

Staff Code of Conduct at St. Patrick's & St. Brigid's College



Approved by Board of Governors :

Date for Review :

A Code of Conduct for Employees within the Education Sector whose work bring them into contact with young people

Introduction

All actions concerning young people must uphold the best interests of the young person as a primary consideration. Staff must always be mindful of the fact that they hold a position of trust, and that their behaviour towards young people in their charge must be above reproach. The Code of Conduct is not intended to detract from the enriching experiences young people gain from positive interaction with staff within the education sector. It is intended to assist staff in respect of the complex issue of child abuse, by drawing attention to the areas of risk for staff and by offering guidance on prudent conduct.

Employees should be aware that failure to comply with the following Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action, including suspension/dismissal.

Purpose , Scope & Principles

The Code of Conduct is designed to give clear guidance on the standards of behaviour all school staff are expected to observe, and the college should notify staff of this code and expectations therein. School staff are role models and are in a unique position of influence and must adhere to behaviour that sets a good example to all pupils within the school. As a member of the school community, each employee has an individual responsibility to maintain their reputation and the reputation of the college, whether inside or outside working hours.

This Code of Conduct applies to all staff who are employed in the school, including the Principal.

Code of Conduct

Setting an Example

- All staff set examples of behaviour and conduct which can be copied by pupils. Staff must therefore avoid using inappropriate or offensive language at all times.
- Staff must demonstrate high standards of conduct in order to encourage our pupils to do the same.
- Staff must avoid putting themselves at risk of allegations of abusive or unprofessional conduct.
- The Code of Conduct will help staff understand what behaviour is and is not acceptable.

Safeguarding Pupils

- Staff have a duty to safeguard pupils from
 - physical Abuse
 - sexual abuse
 - emotional abuse
 - neglect

- The duty to safeguard pupils includes the duty to report concerns of a child protection nature to the Designated Child Protection Teacher (M Cleary) or the Deputy Designated Child Protection Teacher in the absence of the first teacher (A Toner).
- Staff have access to the college's Child Protection Policy and must be familiar with this document.
- Staff must not seriously demean or undermine pupils, their parents/carers or colleagues.
- Staff must take reasonable care of pupils under their supervision with the aim of ensuring their safety and welfare.

Private Meeting with Pupils

- Staff should be aware of the dangers which may arise from private interviews with individual pupils. It is recognised that there may be occasions when confidential interviews must take place. As far as possible, staff should conduct such interviews in a room with visual access, CCTV cameras installed or with the door open.
- Where such conditions cannot apply, staff are advised to ensure that another adult knows the interview is taking place. It may be necessary to use a sign indicating that the room is in use, but it is not advisable to use signs prohibiting entry to the room.
- Where possible another student or (preferably) another adult should be present or nearby during the interview, and SPB College, should take active measures to facilitate this.
- Staff must not conduct any private tutoring work with any pupil or pupils on school premises.

Physical Contact with Pupils

- As a general principle, staff are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with students.
- Staff should never touch a student unless it is necessary to protect the student, others or property from harm. See 'Use of Reasonable Force' Policy.
- Physical punishment is illegal, as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour, unless it is by way of necessary restraint.
- Staff who have to administer First Aid to a student should ensure wherever possible that this is done in the presence of other students or another adult. However, no member of staff should hesitate to provide First Aid in an emergency simply because another person is not present.
- Any physical contact which would be likely to be misinterpreted by the student, parent or other casual observer should be avoided.
- Following any incident where a member of staff feels that his/her actions have been, or may be misconstrued, a written report of the incident should be submitted immediately to his/her line manager or the Principal.
- Staff should be particularly careful when supervising students in residential settings, or in approved out of schools activities, where staff may be in proximity to students in circumstances very different from normal school/work environment.

Confidentiality

- where staff have access to confidential information about pupil or their parents/carers, staff must not reveal this information, except on a professional level to appropriate members of staff.
- All staff may, at some point, witness actions which need to be confidential. School procedures for reporting of such need to be followed. It should not be discussed outside the school. Should guidance be required, this should be sought from the Principal or Assistant Principals.

Choice and Use of Teaching Materials

- Teachers should avoid teaching materials, the choice of which might be misinterpreted and reflect upon the motives for the choice.
- When using teaching materials of a sensitive nature should be aware of the danger that their application, either by students or by the teacher, might after the event be criticised.
- If in doubt about the appropriateness of a particular teaching material, the teacher should consult with the Principal before using it.

Relationships and Attitudes

- All staff should ensure that their relationships with students are appropriate to the age, maturity and sex of the students, taking care that their conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation.
- Attitudes, dress code, demeanour and language all require care and thought, particularly when staff are dealing with adolescent boys and girls.

Social Networking

- Individuals who work with young people should always maintain appropriate professional boundaries and should never enter into inappropriate relationships with young people. This may include;
- Communication of a personal nature
- Inappropriate dialogue through the internet via Facebook, Instagram, MSN, Twitter, online gaming sites etc.
- Staff should not, 'befriend' any current pupil or their parents on social media sites. Staff may wish to add past pupils as, 'friends' after the pupil has turned 18 years of age.
- The sending of emails or text messages to young people via personal email addresses or mobile phones is not acceptable.
- All communications with young people in our school should be of a professional nature and communicated via official school email addresses or a school phone.
- Every adult has a right to use social networking as a means of communicating with other adults. The school would however like to highlight the risks associated with your communications being accessible to the general social networking public. It is advisable to consider using privacy tools when communicating via this media. Staff should at all times be mindful of the nature of their communications on forums not controlled by themselves (e.g. friends or relatives networking sites) and how these communications might be interpreted by others.

Conclusion

It would be impossible and inappropriate to lay down hard and fast rules to cover all the circumstances in which staff interrelate with young people, or where opportunities for their conduct to be misconstrued might occur.

In all circumstances, employees' professional judgement will be exercised and for the vast majority of employees this Code of Conduct, will serve only to confirm what has always been their practice. If employees have any doubts about points in this policy, or how they should act in particular circumstances they should consult with the Principal/Assistant Principal or a representative of their professional association/trade union.

From time to time, it is prudent for all staff to reappraise their teaching styles, relationships with young people and their manner and approach to individual young people, to ensure that they give no grounds for doubt about their intentions, in the minds of colleagues, young people or of their parents/guardians.

Monitoring and Evaluation

SPB College, will update this Code of Conduct in the light of any further guidance and legislation as necessary, and review it regularly. Participation and consultation with staff will be undertaken.