

Staff code of conduct policy

Written by: Anja Toddington
Approved by: Edwina Ratcliffe

Date: March 2017
Date: April 2017

History of review:

Date for next review:
March 2019

Policy Statement:

This policy aims to give all staff /volunteer and trustees strict guidelines in which to work for the benefit of other staff and the children at the School.

Purpose, scope and principles

This code of conduct applies to all staff employed by the school, all school volunteers, and all staff and volunteers on School duties whilst out of school (e.g. school trips) and all members of the school's council of management.

South Devon Steiner School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. All staff, regular volunteers and trustees are subject to an up-to-date *Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)* check prior to taking up their post or role.

All employees have personal and legal responsibilities, including treating others with dignity and respect; acting honestly, using school funds and school equipment appropriately, adhering to health and safety guidelines and practising equal opportunities at all times. These expectations are set out below and should be fully observed by all staff.

This document is not a prescriptive guide to what employees should and should not do. It highlights the principal areas where employees need to be aware of their responsibilities when working in the school and is a framework for behaviour.

South Devon Steiner School can only be successful in providing children with an outstanding Waldorf education through the behaviour of its staff, volunteers and trustees, whether this behaviour is with

children, colleagues or external agencies. Just as we want the students to be themselves, to follow their own path and act with integrity, we also want our colleagues to do the same. This is central to any Waldorf School. As such, the work that teachers and other employees carry out must be done out of freedom and trust. Our actions must not only be derived from obligation but also as free acts born from personal integrity and a commitment to the children. However, no organisation or culture can function without some basic agreed principles in place. In this vein, this document aims to set out employees' legal obligations, together with some agreed minimum standards. It is hoped that new staff will find this useful and it will also serve to remind existing staff of minimum standards.

School staff are role models and are therefore in a unique position of influence in terms of setting a good example to all pupils/students within the school. As a member of our school community, each employee has an individual responsibility to maintain their reputation and the reputation of the school. In some circumstances, this applies outside working hours and outside the school premises.

Collegiate and cooperative working

Staff at South Devon Steiner School strive to work out of principles of anthroposophy. Central to this ethos is collegiate working. Staff are expected to foster trust and professional working relationships by working collaboratively and collegiately with each other. This includes active attendance at and participation in meetings and, where full responsibility teachers are concerned, curriculum development and relevant mandate work.

Where decisions do not fall within the remit of one person, issues will need to be debated in an appropriate forum. Staff need to and should be able to express their positive and negative views during the decision-making process. However, no community can function and develop without its members making some personal sacrifices for the greater good of the school and the principle of collegiate working. In this way, once a decision is reached, all staff therefore need to remain loyal to and adhere to that decision, even if they represented the minority that opposed it.

It is important that wherever possible, we all use the right channels of communication, both to challenge each other and support each other. Policies must be agreed and decisions reached in the appropriate meetings. Staff are expected to uphold school policies and procedures, and raise any concerns about the life or running of the school in a responsible and appropriate way. To challenge colleagues' decisions, the right channel to use is the forum in which the policy or decision was originally agreed or the person who made the decision / wrote the policy. Telling parents or pupils that you do not support a school policy/decision and / or actively not adhering to agreed policies/decisions are both instances of actions which are unacceptable in that they may undermine colleagues or even bring the school into disrepute. There may be times when other commitments prevent us from supporting each other, but by and large staff are expected to support each other wherever possible by being flexible, covering colleagues' lessons/duties when they are off sick and taking on occasional additional work.

Where there are disagreements or difficult relationships between people at work, staff are expected to talk to each other informally and professionally to try to resolve the differences, using a colleague as mediator if appropriate. Where this is not appropriate, staff may wish to discuss the matter informally with the trustee responsible for Pastoral Care – Juliet Crittenden. Or contact the School Mediation Group, contact Reception for details. Whilst this is not always possible (e.g. where serious allegations are made or in instances of bullying), it is anticipated that the complaints procedure and staff grievance procedure will be used once informal steps have failed to help matters. Staff are also referred to the Whistleblowing Policy.

Setting an example

School staff and volunteers set examples of behaviour which can be copied by pupils/students. Imitation features heavily within Waldorf education. All SDSS staff are therefore expected to use appropriate language and behaviour which they would want to be imitated.

Conduct outside work

As a school that is proud of its heritage, ethos and standing in the community, we take pride in our reputation and expect staff to avoid any actions that may damage the reputation of the school, employees' own reputations or the reputation of other members of the school community. In particular, criminal offences that involve violence, possession or use of illegal drugs or sexual misconduct are likely to be regarded as unacceptable and acts of gross misconduct.

Staff should exercise caution when using information technology and be aware of the risks to themselves and others. Inappropriate use of social network sites may bring staff, the school or the school community into disrepute. Please see our Social Media policy for further advice.

Staff may undertake work outside school, either paid or voluntary, provided that it does not conflict with the interests of the school nor be to a level which may contravene the working time regulations or affect an individual's work performance.

Safeguarding pupils/students

All Staff have a duty to safeguard pupils/students from: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect.

This duty includes reporting concerns about a pupil/student to one of the school's Designated Safeguarding Persons (DSP) as highlighted on the Safeguarding policy. Staff are obliged to read the school's Safeguarding Policy and Whistleblowing Policy and must be familiar with these documents. Staff are expected to take reasonable care of pupils/students under their supervision with the aim of ensuring their safety and welfare.

If a staff member is concerned that a correct safeguarding procedure is not followed then any person can make a referral, please see safeguarding policy for further information.

Working alone with a student should be minimised. However, it is recognised that this is not always possible. In these instances, you should be seated near an open door, within the line of sight of those walking past the door if possible. It is essential that the environment helps the pupil feel safe and that the potential for allegations is minimised. In potentially sensitive situations, where the door needs to be closed to provide a safe and confidential space, all reasonable steps need to be taken to safeguard the child and the member of staff.

Confidentiality

Where staff have access to confidential information about pupils/students or their parents or carers, staff must not reveal such information except to those colleagues who have a professional role in relation to the

pupil/student. Therefore such issues when discussed at college meetings are confidential and should not be discussed with those who are not members of college. College will consult with and report to staff in appropriate ways.

All staff are likely at some point to witness actions which need to be confidential. For example, where a pupil is bullied by another pupil (or by a member of staff), this needs to be reported and dealt with in accordance with the appropriate school procedure. Care should be taken to use the right channels when discussing such cases. Safeguarding investigations should be carried out by one person and staff should only discuss these issues with pupils with permission from the Designated Safeguarding Person.

Staff have an obligation to share with one of the school's Designated Safeguarding Persons any information which gives rise to concern about the safety or welfare of a pupil/student. Staff must never promise a pupil/student that they will not act on information that they are told by the pupil/student.

Pupil/student development

As in all schools, staff must comply with school policies and procedures and collaborate with colleagues and external agencies where necessary to support the development of pupils/students. Staff are expected to follow reasonable instructions or requests that ultimately support the development of pupils/students.

Dignity, diversity and inclusion

As a Waldorf school, we strive to establish a strong community with strong moral values among our staff and pupils. Respect for people from all walks of life is therefore essential, regardless of their age, race, sexuality, gender, marital status, religion, beliefs or transgender status. We also aim to help pupils and students to understand that we live in a multi-cultural society. Staff must support and comply with policies relating to equal opportunity, human (and British) values, inclusion, access and bullying, and must help create a fair and inclusive school environment.

Honesty and integrity

As a school we aim to maintain high standards of honesty and integrity. This includes the handling and claiming of money and the use of school property and facilities. All staff must comply with the Bribery Act 2010. A person may be guilty of an offence of bribery under this act if they offer, promise or give financial advantage or other advantage to someone; or if they request, agree, accept or receive a bribe from another person. If you believe that a person has failed to comply with the Bribery Act, you should refer to the school's Whistleblowing Policy.

Personal gifts from individual members of staff to students are likely to be seen as inappropriate and could be misinterpreted by the student or student's parents – especially where gifts are repeated or generous.

Substance abuse, medication on site and prescriptive medication

All staff must understand that whilst caring for the children at SDSS that they must not be under the influence of alcohol or any other substances.

If they are given prescriptive medication they must ask the GP or person dispensing the medication to ensure that this medication does not impair their ability to look after the children under their care. If this is the case, they must inform the school administrator. Failure to do so is considered gross negligence.

Staff must understand that any medication bought into SDSS must be securely locked away from the reach of children, either in the staff room or a locked cupboard, they must not be in bags that could be accessed by children.

Touch, behaviour and Physical Contact with Pupils

School employees are expected to act in an open and transparent way that would not lead any reasonable person to suspect their actions or intent. Employees in schools are in a position of trust and have a duty to protect young people from discrimination and harm and to maintain appropriate professional boundaries. It is equally important for staff to avoid behaviour that might be misinterpreted by others in order to protect both young people and themselves. Staff are required to read and understand school policies on child protection.

School staff recognise the value that appropriate touch has for the children in our care and we will provide physical comfort or consolation to a child who expresses a need for such.

We will not touch a child in a potentially sexually sensitive area unless the child has incurred injury that necessitates immediate medical attention and contact in that way. In such circumstances, we will, as adults, make every effort to ensure that another adult as witness is present in order to protect ourselves and the child.

Source – Dept of Education's publication - Use of Reasonable Force in Schools July 2013

What is reasonable force?

- 1. The term 'reasonable force' covers the broad range of actions used by most teachers at some point in their career that involve a degree of physical contact with pupils.*
- 2. Force is usually used either to control or restrain. This can range from guiding a pupil to safety by the arm through to more extreme circumstances such as breaking up a fight or where a student needs to be restrained to prevent violence or injury.*
- 3. 'Reasonable in the circumstances' means using no more force than is needed.*
- 4. As mentioned above, schools generally use force to control pupils and to restrain them. Control means either passive physical contact, such as standing between pupils or blocking a pupil's path, or active physical contact such as leading a pupil by the arm out of a classroom.*
- 5. Restraint means to hold back physically or to bring a pupil under control. It is typically used in more extreme circumstances, for example when two pupils are fighting and refuse to separate without physical intervention.*
- 6. School staff should always try to avoid acting in a way that might cause injury, but in extreme cases it may not always be possible to avoid injuring the pupil.*

We will not touch a child who in any way expresses that they do not wish to be touched, unless in the extreme case of needing to restrain a child who is in danger to themselves or others.

If staff need to hold/restrain a child, they should always ask themselves?

- Is a less intrusive intervention preferable?
- Do we have to act now?
- Am I the best person to be doing this?

In less urgent situations and if at all possible, the member of staff should advise the child calmly and repeatedly about what they are going to do and why.

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 questions being raised. Staff must not make gratuitous physical contact with pupils and should avoid attributing 'touching' to their teaching style as a way of relating to pupils.

There are of course occasions when physical contact is acceptable or necessary. These usually fall into one of four categories:

1. Action to prevent harm or injury to the pupil or to others

If it is necessary to prevent a pupil causing injury to him/herself to others or to prevent the pupil causing serious damage to property or in what would reasonably be regarded as exceptional circumstances, the use of minimum force and contact necessary to prevent harm is acceptable and justifiable. In any such circumstance there would be a written record of the incident and the parents of the young person involved should be informed the same day. Any such incident must always be reported to one of the Designated Child Protection Officers in the school immediately.

2. Comforting a pupil in distress

In Kindergarten and to a lesser extent in Lower School, it is sometimes the case that a teacher will comfort a pupil by sitting them on their knee or putting an arm around them, this should be discouraged. You will need to use your own professional judgement in such circumstances, depending on the age of the child, the extent and cause of the distress and whether any other individuals are present. Consider how others might perceive your action and ensure that it does not develop into unnecessary contact. Particular care must be taken in situations which involve the same pupil over a period of time. Generally any physical contact between a member of staff and a pupil should be in response to the needs of the child and not the adult and should only be for the minimum duration of time necessary.

3. Unavoidable contact

This is a particularly sensitive issue in subjects such as Eurythmy, and gymnastics and in some forms of skills coaching. All teachers must be alert to the possibilities of pupils misinterpreting any contact. To avoid such misunderstanding, all planned contact must be demonstrably unavoidable. You need to use your professional judgement about the level of physical contact with individual children, which will take account of their age, the circumstances and the background. Generally speaking, it is unwise and unacceptable for physical contact to take place between adolescent pupils and teachers.

4. Other physical contact

One of the strengths of our school is a notable quality of warmth and mutual respect between staff and pupils and it is vital to retain this. Throughout the school, the daily handshake between staff and pupils is an important part of our rhythm and routine.

Corporal Punishment

Any form of physical punishment is unlawful in schools. It is not under any circumstances allowable under the school's own disciplinary procedures and is actionable in law and applies to any adult who works with children in any setting.

Staff should never use negative contact as a form of punishment, for instance, saying 'No' and tapping the child. Although teachers sometimes need to project/raise their voice to make themselves heard, it is important to not make it a habit to use raised voices or strong words as a form of punishment.

The use of mobile phones/camera phones/camera tablets/camera laptops/cameras

SDSS aims to keep all children within its care safe. This includes raising awareness of potential danger through the taking of, and /or distributing of, photographs or moving images.

- No images of pupils will be taken on personal image recording devices at any time. This is to ensure safeguarding of pupils and staff.
- SDSS is a mobile phone free zone. Mobile devices must not be taken out and used in the setting.
- Any visitors to the setting must also observe the same policy, this includes parents, prospective parents and contractors.
- Any staff member who sees a person using a phone should remind them that the SDSS is a mobile phone free zone and that they may use their phone in the car park.

First Aid and caring for pupils with particular problems

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. 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 must therefore be on what is reasonable in all the circumstances.

In situations where regular physical assistance is necessary it is advisable that parents and staff formally acknowledge this in writing.

Discussions with pupils, comments by teachers

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. Systematic use of insensitive, disparaging or sarcastic comments is also unacceptable.

Relationships and attitudes

All staff should understand the need to maintain appropriate boundaries in their dealings with pupils. Intimate relationships between a member of staff and a pupil are now regarded in law as a breach of trust. It is a criminal offence for a teacher or other persons who work with children to breach this trust, punishable on conviction by a fine and/or a term of imprisonment of currently up to 5 years. This legislation includes all children under the age of 18.

All staff should ensure that their relationships with pupils are appropriate to the age and gender of the pupils, and take care that their language or conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Attitudes, demeanour and language all require care and thought, particularly when members of staff of either sex are dealing with adolescent boys and girls.

From time to time teachers may encounter pupils who display attention-seeking behaviour, or develop crushes on them. Staff should aim to deal with those situations sensitively and appropriately, but must ensure that their behaviour cannot be misinterpreted. Best practice in this situation would be to seek advice from one of the Designated Child Protection Officers immediately.

Pastoral Care and situations where conversations of a sensitive nature may be appropriate

A number of teachers 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.

Other staff may, from time to time, be approached by pupils for advice. For example, a pupil may appear distressed and you may feel the need to ask if all is well. In such cases you must judge whether it is appropriate for you to offer counselling and advice or whether to refer the pupil to their class teacher.

Extra-curricular activities, class trips etc.

Staff should be particularly careful when supervising pupils in extra-curricular activities, or in a residential setting during a class trip, outdoor education centre or extended visit away from home. Typically a less formal approach than usual is appropriate in these settings, but that can be open to misinterpretation by pupils and the standard of behaviour expected of staff will be no different from the behaviour expected within school. Class Trip leaders should instruct all helpers and parent-volunteers on what is appropriate behaviour for the situation.

Information technology

Staff must exercise caution when using information technology and be aware of the risks to themselves and others. Do not give your home email address or mobile phone number to any pupil. For email, always use your school email address.

Reporting incidents

Following any incident where a member of staff feels that his/her actions have been, or may be, misconstrued he/she should discuss the matter with one of the Designated Safeguarding Persons. Where it is agreed with a DSP, 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.

Health and safety

All staff, council members and volunteers are obliged to familiarise themselves with the health and safety policy and adhere to it.

Disciplinary action, misconduct and convictions

All staff need to recognise that failure to meet the standards of behaviour and conduct within the code of conduct may result in disciplinary action, including dismissal.

As with all environments where children or vulnerable adults are present, staff at SDSS are obliged to notify the school without delay if they are convicted of a criminal offence, if proceedings are brought against them or a formal accusation is made of a criminal offence.

It should also be noted that employers have to notify the relevant authority when teachers are dismissed or cease employment for reasons of misconduct or incompetence, or where they resign in circumstances where dismissal was a possibility. Where employers judge misconduct to involve a risk of harm to children and young people, they are required to refer cases to the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA). Under the provisions of Home Office Circular 45/86, teaching is a 'notifiable' occupation. This means that the police report any conviction or caution of a teacher to the DBS. Offences involving a risk of harm to children, or to vulnerable adults, are considered by the ISA.

Information/advice/guidance:

- Staff handbook

Compliance:

- Bribery act 2010

References:

- Social media and e-safety policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Equal opportunities policy
- Human values policy
- Anti-bullying policy
- Media consent form
- Health and Safety policy
- Concerns and Complaints Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Welfare Policy