

## **A Policy for Code of Conduct for employees of St Bride's Primary School, whose work brings them into contact with children.**

In St Bride's we aim to create a happy and safe working environment where each child will develop fully through encouragement, example and discipline to become an independent, responsible young person.

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 school. 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.

### **General Relationships and Attitudes**

While working, situations may often call for the ability to support, empathise or comfort pupils; staff should ensure that interaction is appropriate to the age and gender of the individual(s) concerned and that their conduct does not give rise to critical comment or speculation. Attitudes, demeanour and language all require care and thought, when staff are dealing with children and young people. Special care must also be taken when interacting with any pupil on a one-to-one basis.

### **Private Meetings with Pupils**

There are occasions when supervision or a meeting with pupils must take place on a one-to-one basis.

- Staff should be aware of the dangers which may arise from private interviews with individual pupils. It is recognised that there will be occasions when confidential interviews must take place. As far as possible, staff should conduct such interviews in a room with visual access, or with the door open.
- Where such conditions cannot apply, staff are advised to ensure that another adult knows that 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 pupil or (preferably) another adult should be present or nearby during the interview, and the school should take active measures to facilitate this.
- In some circumstances it may be necessary to leave a pupil home. Never carry a child unaccompanied in your car and ensure he/she sits in the rear seats.

## **Physical Contact with Pupils**

- As a general principle, 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.
- 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 pupil 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 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 Mrs Quinn.
- 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.

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

Staff whose work involves the use of Teaching/Learning resources or literature (e.g. books, magazines, information leaflets, videos, computer software/games etc.) should ensure that:-

- They are familiar with the contents of materials they select for use with pupils
- Teachers should avoid teaching materials the choice of which might be misinterpreted. They should 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 a particular teaching material, the teacher should consult with the Principal before using it.

### **Conversations of a Sensitive Nature**

In order to fulfil their role effectively, there will be occasions where staff may find themselves in conversations with pupils covering particularly sensitive issues. In such circumstances all staff should employ discretion and professional judgement to ensure that the conversation cannot be construed as unnecessary and/or unjustified intrusion. Staff should be aware of relevant procedures governing the handling and reporting of areas of concern related to child protection and at all times should ensure that they follow such procedures.

It is especially important in areas such as suspected child abuse that staff listens to pupils in a sensitive and sympathetic manner. However, staff should ensure that they do not adopt an investigative role but instead report the incident according to established guidelines in order that relevant action may be undertaken by the appropriate personnel or agencies.

### **Conclusion**

It would be impossible and inappropriate to lay down hard and fast rules to cover all the circumstances in which staff inter-relate with children and young people, or where opportunities might occur. Professional judgement should be exercised.

The staff of St Bride's will reappraise teaching styles and relationships with children to ensure that they give no grounds for doubt about their intentions in the minds of colleagues, or children, or their parents/guardians.