

# Code of Conduct for safe working with children

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## 1. Introduction

This guidance is intended to protect and promote the interests of employees, volunteers and pupils. All adults who come into contact with children and young people in their work have a legal and moral duty to keep children and young people safe and to protect them from sexual, physical and emotional harm. The duty that rests on an individual is to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure the welfare of a child or young person is paramount. This guidance aims to:

- Keep children safe by clarifying which behaviours constitute safe practice and which behaviours should be avoided;
- Assist adults working with children to work safely and responsibly and to monitor their own standards and practice;
- Support managers and senior leaders in setting clear expectations of behaviour relevant to the services being provided;
- Give a clear message that unlawful or unsafe behaviour is unacceptable and that, where appropriate, disciplinary or legal action will be taken;
- Minimise the risk of misplaced or malicious allegations made against adults who work with children; and
- Reduce the incidence of positions of trust being abused or misused.

Failure to comply with the principles outlined within this statement and the associated policies and procedures will be addressed without delay in accordance with the School Partnership Trust Academies ("SPTA") Disciplinary Policy.

## 2. Roles and Responsibilities

All staff and volunteers are responsible for observing the safe working practices outlined in this policy. All staff have responsibilities to ensure the safeguarding of children and to ensure that they:

- Work and behave safely and responsibly at all times to fulfil their duty of care and not abuse in any way their position of trust.
- Respond to any concerns about a child's wellbeing that they may have or are brought to their attention in line with the Academy and Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) Child Protection Policy.
- Respond in the same way to concerns that involve the behaviour of other adults in the Academy by following the Academy procedures for 'Whistle Blowing' as outlined in the Academy Child Protection Policy and LSCB guidelines.

- Review their own practice and follow Academy policies and procedures and seek advice when unsure.
- Understand that it is professionally and morally unacceptable for staff not to carry out these responsibilities.

### **Academy Responsibilities:**

In order for staff to carry out these responsibilities the Academy will ensure that:

- All new and existing staff receive adequate child protection training as laid down in the Academy child protection and other related policies.
- All staff are made aware and reminded of the Academy procedures for reporting concerns.
- Staff concerns and opinions will be sought and taken into account in the regular review of related policies and procedures.
- All staff are aware of the SPTA Whistleblowing policy and the associated Academy procedures by which adults can voice their concerns, made in the public interest, without fear of repercussion.
- A safe working environment and guidance about safe working practices is provided.
- Employees are treated fairly and reasonably in all circumstances.

### **3. Suggested Audience**

All teaching and support staff and Education Advisory Body ("EAB") members. As part of their Academy induction or professional development, all teaching and support staff will apply the knowledge, principles and procedures contained within this policy.

### **4. Definitions**

For the purposes of this policy:

- **Child** is defined as anyone who has not yet reached their 19th birthday
- **Staff** is defined as anyone employed or contracted to SPTA or one of its Academies
- **Volunteer** is defined as anyone who carries out an unpaid role in an SPTA Academy; this includes Education Advisory Body members.

## 5. Related policies

This policy follows the DfE guidance on Keeping Children Safe in Education <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education> and is part of a suite of SPTA and academy policies which should also be referred to:

- SPTA Safer Recruitment Policy and Procedures
- SPTA Keeping Children Safe in Education policy
- Complaints Procedure
- SPTA Equality and Diversity Policy
- SPTA Health and Safety Policy
- SPTA E Safety Policy and Procedures
- SPTA Whistleblowing Policy
- SPTA Gifts and Hospitality Policy
- SPTA and Academy Learning Outside the Classroom policies
- Academy Child Protection Policy
- Academy Behaviour Policy
- Academy Anti-bullying Policy

This policy complies with the Equality Act 2010 and recognises that aspects of gender, culture or religion may be relevant when considering the nature of allegations or appropriateness of communications or physical interventions.

## 6. Principles

This Academy is part of the School Partnership Trust Academies (SPTA) and will work within all guidelines produced by the SPTA and with all SPTA academies to ensure pupils' health, safety, welfare and well-being are fully safeguarded. This academy is committed to Keeping Children Safe in Education. Each pupil's welfare is of paramount importance to the academy and the academy will welcome, value and support every child to the best of our abilities and resources. This guidance document describes the standards of conduct and practice that SPTA employees and volunteers should follow when working with children.

The following principles apply to all aspects of this policy:

- If no specific advice, policies or guidelines for a specific situation exist or if you are unsure, consult a senior manager (e.g. member of the Academy Senior Leadership Team) to discuss the issue.
- If you need to take a particular course of action in an unplanned circumstance, which may vary from policies or does not allow time for advice to be sought, record these actions with a senior manager.
- If at any time you are concerned that an action or comment by yourself may be misinterpreted or that a child behaves or makes a comment in a way that causes you concern in this respect, log your concerns immediately with the appropriate senior member of staff.

## **7. Reporting incidents**

Employees and volunteers must:

- Be familiar with the academy's system for recording Child Protection and other concerns about children and young people
- Take responsibility for recording any incident, and passing on information where you have concerns, or concerns are disclosed to you by, or about a child. Do this speedily and accurately.
- Report any behaviour by colleagues that raises concern.
- Contact the Academy Designated Safeguarding Representative, the Deputy Safeguarding Representative or a member of the Senior Leadership Team immediately (the same day without fail)

## **8. Propriety and Behaviour**

Employees and volunteers must

- Be aware that behaviour in your personal life may impact upon your work with children and young people
- Follow professional codes of conduct at all times
- Refrain from behaving in a manner which would lead any reasonable person to question your suitability to work with children or act as a role model.

## **9. Confidentiality**

Employees and volunteers must:

- Keep private and sensitive information confidential at all times and only share it with relevant people when it is in the interests of the child to do so;
- Not use information to intimidate, humiliate or embarrass the child;
- Be aware of the need to listen and support children whilst understanding the importance of not promising to keep secrets;
- Never request a child to keep secrets.

## **10. Making a professional judgement**

Employees and volunteers must:

- Make judgements about their behaviour in order to secure the best interests and welfare of the child;
- Record judgements taken and share them with a senior manager;
- Ensure actions taken are warranted, proportionate, safe and applied equitably;
- Discuss any misunderstandings, accidents or threats with a senior manager;
- Be aware of their position of trust and ensure an unequal balance of power is not used for their own or others personal advantage or gratification;
- Not use their position to intimidate, bully, humiliate, threaten, coerce or undermine children;
- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries and avoid behaviour which might be misinterpreted by others;
- Not promote relationships which create a personal friendship or are of a sexual nature, or which may become so.

## **11. Personal/living space**

Employees and volunteers must:

- Not invite a child into their home or any home or domestic setting frequented by them, unless the reason for this has been firmly established and agreed with parents and senior managers or the home has been designated as a work place e.g. childminders, foster carers;

- Be vigilant in maintaining their own privacy and mindful of the need to avoid placing themselves in vulnerable situations;
- Not ask children to undertake personal jobs or errands;
- Maintain professional boundaries.

## **12. Gifts, rewards and favouritism**

Employees and volunteers must:

- Be aware of the SPTA Gifts and Hospitality policy which covers both the giving and receiving of gifts;
- Ensure that all gifts received or given in situations that may be misconstrued are declared;
- Only give gifts to an individual child part of an agreed reward system;
- Ensure that when operating reward systems, methods and criteria for selection of children for awards are fair and transparent.

## **13. Infatuations**

Employees and volunteers must:

- Deal with infatuations sensitively and appropriately to maintain the dignity and safety of all concerned;
- Make sure their own behaviour is beyond reproach;
- If they become aware of an infatuation developing or any indications that it may, record it and discuss it with a senior manager so that action can be taken to avoid any hurt, distress or embarrassment.



#### **14. Communication (including the use of technology)**

Employees and volunteers must:

- Be aware of and comply with the SPTA e Safety policy
- Ensure communication takes 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 and blogs which must be used in accordance with the SPTA e Safety policy.
- Not share any personal information with a child;
- Not request, or respond to, any personal information from a child, other than that which may be appropriate as part of their professional role;
- Not give their personal contact details to children, including their mobile number, home phone or personal e-mail address, unless the need to do so is agreed with senior management and parents;
- Only use equipment e.g. mobile phones, provided by SPTA or an SPTA Academy to communicate with children, making sure that parents/carers have given permission for this form of communication to be used;
- Only make contact with children for professional reasons and in accordance with Academy policy;
- Only use text messaging as a last resort when no other forms of communication are possible;
- Not use internet or web-based communication channels to send messages;
- Use internal e-mail systems in accordance with the SPTA e Safety policy.

#### **15. Social Contact**

Employees and volunteers must:

- Not have social contact with children unless the reason for this has been firmly established and agreed with Senior Managers;
- Not have secret social contact with children and/or their parent(s);
- Always approve any planned social contact with children with senior colleagues;
- Advise senior management of any social contact that has occurred which may raise concern;

- Report and record any situation which may place a child at risk or may compromise SPTA, the Academy or their own professional standing.

## 16. Sexual Contact

Employees and volunteers must:

- Not engage in sexual activity with or in the presence of a child, or cause or incite a child to engage in or watch sexual activity; to do so would be considered a criminal offence;
- Refrain from 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.
- Not discuss their own sexual relationships with or in the presence of children or young people;
- Ensure that your relationships with children and young people clearly take place within the boundaries of a respectful professional relationship
- Ensure language, attitudes and demeanour do not give rise to comment or speculation;
- Be aware that consistently conferring inappropriate special attention and favour upon a child might be construed as part of a grooming process, and as such will give rise to concerns about behaviour.
- Be aware that staff and volunteers **MUST NOT** have sex with a child under 16 – this is statutory rape and could result in a criminal conviction and prison sentence.
- Be aware that staff and volunteers **MUST NOT** have sex with any student over the age of 16. It is a breach of trust.
- Avoid making sexual remarks to, or about, a child/young person

## 17. Physical Contact

Employees and volunteers must:

- Be aware of and comply with the Academy's physical intervention policy
- Be aware that even well intentioned physical contact may be misconstrued by the child, an observer or by anyone to whom this action is described;
- Only have physical contact with a child when it is necessary and in ways which are appropriate to their professional or agreed role and responsibilities; never touch a child in a way which may be considered indecent;
- Be aware of the child's reactions or feelings and, as far as possible, only use a level of contact which is acceptable to the child and for the minimum time necessary;
- Seek permission from the child or the parent, if the child is very young, before physical contact is made and agree what contact is acceptable;
- Not assume that when a child is distressed they seek physical comfort;
- Always be prepared to report and explain actions and accept that all physical contact is open to scrutiny;
- Not indulge in horse play;
- Always encourage children, where possible to undertake self-care tasks independently;
- Be aware of cultural or religious views about touching and be sensitive to issues of gender;
- Where regular physical contact is required, the nature of this must be agreed with senior management and the parent as part of a formally agreed plan;
- Where a child initiates inappropriate physical contact, you must sensitively deter them and help them understand the importance of personal boundaries.

## 18. Behaviour Management

Employees and volunteers must:

- Be aware of and comply with the Academy's behaviour policy
- Not use any form of degrading treatment to punish a child;
- Not use sarcasm, demeaning or insensitive comments;
- Ensure any sanctions and rewards are part of an agreed behaviour management policy;
- Try to defuse situations before they escalate;
- Never use corporal punishment;
- Follow the behaviour policy and only use physical intervention in exceptional circumstances and as a last resort, when other behaviour management strategies have failed and where there is a risk of physical injury or serious damage to property;
- When, using physical intervention, use the minimum force necessary and techniques in- line with recommended policy and practice and always report and document the incident;
- Be mindful of other factors which may be impacting on a child's behaviour, i.e. bullying, changes in home circumstances;

**Note: the use of unwarranted physical force is likely to constitute a criminal offence.**

## 19. Personal/Intimate Care

Employees and volunteers must:

- Be aware of and comply with the Academy's intimate care policy. **Note the SPTA intimate care policy requires intimate care to be carried out by employees only.**
- Make other staff aware of the task being undertaken;
- Explain to the child what is happening;
- Carefully and sensitively observe the emotional responses of the child, and record and report any concerns to senior management and parents, if appropriate;
- Respect children's privacy at all times;
- Avoid any physical contact when children are in a state of undress, other than as part of an agreed care plan;

- Not change, in the same place as children;
- Not shower or bathe with children;
- Not assist with any personal care task which a child can undertake themselves.

## **20. First Aid and the administration of medicine**

Employees and volunteers must:

- Be aware of and comply with the SPTA First Aid , Accidents and Incidents policy and the Academy Supporting Children with Medical Needs policy
- Be suitably trained and qualified before administering first aid and/or any agreed medication;
- Ensure arrangements are in place to obtain parental consent for the administration of first aid or medication;
- Make adults aware of the task being undertaken;
- Explain to the child what is happening;
- Ensure an appropriate health/risk assessment is undertaken prior to undertaking certain activities.

## **21. One to one situations/home visits**

Employees and volunteers must:

- Avoid home visits wherever possible
- Ensure that, when lone working is an integral part of their role, full and appropriate risk assessments have been agreed;
- Avoid meetings with a child in secluded areas:
- Always inform colleagues and/or parents about one to one contact beforehand, assessing the need to have them present or close by;
- Avoid the use of engaged or equivalent signs, where ever possible, these create an opportunity for secrecy or the impression of secrecy;
- Carefully consider the need of the child when in one to one situation and always report any situation where the child becomes distressed or angry towards you;
- Agree the purpose for any home visit with senior management unless it is an acknowledged and integral part of your role;

- Never put yourself into a one to one situation when little or no information is available about the child.

## **22. Transport**

Employees and volunteers must:

- Be aware of and comply with the SPTA Minibus and other passenger transport vehicles policy;
- Ensure requirements around seat belts and car seats are adhered to;
- Not offer lifts outside normal working duties unless this has been brought to the attention of senior management and been agreed with parents;
- Ensure they are fit to drive and free from any drugs, alcohol or medicine that is likely to impair judgement or ability to drive;
- Record details of the journey in accordance with the SPTA Minibus and other passenger transport policy;
- Ensure that there are proper procedures in place for vehicle, passenger and driver safety, including appropriate insurance;
- Ensure that any impromptu or emergency lifts are recorded and can be justified if questioned.

## **23. Educational visits**

Employees and volunteers must:

- Be aware of and comply with the SPTA and Academy Learning outside the classroom policies
- Recognise that they are in a position of trust and ensure that their behaviour remains professional at all times and stays clearly within defined boundaries;
- Ensure staff/child ratios and gender mix are appropriate;
- Always have another adult present in out of work activities, unless otherwise agreed with a senior manager;
- Ensure risk assessments are undertaken;
- Have parental consent to the activity;
- Never share beds with children;

- Not share bedrooms unless it is a dormitory situation and the arrangements have been agreed with a senior manager, parents and children.

#### **24. Photography and Videos**

Employees and volunteers must:

- Be aware of and comply with the SPTA e Safety policy
- Be clear about the purpose of any activity involving photography and what will happen to the images when the activity is concluded;
- Be able to justify the reason for having images of children in their possession;
- Avoid making images in one to one situations or situations that may be construed as secretive or which show a single child with no surrounding context;
- Only use equipment provided or authorised by SPTA or the Academy
- Immediately report any concerns if any inappropriate or intrusive images are found;
- Have parental consent to take, display and/or distribute any images of children;
- Not use images that may cause distress or offence;
- Not use mobile phones or any other devices that have a camera to take images of children.

#### **25. Access to inappropriate images and internet usage**

Employees and volunteers must:

- Be aware of and comply with the SPTA e safety policy
- Not access, make or store indecent images of children on the internet, to do so would be illegal and lead to a criminal investigation;
- Not make or store images of children, gathered as a result of their work, on personal equipment;
- Ensure that children are not exposed to unsuitable material through ICT;
- Ensure that any materials shown to children are age appropriate;
- Immediately report any concerns, if any inappropriate or intrusive images are found, to the LADO.