatening, intrusive or open to misinterpretation.

If you have a particular concern about the need to provide this type of care and reassurance you should seek further advice from the DSL.

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Staff supervising PE and games, providing musical tuition or fitting costumes for plays may be required to initiate physical contact with pupils to support them to perform a task safely, to demonstrate the use of a particular piece of equipment/instrument, to assist them with an exercise or to adjust a piece of clothing. Contact under these circumstances should be done with the pupil's agreement, (e.g. say "I'm sorry, I have to get a bit closer for this; is that okay?") for the minimum time necessary and in as open and environment as possible. Staff should remain sensitive to any discomfort expressed verbally or non-verbally by the pupil/student.

Physical contact must never be secretive or represent a misuse of authority.

If a member of staff believes that an action could have been misinterpreted, the incident and circumstances should be reported as soon as possible to the DSL, who will record it and take whatever further action is deemed necessary.

Changing

Pupils are entitled to privacy while changing for P.E. and should not change anywhere except in the lockable toilets or other designated changing rooms. Supervision of rooms where children are changing should be appropriate to the needs and age of the pupils and sensitive to the potential for embarrassment.

Staff should be vigilant about their own behaviour when helping children change in and out of costumes for plays, etc.

One to One Situations

Staff working individually with pupils should be aware of the potential vulnerability of pupils and staff in such situations. Staff should manage these situations with regard to the safety of the pupil and to protect themselves from accusations.

Individual work with pupils should not be undertaken in isolated areas. Where it is necessary to close doors for reasons of confidentiality a colleague should be made aware of this.

Transporting Pupils

When taking pupils off-site, the Risk Assessment Policy must be followed and staff must follow guidance in the current policy regarding their own conduct and that of pupils.

Home Visits

It is essential that a strong relationship can develop between teachers, children and their parents, so that the child feels that their parents and their teachers are united in support of their education. Parents of younger children in particular are encouraged to invite their child's Class Teacher to their home occasionally.

Teachers should take care that parents do not feel they are being inspected. Visits must benefit and not be intrusive for children; they should feel comfortable.

Teachers should use their professional discretion, particularly when invited into the child's bedroom. Under no circumstances should a teacher go into a child's bedroom unless invited, or without their parents' knowledge.

E-Safety

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Staff should have regard for The St Michael Steiner School's Policy for the Use of Electronic Media.

Staff must not engage in inappropriate use of social network sites which may bring themselves, the school or the school community into disrepute.

The school instagram account is not accessible to parents.

Staff need to check their privacy settings and ensure they create clear boundaries with parents when using WhatsApp / Instagram accounts.

Staff should remain mindful of their digital footprint and exercise caution in all their use of social media or any other web based presence they have. This includes written content, videos or photographs and views expressed either directly or by 'liking' certain pages or posts or following certain individuals or groups.

Staff should exercise care when using dating websites where they could encounter students or parents.

Staff must not accept 'friend' invitations or become 'friends' with, or follow, any current pupil of The St Michael Steiner School on any social media platform or communicate with pupils privately using any social media site.

Staff should not accept from, or extend 'friend' invitations to current parents of The St Michael Steiner School on any social media platform. Staff members who are also parents should exercise professional judgement when interacting in parent WhatsApp groups, etc.

Mobile phones should be switched off (or silent) during lessons and when on break duty. They may be used as timepieces but not for making phone calls (except in an emergency), texting or for access to the internet when pupils are present, except for research purposes related to lessons in the Middle or High School.

Personally -owned mobile phones, tablets and laptops brought into school are the responsibility of their owner. The St Michael Steiner School accepts no responsibility for the loss, theft or damage of personally-owned electronic devices.

Photography, Video and Images of Children

Many school activities involve recording images as part of the curriculum, extra school activities, publicity or to celebrate an achievement.

Under the General Data Protection Act 2018 images are not regarded as personal data. However, we expect that consent is obtained from the parent/guardian of a pupil, or in the case of older pupils, from the pupil themselves, for any image to be retained and processed by the school. This is given (or withheld) in the Consent Form that the parents sign at the beginning of their time at the school, when they enter the High School or when the form is updated.

It is the duty of staff to make themselves aware of pupils for whom consent has been withheld and to respect this. It is also important to respect the wishes of the pupil, remembering that some pupils do not wish to have their photograph taken or be filmed. In the case of older pupils, their consent should be sought before taking images and before publishing them on the school website or social media.

Photographs/stills or video footage of pupils should only be taken for purposes authorised by the school and should be stored securely on password protected computers or hard drives.

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Staff should record the proposed use of photographic/video equipment in lesson plans and share these with their mentors. All photographs/stills and video footage should be available for scrutiny and staff should be able to justify all images/video footage made.

Staff should remain aware of the potential for images of pupils to be misused. Therefore, careful consideration should be given to how activities which are being filmed or photographed are organised and undertaken.

Particular care should be given when filming or photographing young or vulnerable pupils who may be unable to question how or why the activities are taking place. Staff should also be mindful that pupils who have been abused through the use of video or photography may feel threatened by its use in a teaching environment.

Parents and pupils are not allowed to film or or take photographs at school unless asked to specifically and are not allowed to post images taken at school or on school trips on social media without permission from the school.

Confidentiality

All staff must act in accordance with the school's Data Protection Policy (2018) with regard to all personal data about pupils, staff, parents and visitors. Consult this document for information about what constitutes personal data and how to collect, use, store and dispose of it securely.

Members of staff have access to confidential information about pupils, their parents/carers or their siblings. Staff must not reveal such information except to those colleagues who have a professional role in relation to the pupil on a need-to-know basis. All staff are likely at some point to witness actions which need to be confidential and these should be dealt with in the same way.

Staff should never use confidential or personal information about a pupil or their family for their own, or third parties' advantage (including that of partners, friends, relatives or other organisations).

Staff have a statutory obligation to share with The St Michael Steiner School's Data Protection Officer or Data Protection Controller, any information which gives rise to concern about the welfare or safety of a pupil or that might suggest a pupil is in need or at risk of significant harm. Staff should pass on information to the Designated Safeguarding Lead without delay .

Staff should refer to the Department of Education's document <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-practitioners-information-sharing-advice> for further guidance on information sharing. If you are in any doubt about whether to share you should seek guidance from the DSL or Deputy DSL.

Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing is the mechanism by which staff can voice concerns they may have about a colleague, without fear of repercussion.

All school staff have a duty to report any behaviour by a colleague which raises concern. Staff should refer to the school's Whistleblowing Policy for further guidance. This is particularly important where the welfare of pupils may be at risk. Refer to the school's Whistleblowing policy for guidance.

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