

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN: St Thomas More R.C Primary School

SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT

“ The school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment”

For teachers, and in addition to the general guidance about conduct for staff volunteers etc, the Code of Conduct and Practice for Registered Teachers (General Teaching Council: November 2004) will apply. In particular, and in this context, Section 1 of that code and the following elements within it.

UNACCEPTABLE PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

“Conduct which falls short of the standard expected of a registered teacher and behaviour which involves a breach of the standards of propriety expected of the profession.”

CONDUCT RELATING TO PUPILS AND PARTNERS IN EDUCATION

Registered teachers may be found guilty of unacceptable professional conduct

Where they:

1. Seriously demean or undermine pupils, their parents, carers or colleagues or act towards them in a manner that is discriminatory in relation to gender, religion, belief, colour, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, or disability.

Where they fail to:

2. Take reasonable care of pupils under their supervision with the aim of ensuring their safety and welfare.
3. Comply with relevant statutory provisions which support the well being and development of pupils

INTRODUCTION

This guidance is intended to assist schools develop and review codes of conduct and, in turn, to help staff and volunteers to minimise the risk of being accused of improper conduct towards the children or young people with whom they come into contact during their work. This should be included in schools' induction arrangements for all staff and volunteers.

It would be impossible and inappropriate to lay down hard and fast rules to cover all the circumstances in which staff relate to pupils and where opportunities for their conduct to be misconstrued might occur. Staff must at all times exercise professional judgement and standards of behaviour in their dealings with pupils. For the vast majority of staff this guidance will serve only to confirm what has always been their practice. If staff have any doubts about the advice contained in this document they should consult their head teacher.

CHILD ABUSE

Child abuse may be physical, sexual or psychological. Whilst child abusers may be relatives or friends of the family, some meet children in other contexts and a small minority of these may gain access to children in schools as teachers or support staff

or through their voluntary involvement in school activities. Pupils should not feel inhibited from reporting abuse against them by staff or volunteers, or any incident where a pupil has grounds to believe that a member of staff has crossed the boundary of acceptable behaviour. Head teachers and staff will continue to do all they can to ensure that the environment within schools encourages pupils and staff to make truthful reports of any inappropriate behaviour.

The action to be taken by staff when they suspect a pupil is being abused by a person outside or inside the school, and the steps that should be taken if an allegation of abuse is made against a member of staff by a pupil, are set out in the school's child protection procedure and all staff should be familiar with that.

OTHER PROCEDURES AND GUIDANCE

Staff should also be familiar with the school's policies about physical contact with pupils, the use of reasonable force to control or restrain pupils, and the procedures that should be followed if a pupil needs first aid or medical attention.

1. GUIDELINES FOR STAFF

1.1 Private meetings with pupils.

- (a) Staff and volunteers should be aware that private meetings with individual pupils may give rise to concern. There will be occasions when a confidential interview or a one to one meeting is necessary. However, where possible, such interviews should be conducted in a room with visual access, or with the door open, or in a room or area which is likely to be frequented by other people, and another pupil or adult should be present or nearby. Where such conditions cannot apply, staff should ensure that another adult knows that the interview is taking place.
- (b) Meetings with pupils away from the school premises should only be arranged with the specific approval of the head teacher.

1.2 Physical contact with pupils

- (a) Physical contact may be misconstrued by a pupil, parent or observer. Touching pupils, including well intentioned informal and formal gestures such as putting a hand on the shoulder or arm, can, if repeated regularly, lead to serious questions being raised. As a general principle staff must not make gratuitous physical contact with their pupils. It is particularly unwise to attribute touching to their teaching style or as a way of relating to pupils.
- (b) Any form of physical punishment of pupils is unlawful, as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour unless it is by way of restraint. It is particularly important that staff understand this both to protect their own position and the overall reputation of the school.

1.3 Where physical contact may be acceptable

- (a) There may be occasions where a distressed pupil needs comfort and reassurance which may include physical comforting such as a caring parent would give. Staff should use their discretion in such cases to ensure that what is, and what is seen to be by others present, normal and natural does not become unnecessary and unjustified contact, particularly with the same pupil over a period of time. Where a member of staff has a

particular concern about the need to provide this type of care and reassurance he / she should seek the advice of the head teacher.

- (b) Some staff are likely to come into physical contact with pupils from time to time in the course of their duties. Examples include: showing a pupil how to use a piece of apparatus or equipment; demonstrating a move or exercise during games or PE and; contact activities at a youth club. Staff should be aware of the limits within which such contact should properly take place and of the possibility of such contact being misinterpreted.
- (c) There may be occasions where it is necessary for staff to restrain a pupil physically to prevent him / her from inflicting injury to others or self-injury, damaging property, or causing disruption. In such cases only the minimum force necessary may be used and any action taken must be to restrain the pupil. Where an employee has taken action to physically restrain a pupil he / she should make a written report of the incident in the form prescribed by the school's policy on restraint.

1.4 Caring for pupils with particular problems

- (a) Staff who have to administer first aid should ensure wherever possible that other children or another adult are present if they are in any doubt as to whether necessary physical contact could be misconstrued.
- (b) Wherever possible staff who have to help children with toileting difficulties should be accompanied by another adult, and pupils should, wherever possible, be encouraged to change themselves. It is accepted that there will be some situations where pupils will present particular problems for staff and the emphasis will be on what is reasonable in all the circumstances.

1.5 Relationships and attitudes

- (a) All staff should clearly understand the need to maintain appropriate boundaries in their dealings with pupils. Intimate or sexual relationships between staff and pupils will be regarded as a grave breach of trust, and any sexual activity between a member of staff and a pupil under 18 years of age may be a criminal offence.
- (b) All staff should ensure that their relationships with pupils are appropriate to the age and gender of the pupils, and care should be taken that their language or conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Attitudes, demeanours and language all require care and thought, particularly when members of staff of either sex are dealing with adolescent boys and girls.
- (c) From time to time staff may encounter pupils who display attention-seeking behaviour, or profess to be attracted to them. Staff should aim to deal with those situations sensitively and appropriately, but must ensure that their behaviour cannot be misinterpreted. In these circumstances, the member of staff should also ensure that the head teacher or a senior colleague is aware of the situation.

1.6 Where conversation of a sensitive nature may be appropriate

- (a) Many staff have a pastoral responsibility for pupils and in order to fulfil that role effectively there will be occasions where conversations will cover particularly sensitive matters. Staff must, in these circumstances, use their

discretion to ensure that, for example, any probing for details cannot be construed as unjustified intrusion.

- (b) Other staff in school may, from time to time, be approached by pupils for advice. Pupils may also appear distressed and staff may feel the need to ask if all is well. In such cases staff must judge whether it is appropriate for them to offer counselling and advice or whether to refer the pupil to another member of staff with acknowledged pastoral responsibility for the particular pupil.

1.7 Inappropriate comments and discussions with pupils

- (a) As with physical contact, comments by staff to pupils, either individually or in groups, can be misconstrued. As a general principle therefore staff must not make unnecessary comments to and / or about pupils which could be construed to have a sexual connotation. It is also unacceptable for staff to introduce or to encourage debate amongst pupils in class, or elsewhere, which could be construed as having a sexual connotation that is unnecessary given the context of the lesson, or the circumstances. At the same time it is recognised that a topic raised by a pupil is best addressed rather than ignored.
- (b) Systematic use of insensitive, disparaging or sarcastic comments are also unacceptable.

1.8 Extra curricular activities

- (a) Staff should be particularly careful when supervising pupils in extra curricular activities, or a residential setting such as a ski trip, outdoor education camp or extended visit away from home. Typically a less formal approach than usual maybe appropriate in these settings, but that can be open to misinterpretation. In any event, the standard of behaviour expected of staff will be no different from the behaviour expected within school.
- (b) Staff should take care in receiving or giving gifts to pupils which could be misunderstood. Gifts to individual pupils from staff will be exceptional and should be assessed against the school's policy or by a senior member of staff. Inappropriate gifts from pupils should be reported as described in paragraph 1.7.

1.7 Reporting incidents

Following an incident where a member of staff feels that his / her actions have been, or may be, misconstrued he / she should discuss the matter with the head teacher. Where it is agreed with the head teacher the member of staff or volunteer should provide a written report of the incident. A detailed written report should always be made if a member of staff has been obliged to restrain a pupil physically, or where a complaint has been made by a pupil, parent or other adult.