

# Linn Primary School and Nursery Unit



# Staff Code of Conduct

August 2021

## STAFF CODE OF CONDUCT

The use of the word **staff** in this policy also refers to **governors, volunteers, students (teaching and non-teaching) and work experience pupils** working in the school. **All such personnel** are required to adhere to this Code of Conduct.

### INTRODUCTION

All staff have personal and legal responsibilities, including; treating others with dignity and respect; acting honestly, using public 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 staff should and should not do. It highlights the principal areas where staff need to be aware of their responsibilities when working in the school and is a framework for behaviour. All staff should ensure they are familiar with the specific policies that underpin these behaviours. If these documents are not supplied at induction, they should be requested from the Principal.

All actions concerning children and 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 the children and young people in their charge must be above reproach. This Code of Conduct is not intended to detract from the enriching experiences children and young people gain from positive interaction with staff within the education sector. It is intended to assist in respect of the complex issue of child abuse, by drawing attention to the areas of risk and offering staff guidance on prudent conduct.

### RIGHTS RESPECTING SCHOOL

Linn Primary School is a 'Rights Respecting School' and as a result continues to strive to promote an ethos which reflects UNICEF's 'Rights' Respecting School Award' (RRSA).

This award recognises schools that have put the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) at the heart of their planning, policies, practice and ethos. A rights' respecting school is a community where children's rights are learned, taught, practised, respected, protected and promoted.

The **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child** is the basis of all **UNICEF's** work and states that every child has the right to:

- a childhood (including protection from harm);
- be educated (including all girls and boys completing primary school);
- be healthy (including having clean water, nutritious food and medical care);
- be treated fairly (including changing laws and practices that are unfair on children);
- be heard (including considering children's views).

## **VISION STATEMENT**

It is our vision that Linn Primary School and Nursery Unit is a place where children are nurtured in a caring environment conducive to learning, so that they can become flexible, individual learners who feel valued and can develop the self-confidence and skills to become well rounded individuals.

Our intention is that all adults associated with the school will have opportunities to develop both individually and as valued team members.

It is important that the school is central to the community and therefore our aim is to ensure effective links are maintained with local community groups for the benefit of all.

Our school promotes the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Articles 3 and 29 underline our school vision:

### **Article 3**

The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all our actions.

### **Article 29**

Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures and the environment.

## **OUR RIGHTS RESPECTING SCHOOL CHARTER**

**Article 2 (without discrimination)** Every child must be treated equally no matter of race, gender, nationality or religion and treated fairly whatever their ability or need.

**Article 3 (best interests of the child)** The best interest of the child must be a top priority in everything we do.

**Article 12 (respect the views of the child)** Every child has the right to say what they think in all matters affecting them.

**Article 19 (protection from all forms of violence)** Every child must be protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and mistreatment.

**Article 24 (health & Health Services)** Every child has the right to good health care.

**Article 29 (goals of education)** Every child has the right to develop their personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own cultures, and the environment.

The duty to safeguard pupils/students *includes the duty to report child protection/safeguarding concerns* about a pupil/student to the school's Designated Teacher for Child Protection or in his/her absence the Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection or the school Principal. Staff have also a duty to implement the school's Positive Behaviour Policy and Anti-Bullying procedures.

**(Reference: Positive Behaviour Policy and Anti-Bullying Procedures)**

All members of staff are provided with personal copies of the school's Safeguarding/Child Protection Policy and they must be familiar with this document.

**(Reference: Safeguarding/Child Protection Policy)**

### ***Private Meetings with Pupils***

Staff should be aware of the dangers which may arise from private interviews or meetings with individual pupils. It is recognised that there will be occasions when confidential meetings must take place. Staff should conduct such meetings in a room with visual access, or with the door open.

Where such conditions cannot apply, all staff are advised to ensure that another adult knows that the meeting 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 pupil or (preferably) another adult should be present or nearby during the meeting, and the school should take active measures to facilitate this.

### ***Physical Contact with Pupils***

As a general principle, members of staff are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with their pupils.

It is unrealistic and unnecessary, however, to suggest that staff should touch pupils only in emergencies. In particular, a distressed child, especially a younger child, may need reassurance involving physical comforting, as a caring parent would provide. Staff should not feel inhibited from providing this.

Staff should never touch a child who has clearly indicated that he/she is, or would be, uncomfortable with such contact, unless it is necessary to protect the child, others or property from harm. (DENI Circular 1999/9 on the use of reasonable force, gives guidance on Article 4 of the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 - Power of member of staff to restrain pupils).

**(Reference: 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.

If a member of staff has to administer first aid to a pupil, he/she should ensure wherever possible that this is done in the presence of other children 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 pupil, parent/carer 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 the Principal. Staff should be particularly careful when supervising pupils in a residential setting, or in approved out of school activities, where more informal relationships tend to be usual and where staff may be in proximity to pupils in circumstances very different from the normal school/work environment.

Should a pupil require assistance as a result of an injury or a personal hygiene need, all staff should follow the school's Intimate Care Policy.

**(Reference: Intimate Care Policy)**

### ***Choice and Use of Teaching Materials***

Teachers should avoid teaching materials, the choices of which might be misinterpreted and reflect upon the motives for the choice.

When using teaching materials of a sensitive nature a teacher should be aware of the danger that their application, either by pupils or by the teacher, might after the event be criticised. If in doubt about the appropriateness of particular teaching materials, the teacher should consult with the Principal before using it.

### ***Relationships and Activities***

Within the Pastoral Care Policy of the school, staff should ensure that their relationships with pupils are appropriate to the age, maturity and sex of the pupils, taking care that their conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Attitudes, demeanour and language all require care and thought.

**(Reference: Pastoral Care Policy)**

## **RELATIONSHIPS**

All staff should observe confidentiality in respect of any discussions with other individual staff about their professional problems, personal problems and difficulties.

Staff should not denigrate their colleagues in the presence of third parties: nor should a member of staff adversely criticise a colleague in the presence of others save in the context of appropriate procedures.

Effective consultation between staff takes place in an atmosphere of mutual respect for the professional expertise and a recognition and understanding of the various responsibilities, of those involved. Staff should be able to express freely their considered professional opinions while recognising the responsibilities borne by colleagues.

While it is recognised that pupils will from time to time discuss their work and progress with staff, particularly those staff members who undertake pastoral care, staff should ensure that they maintain the delicate balance between taking a close interest in the welfare of pupils and the avoidance of entering into discussions about the conduct, competence or efficiency of other staff members.

The growth of friendly relationships between staff and pupil which is based on mutual respect and recognition of the role that each plays in the learning situation is desirable. It is, however, an abuse of this professional relationship for a teacher to:

- enter into an improper association with a pupil;
- show undue personal favour or disfavour towards a pupil;
- commit such acts against a child which are illegal.

Staff should not deliberately behave in such a way as to bring the school in disrepute.

Staff should not behave in an offensive or discriminatory manner (eg. racist, political, religious, sexual) or make offensive or discriminatory remarks directed towards or about others.

### **HEALTH & SAFETY**

Employees must adhere to the school's Health and Safety policy, procedure and guidance and must ensure that they take every action to keep themselves and everyone in the school environment safe and well.

This includes taking immediate safety action in a potentially harmful situation (either at school or off-site) by complying with statutory and school guidelines and collaborating with colleagues, agencies and the local authority.

**(Reference: Health and Safety Policy)**

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

All employees at the school and the governors come into contact with a significant volume of data and information in relation to pupils, staff, school activities and many other matters. There is an obligation to read and to observe the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.

### **MANAGING DATA**

Under the Data Protection Act 1998, members of staff are required to collect, maintain and dispose of sensitive or personal data in a responsible manner. Arrangements are in place within school to have sensitive data destroyed as appropriate.

### **DISCLOSING DATA**

Members of staff are expected to treat any information about pupils in a discreet and confidential manner.

Staff should not disclose sensitive information about the school, including its pupils and staff to other parties, for example, parents/carers, colleagues or on social media sites. There are particular exceptions to this; for example disclosure of suspected or alleged abuse of a pupil to Child Protection officers; discussion with a person accompanying or representing a member of staff in a formal meeting or disclosure under the Whistleblowing procedure. All communication with the media must be directed through the Principal or his nominee.

**(Reference: Whistleblowing Policy)**

Staff must also take all reasonable steps to ensure that the loss, destruction, inaccuracy or disclosure of information does not occur as a result of their actions, including information relating to school business and pupil data.

## **SOCIAL CONTACT with PUPILS**

Staff should not establish or seek to establish social contact with pupils of the school. This includes giving any personal details to a pupil such as a home/mobile telephone number, home/school email address, or engage in communication via social media. Staff should not accept friendship requests from pupils on social media sites.

(Reference: **Acceptable Use Policy for Mobile Phones and Related Technologies and eSafety Policy**).

## **USE OF SCHOOL COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS**

The school has the right to monitor internet activity using the C2K system or document production, principally in order to avoid offensive or nuisance material and to protect systems from viruses, but also to ensure proper and effective use of systems by staff.

Staff should be aware that the school has the right to access employees' personal email and computer files stored on the school system if required for investigation of misuse.

It is recommended that employees do not use school systems (phone, email, computers) for personal use. Inappropriate usage, which includes excessive or regular personal use, may result in disciplinary action.

Inappropriate use of email and internet systems also includes viewing, publication or circulation of illegal or offensive material, gambling or gaming; these will be treated as disciplinary matters. Passwords should not be shared and access to computer systems must be kept confidential. Breach of this confidentiality may be subject to disciplinary action. Employees who receive inappropriate communications should inform the Principal or nominee immediately.

## **USE of MOBILE PHONES or PERSONAL TECHNOLOGY**

Staff members should refrain using their mobile phones or personal technology when in contact with children unless prior permission has been given.

Staff should not use their personal mobile phone or personal technology to take photographs of the pupils without good reason. E.g., a personal phone may be used if pupils are on a school trip and the member of staff has forgotten to bring a school camera. The photographs must be removed from the member of staff's phone at their earliest convenience.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

The use of social media sites (Eg., Facebook, Twitter, etc.) are now commonplace with the result that the lines between work and personal life can become blurred. To protect staff, pupils and the reputation of the school the following guidelines should be followed:

- Staff should not use the C2K system to engage in personal social media activities. This inappropriate use of social media sites may be treated as a disciplinary matter.
- If staff use social media sites for personal use, they are reminded that they have a responsibility to ensure they are posting comments or images that are not detrimental to their position as a member of staff of this school, the privacy or rights of pupils or the reputation of the school.

Images **may** include photographs from staff parties, or during a period of absence due to illness that could be misinterpreted and present the staff or the school, in a negative light. **A common sense approach to the use of social media websites is recommended.**

Under no circumstance should offensive or discriminatory comments be made about work colleagues on the internet. This may amount to cyber-bullying or defamation and could be deemed a disciplinary matter.

### **DRESS CODE**

Staff should dress in a manner that is appropriate to the tasks of their post, their professional status and their position as role model for primary school children. Male staff should wear a shirt and tie and jeans should not be worn when in the work place unless an alternative arrangement has been agreed with the Principal or his nominee. Also, staff working on the school premises eg., in-service training but not working in a classroom situation are still expected to dress as detailed above.

### **USE OF ALCOHOL AND ILLEGAL DRUGS**

The taking of illegal drugs will not be tolerated. All staff members are expected to attend work without being under the influence of alcohol or drugs that may adversely impact their ability to carry out their duties.

If alcohol or drug usage negatively impacts on a member of staff's working life, the school has the right to discuss the matter with the member of staff and take appropriate action, having considered factors such as the welfare of the children in their care, school reputation and public confidence.

### **USE OF SCHOOL EQUIPMENT OR PREMISES**

School equipment and premises are available only for school-related activities and should not be used for fulfilment of another job or post or for excessive or regular personal use, unless authorised in advance by the Principal or his nominee. This includes photocopy facilities, stationery, telephones and computers and premises. Any school equipment that is used outside school premises, for example laptops, iPads, etc. should be returned to the school when the member of staff leaves employment or upon request by the Principal or nominee.

Any equipment or resources removed from the premises should be recorded in the school's 'Borrow Book' and in line with the school's 'Borrowing' Policy.

**(Reference: School Equipment Borrowing Policy)**

### **STAFF EVENTS/PARTIES**

The school does not seek to dictate how members of staff conduct themselves in their personal lives outside work. However, unlawful, anti-social, unacceptable conduct by staff at school events (E.g. Staff Christmas party or end of year party) may be deemed a disciplinary matter. This includes behaviour that may bring the school's reputation into disrepute.

### **TIMEKEEPING**

Members of staff are reminded of the importance good timekeeping and that consistent poor timekeeping may lead to disciplinary action being taken. Staff should be punctual and if this not possible, for whatever reason, the member of staff should contact the Principal or his nominee. If a member of staff needs to leave work early or has to attend an appointment, this should be discussed with the Principal. Teachers staff have core hours to work in line with the school's directed time. Non-teaching staff have contracted set hours.



## **STAFF ILLNESS/ABSENTEEISM**

Staff should refer to the 'Managing Attendance at Work' policies for teaching and non-teaching staff. If a member of staff becomes ill or is unable to be in work for whatever reason, he/she should contact the Principal. If a member of staff is not in school and knows he/she will not be in school the next day, they should contact the school office during the school day and as early as possible, to allow arrangements to be put in place to cover the absence.

If notifying the Principal of illness/or absence, **she should not be contacted at home before 7.00a.m. or after 11.00p.m.**

In line with Education Authority's recommendations, a governor has been appointed to regularly review staff attendance. This review is on the agenda of all Board of Governors' meetings. All members of school employees are referred to the Education Authority's Occupational Health after twenty days consecutive days absence or repeated absences due to illness.

**(Reference: Managing Attendance at Work Policy: Teaching and Non-Teaching)**

## **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

A staff member is required to declare this where the group or organisation would be considered to be in conflict with the ethos of the school. Membership of a trade union or staff representative group would not need to be declared.

Employees should also consider carefully if they need to declare to the school their relationship with any individual(s) where this might cause a conflict with school activities. E.g. a relationship with a Governor, another staff member or a contractor who provides services to the school. Failure to make a relevant declaration of interests is a very serious breach of trust and therefore if employees are in doubt about a declaration, they are advised to take advice from the Principal, the Education Authority or their trade union. All declarations, including nil returns, should be submitted in writing to the Principal or his nominee.

## **CONCLUSION**

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

If a member of staff has any doubts about the content of this document, or how they should act in particular circumstances, they should consult the Principal, nominee or a representative of their professional association.

From time to time, however, it is prudent for all staff to reappraise their teaching styles, relationships with the pupils and colleagues, their manner to ensure that they give no grounds for doubt about their intentions.

- Members of staff are also referred to the following school policies:
- Safeguarding Policy/Child Protection;
- Positive Behaviour;
- Anti-Bullying;
- Pastoral Care;
- Intimate Care Policy;
- Acceptable Use Policy for Mobile Phones and Related Technologies;
- eSafety;
- Use of Reasonable Force;
- Managing Attendance at Work;
- Whistleblowing;
- Directed Time Guidance;
- Health & Safety.

#### **POLICY REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed in 2023 or updated in light of relevant emerging guidance/  
knowledge gained from any critical incidence since the last review