ST MARY'S RC HIGH SCHOOL

STAFF BEHAVIOUR (CODE OF CONDUCT) POLICY

Policy owner: Headteacher

Policy approval level: Safeguarding committee

Date policy approved: 12 June 2023

Review frequency: 3 yearly

Review date: June 2026

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This policy sets out clear guidance on the standards of behaviour expected from all members of staff at St Mary's RC High School - 'the school'. The principles underlying the guidance aim to encourage staff to achieve the highest possible standards of conduct and to minimise the risk of inappropriate conduct occurring.

1.2 School staff are in a unique position of trust and influence as role models for pupils. Therefore, staff must adhere to behaviour that sets a good example to all pupils within the school.

1.3 Staff also have an individual responsibility to maintain their own reputation and the reputation of the school, both inside and outside working hours and work setting.

1.4 This policy applies to all staff and volunteers in the school regardless of their position, role or responsibility. References to 'staff' throughout the policy relate to all of the following groups:

a. All members of staff including teaching and support staff;

b. Volunteers, including governors;

c. Casual workers;

d. Temporary and supply staff, either from agencies or engaged directly; and

e. Student placements, including those undertaking initial teacher training and apprentices.

1.5 St Mary's RC High School requires that all members of staff read and agree to comply with this policy.

1.6 Breach or failure to observe this policy will result in action being taken under the school disciplinary procedures including, but not limited to, dismissal.

1.7 This code of conduct is not an exhaustive list of acceptable and unacceptable standards of behaviour. In situations where guidance does not exist in this policy, staff are expected to exercise their professional judgement and act in the best interests of the pupils and the school.

2. PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOUR AND CONDUCT

2.1 Staff are expected to demonstrate the highest possible standards of personal and professional conduct and behaviour and consistently act with honesty and integrity. The school expects staff to treat each other, pupils, parents and the wider community with dignity and respect at all times.

2.2 Staff must act in accordance with their duty of care to pupils and ensure that the safety and welfare of pupils are accorded the highest priority.

2.3 Staff will show fairness in their treatment of children and avoid behaviours such as embarrassing or humiliating pupils, making jokes at the expense of pupils, discriminating against or favouring pupils, and sarcasm.

2.4 Staff must have regard for the Catholic ethos and values of the school, and must not do or say anything which may bring the school or governing body into disrepute. Care should be taken by staff to avoid any conflict of interest between activities undertaken outside school and responsibilities within school. Staff should act in accordance with the school's policies and procedures at all times.

2.5 In any interaction with pupils, staff must not express or endorse opinions that are contrary to the teachings of the Catholic church.

3. DRESS AND APPEARANCE

3.1 The school recognises that dress and appearance are matters of personal choice and self-expression. However, all members of staff must dress in a manner that is appropriate to their professional role and that promotes a professional image.

3.2 Staff should dress in a manner that is not offensive or revealing and in a manner that is free from political or contentious slogans.

3.3 Staff should dress safely and appropriately for the tasks they undertake.

3.4 Tattoos and body art should be covered while staff are in school. Discreet earrings and discreet nose studs are acceptable but all other body piercings should be removed or covered while on school premises.

4. SMOKING, ALCOHOL AND OTHER SUBSTANCES

4.1 The school is a non-smoking site. Staff must not smoke on school premises or outside school gates. Any member of staff wishing to smoke must leave the school grounds.

4.2 Staff must not smoke whilst working with or supervising pupils offsite.

4.3 Staff must not be under the influence of alcohol, illicit drugs or other illegal substances on or near school premises or whilst engaging in school/student events (i.e. Leaving Proms, residential visits) both within the school premises and outside the school setting.

4.4 Staff should not engage in activities that may damage the reputation of the school

5. RELATIONSHIPS WITH PUPILS

5.1 Staff must maintain professional boundaries with pupils appropriate to their position and must always consider whether their actions are warranted, proportionate, safe, and applied equitably. Staff should act in an open and transparent way that would not lead any reasonable person to question their actions or intent. Staff should think carefully about their conduct so that misinterpretations are minimised.

5.2 Staff must not establish or seek to establish social contact with pupils for the purpose of securing a friendship or to pursue or strengthen a relationship. If a young person seeks to establish social contact you should exercise your professional judgement in making a response and be aware that such social contact could be misconstrued.

5.3 Staff must not develop personal or sexual relationships with pupils and must not engage in any sexual activity with a pupil. Sexual activity does not just involve physical contact including penetrative and non-penetrative acts.

5.4 Working Together to Safeguard Children defines sexual abuse as 'forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet)'.

5.5 Staff should be mindful of Section 16 of The Sexual Offences Act 2003.

5.6 Staff must not make sexual remarks to a pupil, discuss their own sexual relationships with, or in the presence of, pupils or discuss a pupil's sexual relationships in an inappropriate setting or context.

5.7 Contact with pupils must be through the school's authorised mechanisms. Personal phone numbers, email addresses or communication routes via all social media platforms, should not be used and staff should not share their home address with pupils. If contacted via an inappropriate route the member of staff must inform the Headteacher immediately.

6. INFATUATIONS

6.1 It is not unusual for pupils or, sometimes, their parents to develop infatuations towards members of staff. All such situations must be responded to sensitively to maintain the dignity of those concerned.

6.2 Staff should also be aware that such circumstances carry a high risk of words or actions being misinterpreted and for allegations to be made against staff. Any indications of an infatuation towards yourself or another member of staff must be reported to your line manager.

7. GIFTS/HOSPITALITY

7.1 Staff need to take care that they do not accept any gift/offer of hospitality that might be construed as a bribe by others, or lead the giver to expect preferential treatment. However, there may be occasions where pupils or parents wish to give a small token of appreciation to staff, for example at religious festivities or at the end of the year.

7.2 It is unacceptable to receive gifts on a regular basis or to suggest to pupils that gifts are appropriate or desired. Money must not be accepted as a gift. If you are unsure whether to accept a gift you should consult your line manager.

7.3 Staff must not accept significant gifts or hospitality from pupils, parents, carers, actual or potential contractors or outside suppliers. All such gifts/offers of hospitality should be reported to your line manager and recorded.

7.4 Personal gifts must not be given by staff to pupils and any reward to pupils should be in accordance with the school's behaviour policy, recorded and not based on favouritism.

8. PHYSICAL CONTACT WITH PUPILS

8.1 There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for staff to have physical contact with pupils, but it is crucial that they only do so in ways appropriate to their professional role. A 'no touch' approach is impractical for most staff and may in some circumstances be inappropriate. When physical contact is made with pupils it should be in response to their needs at that time, of limited duration and appropriate to their age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity and background.

8.2 Where feasible, staff should seek the child's permission before initiating contact. Staff should listen, observe and take note of the child's reaction or feelings and, so far as is possible, use a level of contact which is acceptable to the child for the minimum time necessary.

8.3 It is not possible to be specific about the appropriateness of each physical contact, since an action that is appropriate with one child in one set of circumstances may be inappropriate in another, or with a different child. Staff should therefore, use their professional judgement at all times.

8.4 Staff should 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.

Staff should never touch a child in a way which may be considered indecent. Always be prepared to explain actions and accept that all physical contact be open to scrutiny. Staff must not engage in rough play, tickling or fun fights with pupils.

8.5 Extra caution should be exercised where a child is known to have suffered previous abuse or neglect. Such experiences may sometimes make a child exceptionally needy and demanding of physical contact and staff should respond sensitively by deterring the child through helping them to understand the importance of personal boundaries.

8.6 Staff supervising PE and games, or providing musical tuition should demonstrate the use of a particular piece of equipment/instrument on another member of staff if possible. However, they may be required to initiate physical contact with pupils to support a child to perform a task safely, to demonstrate the use of a particular piece of equipment/instrument or to assist them with an exercise. Contact under these circumstances should be done with the pupil's agreement, for the minimum time necessary and in an open environment. Staff should remain sensitive to any discomfort expressed verbally or non-verbally by the pupil.

8.7 Physical contact must never be secretive, for the gratification of the adult or represent a misuse of authority.

8.8 If a member of staff believes that an action could be misinterpreted, the incident and circumstances should be reported to your line manager, recorded and, if appropriate, a copy placed on the child's file.

8.9 To avoid doubt, staff should refer to other, relevant school's policies.

9. CHILD IN DISTRESS

9.1 There may be occasions when a pupil is in distress and in need of comfort as a reassurance. This may include age appropriate physical contact. Staff should remain self-aware at all times in order that their contact is not threatening, intrusive or subject to misinterpretation.

9.2 Such incidents should always be recorded and shared with the Designated Safeguarding Lead. If you have a particular concern about the need to provide this type of care and reassurance you should seek further advice from your line manager.

10. SHOWERS AND CHANGING

10.1 Pupils are entitled to respect and privacy whilst they are changing or showering after PE/games or swimming. However, there needs to be an appropriate level of supervision in order to safeguard young people, meet health and safety requirements and to ensure that bullying does not take place. The supervision should be appropriate to the needs and age of the pupils/students and sensitive to the potential for embarrassment.

10.2 Staff should be vigilant about their own behaviour and make clear their intention of entering a changing room. Staff must not change or shower in the same place as children.

11. ONE TO ONE SITUATIONS

11.1 Staff working individually with pupils should be aware of the potential vulnerability of pupils and staff in such situations. Staff should manage these situations with regard to the safety of the pupil and to themselves.

11.2 Individual work with pupils should not be undertaken in isolated areas or rooms where there is no external viewing panel. Where it is necessary to close doors for reasons of confidentiality a colleague should be made aware of this and asked to remain vigilant.

12. TRANSPORTING PUPILS

12.1 In certain circumstances it may be appropriate for staff to transport pupils offsite, for example sports fixtures, swimming lessons or other out of school activities. A designated member of staff should be appointed to plan and provide oversight of all transport arrangements and to respond to any difficulties that may arise.

12.2 Staff should ensure that the transport arrangements and the vehicle meet all legal requirements. Staff should ensure that the driver has the appropriate license for the vehicle, that the vehicle is roadworthy, has a valid MOT certificate and is appropriately insured and that the maximum capacity is not exceeded.

12.3 Staff should ensure that the driver is not distracted while the vehicle is in motion for any reason other than an emergency and should also ensure all passengers are wearing correctly fastened seatbelts. Staff should never transport pupils while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

12.4 Prior to transporting pupils offsite consent must be obtained from pupils' parent/guardian and staff should be aware that the safety and welfare of the pupils is their responsibility until this is safely passed back to their parent/carer.

13. E-SAFETY

13.1 Staff should follow the school's E-Safety policy for staff and the Acceptable Use Policy at all times and should have regard for the school's E-Safety policy for pupils.

13.2 Staff must not engage in inappropriate use of social network sites which may bring themselves, the school or the school community into disrepute. Staff should adopt the highest security settings on any personal profiles they have.

13.3 Staff should remain mindful of their digital footprint and exercise caution in all their use of social media or any other web based presence they have. This includes written content, videos or photographs and views expressed either directly or by 'liking' certain pages or posts or following certain individuals or groups. Staff should exercise care when using dating websites where staff could encounter students.

13.4 Staff must not make contact with pupils, must not accept or initiate friend requests or follow pupils' accounts on any social media platform. Staff must not communicate with pupils via social media, websites, instant messenger accounts or text message. The only acceptable method of contact is via the use of school email accounts or telephone equipment.

13.5 Staff should not make contact with pupils' family members, accept or initiate friend requests or follow pupils' family member's account on any social media platform.

13.6 However, the school acknowledges that staff who are also parents may wish to make contact with other parents, who are friends, over social media. Staff must exercise caution and professional judgement in these circumstances and should not have any contact with pupils' family members via social media if that contact is likely to constitute a conflict of interest or call into question their objectivity.

13.7 Mobile phones and personally-owned devices may not be used during lessons or formal school time. They should be switched off (or silent) at all times. The Bluetooth functionality of a mobile phone should be switched off at all times and may not be used to send images or files to other mobile phones. Mobile phones and personal devices are not permitted to be used in certain areas within the school site such as changing rooms and toilets.

13.8 Mobile phones and personally-owned mobile devices brought in to school are the responsibility of the device owner. The school accepts no responsibility for the loss, theft or damage of personally-owned mobile phones or mobile devices.

14. PHOTOGRAPHY, VIDEO AND IMAGES OF CHILDREN

14.1 Many school activities involve recording images as part of the curriculum, extra school activities, publicity or to celebrate an achievement. In accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations, the image of a pupil is personal data. Therefore, it is a requirement under the regulations for consent to be obtained from the parent/guardian of a pupil for any images made. It is also important to take into account the wishes of the pupil, remembering that some pupils do not wish to have their photograph taken or be filmed.

14.2 Using images for publicity purposes will require the age-appropriate consent of the individual concerned and their parent/guardian. Images should not be displayed on websites, in publications or in a public place without their consent. Staff should also be clear about the purpose of the activity and what will happen to the photographs/ images/video footage when the lesson or activity is concluded.

14.3 Photographs/stills or video footage of pupils should only be taken using school equipment for purposes authorised by the school and should be stored securely and only on school equipment.

14.4 Staff should ensure that a member of the Senior Leadership Team is aware of the proposed use of photographic/video equipment and that this is recorded in lesson plans. All photographs/stills and video footage should be available for scrutiny and staff should be able to justify all images/video footage made.

14.5 Staff should remain aware of the potential for images of pupils to be misused to create indecent images of children and/or for grooming purposes. Therefore, careful consideration should be given to how activities which are being filmed or photographed are organised and undertaken. Particular care should be given when filming or photographing young or vulnerable pupils who may be unable to question how or why the activities are taking place. Staff should also be mindful that pupils who have been abused through the use of video or photography may feel threatened by its use in a teaching environment.

15. CONFIDENTIALITY

15.1 Members of staff may have access to confidential information about pupils, their parents/carers or their siblings. Staff must not reveal such information except to those colleagues who have a professional role in relation to the pupil on a need to know basis.

15.2 Staff should never use confidential or personal information about a pupil or her/his family for their own, or others' advantage (including that of partners, friends, relatives or other organisations). Information must never be used to intimidate, humiliate, or embarrass the pupil.

15.3 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, this needs to be reported and dealt with in accordance with the appropriate school procedure. It must not be discussed outside the school, including with the pupil's parent or carer, nor with colleagues in the school except by a senior member of staff with the appropriate authority to deal with the matter.

15.4 Staff have a statutory obligation to share with the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead any information which gives rise to concern about the welfare or safety of a pupil or that might suggest a pupil is in need or at risk of significant harm. Staff should pass on information without delay in accordance with the school's safeguarding policy and procedures and this should be recorded. Staff must never promise a pupil that they will not act on or pass on any information that they are told by the pupil.

15.5 Staff should refer to the Department for Education's document Information sharing: advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services for further guidance on information sharing. If you are in any doubt about whether to share you should seek guidance from a member of the senior leadership team.

15.6 Any media or legal enquiries should be passed to the senior leadership team and only approved staff and Governors should communicate to the media about the school.

16. LOW LEVEL CONCERNS

16.1 Low-level concerns are concerns that do not meet the harms threshold. They are not insignificant – a teacher having favourites for example, or a member of staff using inappropriate sexualised language – and still need to be reported, recorded, and dealt with appropriately.

16.2 In order to promote a safer culture, staff need to be aware of safer working practice guidelines – and the school will ensure that a thorough safeguarding response is embedded within the wider response to staff breaking the code of conduct.

16.3 Any low level concerns will be recorded in a separate safeguarding file and will include any actions taken to support the member of staff to understand appropriate behaviours and avoid any further incidences of these behaviours.

16.4 Staff should understand what appropriate behaviour is and feel confident to report any concerns to the appropriate person. (DSL/Headteacher).

16.5 It is important to review systems and the school culture as part of the response to low-level concerns, in case it is failing to prevent, or is facilitating, inappropriate behaviour.

17. WHISTLEBLOWING

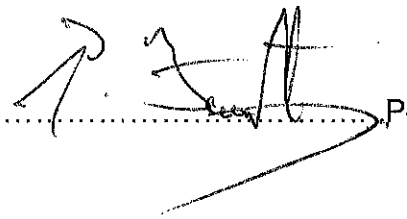
17.1 Whistleblowing is the mechanism by which staff can voice their concerns, without fear of repercussion.

17.2 All school staff have a duty to report any behaviour by a colleague which raises concern. Staff should refer to the school's whistleblowing policy for further guidance. This is particularly important where the welfare of pupils may be at risk.

18. COMPLIANCE

18.1 All staff must complete the form at Appendix 1 to confirm that they have read, understood and agree to comply with this policy. This form should be signed and dated and returned to Mrs Ros Evans, Personnel Officer. A copy will be retained on the member of staff's personal file.

This policy was approved by the Safeguarding Committee of the governing body at their meeting on 12 June 2023. It is subject to 3-yearly review.



.....Pete Fawcett Chair of Safeguarding Committee

Appendix 1

STAFF BEHAVIOUR (CODE OF CONDUCT) POLICY – CONFIRMATION OF COMPLIANCE CERTIFICATE

I hereby confirm that I have read, that I understand and that I agree to comply with St Mary's RC High School Staff Behaviour (Code of Conduct) Policy.

Signature: .....

Name: .....

Position/post held: .....

Date: .....

Once completed, signed and dated, please return this form to Mrs Ros Evans.