



## SAFER WORKING PRACTICES POLICY

### **Purpose and Aim**

All Trust staff and volunteers are expected to abide by the relevant Code of Conduct. They will be reminded of the need to maintain appropriate professional boundaries in their dealings with pupils and should clearly understand the need to maintain such boundaries. They will be provided with guidance as to the behaviours expected of them and which, if followed, should help prevent them becoming vulnerable to allegations of abuse.

Safe working practice ensures that students are safe and that all 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;
- aware of their professional responsibilities when using social media;
- work in an open and transparent way;
- work with other colleagues where possible in situations open to question to discuss and/or take advice from Trust management over any incident which may give rise to concern;
- record any incidents or decisions made;
- apply the same professional standards regardless of gender or sexuality;
- be aware of confidentiality policy;
- are aware that breaches of the law and other professional guidelines could result in criminal or disciplinary action being taken against them.

Adults have a crucial role to play in the lives of children. This policy has been produced to help them establish the safest possible learning and working environments which safeguard children and reduce the risk of them being falsely accused of improper or unprofessional conduct. Information in the policy may also appear in associated policies. For example: Code of Conduct of Employees, Child Protection Policy, E-Safety Policy, Positive Handling Policy, Medication Policy.

### **Responsibilities - associated policy 'Child Protection Policy'**

Staff within the Multi Academy Trust are accountable for the way in which they exercise authority, manage risk, use resources and safeguard pupils.

All staff have a responsibility to keep pupils safe and to protect them from abuse (sexual, physical and emotional), neglect and safeguarding concerns. Pupils have a right to be safe and to be treated with respect and dignity. It follows that trusted adults are expected to take reasonable steps to ensure their safety and well-being. Failure to do so may be regarded as professional misconduct.

The safeguarding culture of the academies within our Multi Academy Trust, in part, is exercised through the development of respectful, caring and professional relationships between adults and pupils and behaviour by the adult that demonstrates integrity, maturity and good judgement.

The public, local authorities, employers and parents/carers will have expectations about the nature of professional involvement in the lives of children. When individuals accept a role, working in an education setting, they should understand and acknowledge the responsibilities and trust involved in that role.

### **Confidentiality - associated policy 'Child Protection Policy' and the 'Code of Conduct Policy'**

Members of staff may have access to confidential information about pupils in order to undertake their everyday responsibilities. In some circumstances, staff may be given highly sensitive or private information. They should never use confidential or personal information about a pupil or her/his family for their own, or others' advantage (including that of partners, friends, relatives or other schools / services). Information must never be used to intimidate, humiliate, or embarrass the pupil.

Confidential information about a child or young person should never be used casually in conversation or shared with any person other than on a need-to-know basis. In circumstances where the child'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 child, 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:

#### **The Child Protection Team at Southmoor Academy:**

Mrs O McCourt, Ms N Murley, Mrs L Mellefont, Mrs A Riddle, Mr N Carter, Mrs C Zakaidze

#### **The Child Protection Team at Sandhill View Academy:**

Mrs A Johnston, Mrs A O'Donnell, Miss A Wright, Mrs L Scott

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 the designated members of staff for Child Protection at the relevant Academy. Any media or legal enquiries should be passed to senior management / designated members of staff for Child Protection. The storing and processing of personal information about pupils is governed by the Data Protection Act 1998. Staff are provided with clear advice about their responsibilities under this legislation.

### **Making professional judgements – associated policy 'Child Protection Policy'**

This policy cannot provide a complete checklist of what is, or is not, appropriate behaviour for staff. It does highlight, however, behaviour which is illegal, inappropriate or inadvisable. There will be rare occasions and circumstances in which staff have to make decisions or take action in the best interest of a pupils 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 pupils in their charge and, in so doing, will be seen to be acting reasonably. These judgements should always be recorded and shared with a line manager / senior leader.

Adults should always consider whether their actions are warranted, proportionate, safe and applied equitably.

### **Propriety and Behaviour – associated policy 'Code of Conduct Policy'**

All adults working with pupils within the Multi Academy Trust have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of pupils. It is, therefore, expected that they will adopt high standards of personal conduct in order to maintain the confidence and respect of their colleagues, pupils 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 pupils. Misuse of drugs, alcohol or acts of violence would be examples of such behaviour.

Adults in contact with pupils 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 an employer as to whether there may be a potential risk to pupils in the workplace.

### **Dress and Appearance - associated policy 'Code of Conduct Policy'**

Staff should dress in a way which is appropriate to their role and this may need to be different to how they dress when not at work. Adults who work with pupils should 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.

### **Gifts, Rewards and Favouritism - associated policy 'Code of Conduct Policy' (section 19 and 20)**

Staff should be aware of the Trust's Code of Conduct Policy which outlines details on the giving and receiving of gifts.

Staff should ensure:

- that gifts received or given in situations which may be misconstrued 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, e.g. book, pen, revision guide to motivate learning;
- that all selection processes which concern pupils are fair and that wherever practicable these are undertaken and agreed by more than one member of staff.

### **Infatuations**

Occasionally, a child or young person 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 or young person is developing an infatuation should discuss this at the earliest opportunity with a member of the Child Protection Team within the relevant Academy, so appropriate action can be taken to avoid any hurt, distress or embarrassment.

This means that all staff should:

- report and record any incidents or indications (verbal, written or physical) that suggest a child or young person may have developed an infatuation with a member of staff;
- always acknowledge and maintain professional boundaries.

## **Communication with Pupils (including the Use of Technology) – associated policy ‘E-Safety and Code of Conduct Policies’**

This means that staff should:

- ensure that personal social networking sites are set at private and pupils are never listed as approved contacts;
- never use or access social networking sites of pupils;
- not give their personal contact details to pupils, including their mobile telephone number;
- only use equipment e.g. mobile phones, provided by the Trust to communicate with children, making sure that parents have given permission for this form of communication to be used;
- only make contact with children for professional reasons and in accordance with relevant policies;
- recognise that text messaging should only be used as part of an agreed protocol and when other forms of communication are not possible;
- not use internet or web-based communication channels to send personal messages to a child/young person.

## **Sexual Contact**

All staff within the Multi Academy Trust should clearly understand the need to maintain appropriate boundaries in their contact with pupils. Intimate or sexual relationships between children/young people and the adults who work with them will be regarded as a grave breach of trust. Allowing or encouraging a relationship to develop in a way which might lead to a sexual relationship is also unacceptable. Any sexual activity between an adult and the child or young person with whom they work may be regarded as a criminal offence and will always be a matter for disciplinary action. All children and young people are protected by specific legal provisions in this respect regardless of whether the child or young person consents or not. The sexual activity referred to does not just involve physical contact including penetrative and non-penetrative acts. It may also include non-contact activities, such as causing children to engage in or watch sexual activity or the production of pornographic material.

This means that adults should **not**:

- have sexual relationships with pupils;
- have any form of communication with a child or young person which could be interpreted as sexually suggestive or provocative i.e. verbal comments, letters, notes, electronic mail, phone calls, texts, physical contact;
- make sexual remarks to, or about, a child/young person;
- discuss their own sexual relationships with or in the presence of pupils.

## **Behaviour Management – associated policy ‘Behaviour Policy and Positive Handling’**

All pupils have a right to be treated with respect and dignity even in those circumstances where they display difficult or challenging behaviour. Adults should not use any form of degrading treatment to punish a child. The use of sarcasm, demeaning or insensitive comments towards pupils is not acceptable in any situation. Any sanctions or rewards used should be part of a behaviour management policy which is widely publicised and regularly reviewed. The use of corporal punishment is not acceptable and is unlawful in schools. Whilst there may be a legal defence for parents who physically chastise their children, this does not extend, in any circumstances, to those adults who work with or on behalf of pupils. Where children display difficult or challenging behaviour, adults must follow the behaviour policy outlined by the Trust and use strategies appropriate to the circumstance and situation. The use of physical intervention can only be justified in exceptional circumstances and must be used as a last resort when other behaviour management strategies have failed. Where a child has specific needs in respect 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 the behaviour management policy of the Trust.

### **Use of Control and Physical Intervention - associated policy 'Behaviour Policy and Positive Handling'**

This means that adults should:

- adhere to the Trust's Positive Handling policy;
- always seek to defuse situations;
- always use minimum force for the shortest period necessary;
- record and report as soon as possible after the event any incident where physical intervention has been used.

### **Other Activities that require Physical Contact**

Some adults who work in certain settings, for example sports, drama or outdoor activities or teach specific subjects such as PE or music, will have to initiate some physical contact with children, for example, 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. It should take place in a safe and open environment i.e. one easily observed by others and last for the minimum time necessary.

This means that staff should:

- treat children with dignity and respect and avoid contact with intimate parts of the body;
- always explain to a child the reason why contact is necessary and what form that contact will take;
- seek consent of parents where a child or young person is unable to do so because of a disability;
- consider alternatives, where it is anticipated that a pupil might misinterpret any such contact;
- be familiar with and follow recommended guidance and protocols;
- conduct activities where they can be seen by others;
- be aware of gender, cultural or religious issues that may need to be considered prior to initiating physical contact.

### **Children and Young People in Distress**

There may be occasions when a distressed child needs comfort and reassurance and this may involve physical contact. Staff 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 a member of the Child Protection Team and parents/carers.

### **Personal Care**

Young people 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 young people and/or satisfy health and safety considerations. This supervision should be appropriate to the needs and age of the young people concerned and sensitive to the potential for embarrassment. Staff need to be vigilant about

their own behaviour, ensure they follow agreed guidelines and be mindful of the needs of the pupils with whom they work.

This means that staff should:

- avoid any physical contact when children are in a state of undress;
- avoid any visually intrusive behaviour and where there are changing rooms announce their intention of entering.

This means that adults should **not**:

- change in the same place as children;
- shower or bathe with children;
- assist with any personal care task which a child or young person can undertake by themselves.

### **First Aid and Administration of Medication - associated policy 'Medication Policy'**

This means that the Multi Academy Trust should:

- ensure those staff who are first aid trained understand the extent and limitations of their role in applying basic care and hygiene tasks for minor abrasions and understand where an injury requires more experienced intervention;
- ensure training is regularly monitored and updated;
- always ensure that arrangements are in place to obtain parental consent for the administration of first aid or medication (Individual Health Care Plans).

This means that staff should:

- adhere to the policy for administering first aid or medication;
- comply with the necessary reporting requirements;
- make other adults aware of the task being undertaken;
- explain to the child what is happening;
- always act and be seen to act in the child's best interests;
- report and record any administration of first aid or medication;
- have regard to any Individual Health Care Plans which are in place;
- always ensure that an appropriate health/risk assessment is undertaken prior to undertaking certain activities.

### **One to One Situations**

Staff should ensure that when lone working is an integral part of their role, full and appropriate risk assessments have been conducted and agreed. Staff should avoid meetings with a child or young person in remote, secluded areas. Staff should always inform other colleagues and/or parents/carers about the contact(s) beforehand, assessing the need to have them present or close by. Staff must avoid use of 'engaged' or equivalent signs wherever possible; such signs may create an opportunity for secrecy or the interpretation of secrecy. Staff must always report any situation where a child becomes distressed or angry to a senior colleague and carefully consider the needs and circumstances of the child/children when in one to one situations.

### **Home Visits**

Staff should agree the purpose for any home visit with senior management, unless this is an acknowledged and integral part of their role e.g. home tutors. Detailed records including times of arrival and departure and work undertaken must be documented after the visit. If any there are behaviours or

situations which give rise to concern, this should be reported to / discussed with a member of the Child Protection Team and where appropriate, action will be taken. Home visits should always be completed during normal working hours and never outside agreed working arrangements. Staff carrying out the visit, must not be exposed to unacceptable risk and must have access to a mobile telephone and an emergency contact person.

### **Transporting Pupils**

In certain situations, for example, out of school activities, staff or volunteers may agree to transport children. 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. There will be occasions when adults are expected or asked to transport children as part of their duties. Staff, who are expected to use their own vehicles for transporting children should ensure that the vehicle is roadworthy, appropriately insured and that the maximum capacity is not exceeded. It is a legal requirement that all passengers should wear seat belts and it is the responsibility of the staff member to ensure that this requirement is met.

There may be occasions where the child or young person 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 a senior manager / Child Protection Team and parents/carers.

This means that staff should:

- ensure they are fit to drive and free from any drugs, alcohol or medicine which is likely to impair judgement and/ or ability to drive;
- be aware that the safety and welfare of the child is their responsibility until they are safely passed over to a parent/carer;
- record details of the journey in accordance with agreed procedures;
- ensure that their behaviour is appropriate at all times;
- ensure that there are proper arrangements in place to ensure vehicle, passenger and driver safety. This includes having appropriate insurance for the type of vehicle being driven;
- ensure that any impromptu or emergency arrangements of lifts are recorded and can be justified if questioned.

### **Educational Visits and After-School Activities**

Staff should take particular care when supervising pupils on trips and outings, where the setting is less formal than the usual workplace. Staff should 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 out of school activities include overnight stays, careful consideration needs to be given to sleeping arrangements. Children, young people, adults and parents should be informed of these prior to the start of the trip. In all circumstances, those organising trips and outings must pay careful attention to ensuring safe staff/child ratios and to the gender mix of staff especially on overnight stays. Health and Safety arrangements require members of staff to keep colleagues/employers aware of their whereabouts, especially when involved in activities outside the usual workplace. Appropriate Risk Assessments must be carried out beforehand and verified by Mr D Martin for Southmoor or Mrs J Davison for Sandhill View.

### **Photography and Videos**

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.

Informed written consent from parents or carers and agreement, where possible, from the child or young person, should always be sought before an image is taken for any purpose. Careful consideration should be given as to how activities involving the taking of images are organised and undertaken. Care should be taken to ensure that all parties understand the implications of the image being taken especially if it is to be used for any publicity purposes or published in the media, or on the internet. There also needs to be an agreement as to whether the images will be destroyed or retained for further use, where these will be stored and who will have access to them. Staff need to remain sensitive to any children who appear uncomfortable, for whatever reason, and should recognise the potential for such activities to raise concerns or lead to misunderstandings. It is not appropriate for adults to take photographs of children for their personal use.

### **Access to Inappropriate Images and Internet Usage – associated policy ‘E-Safety Policy’**

There are no circumstances that will justify adults possessing indecent images of children. Adults who access and possess links to such websites will be viewed as a significant and potential threat to children. Accessing, making and storing indecent images of children is illegal. This will lead to criminal investigation and the individual being barred from working with pupils, if proven. Adults should not use equipment belonging to their school/service to access adult pornography; neither should personal equipment containing these images or links to them be brought into the workplace. This will raise serious concerns about the suitability of the adult to continue to work with children. Adults should ensure that pupils are not exposed to any inappropriate images or web links. The Academy staff need to ensure that internet equipment used by children have the appropriate controls with regards to access. e.g. personal passwords should be kept confidential.

Where indecent images of children or other unsuitable material are found, the police and Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) should be immediately informed. Adults should not attempt to investigate the matter or evaluate the material themselves, as this may lead to evidence being contaminated which in itself can lead to a criminal prosecution.

### **Supervision during examinations**

There are occasions during examination periods when timetables clash and arrangements need to be made to preserve the integrity of the examination process. In these circumstances, staff may be asked to volunteer to supervise students perhaps in their own homes. Most Local Authorities, professional bodies and teaching unions do not endorse this practice. Where there are no staff volunteers, the examination awarding bodies allow for alternative supervisory arrangements to be made.

### **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 and care should especially be taken in those areas of the curriculum where usual boundaries or rules are less rigorously applied, i.e. drama.

The curriculum can sometimes include or lead to unplanned discussion about subject matter of a sexually explicit or otherwise sensitive nature. Responding to pupils' questions can require careful judgement and staff may wish to take guidance in these circumstances from a senior member of staff / member of the Child Protection Team. Parents have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of sex education. There is no right to withdraw from elements that are part of the national curriculum for science, Relationships or Health Education. Following the discussions with parents, except in exceptional

circumstances, the Trust will respect the parents' request to withdraw their child, up to and until three terms before the child turns 16. After that point, if the child wishes to receive sex education rather than be withdrawn, the school will make arrangements to provide the child with sex education during one of those terms.

### **Sharing Concerns and Recording Incidents -associated policy 'Child Protection Policy'**

This means that staff:

- should be familiar with the systems for recording/reporting concerns;
- 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 workplace.

This means that the Trust:

- should have an effective, transparent and accessible system for recording and managing concerns raised by any individual in the workplace.

**Person responsible:** Trust Director: SEND & Safeguarding  
Deputy Head – Sandhill View Academy

**Last review date:** 26.05.21