

## STAFF CODE OF CONDUCT

In Gaelscoil Uí Néill we want all our students and staff to feel happy, safe and secure so that they can benefit fully from their time in school and be enabled to contribute wholeheartedly to the educational experience which our school offers. This Code of Conduct helps all staff and volunteers to understand what behaviour is and is not acceptable. All staff and volunteers are expected to familiarise themselves and comply with all policies and procedures. This will enable staff and volunteers to avoid putting themselves at risk of allegations of abuse or unprofessional conduct.

We aim, at all times, to behave appropriately and warmly towards each other and to support one another both personally and professionally. As staff members in the school, we are mindful that our behaviour towards our pupils should always be above reproach and we acknowledge the need to exercise prudence in our dealings with the students in our care. All staff should demonstrate high standards of conduct in order to encourage our pupils to do the same. As a member of a school community, each person has an individual responsibility to maintain their reputation and the reputation of the school.

We subscribe to the following good practice in this area:

- When the need arises to interview a student alone it is wise to let another member of staff know that the meeting is happening and where it will be taking place. The venue should, if at all possible, have a window and, if this is not so, a door should be left ajar if this is appropriate to the meeting.
- It is good practice to avoid **unnecessary** physical contact with our students. It is prudent to avoid any physical contact which might be open to misinterpretation by the student or by others. If an incident occurs this should be reported to the Principal as soon as possible.
- Where physical contact is required to maintain the safety of the student or others around her, that safety must take precedence over all other considerations.

- There should **never** be any physical response to misbehaviour, whatever the provocation, except where it is required to maintain the safety of the student or that of others. In this event, the incident should be reported immediately to the Principal.
- If it is necessary to administer first-aid this is best done with another person present. The welfare of the student is, however, paramount, and intervention should **never** be delayed because there is no other adult present.
- It is inevitable that some of our teaching will involve the use of sensitive materials and it is very difficult to anticipate when these might impact negatively on our students. If the material to be used is very contentious, and if there are concerns about any students in a class in relation to it, it is good practice to consult with the Principal.
- Members of staff should not allow students to have access to their personal mobile phone numbers or to their personal email addresses. If contact via mobile phone is necessary e.g. on a school trip, a mobile phone (or a SIM card) provided by the school should be used. All electronic communications with pupils should be via school authorised mechanisms. Such contact should be kept to a minimum and requires the authorisation of the Principal/Vice Principal. If contacted by a pupil via an inappropriate route, staff should report the contact to the principal immediately.
- Personal use of mobile phones by staff is restricted to break times. Personal calls should never be made during pupil contact times. In cases of emergency staff are contactable via the school landline. Any special circumstances must be brought to the attention of the Principal
- Social Networking present's particular difficulties for staff in all schools; great care must be taken to ensure that appropriate boundaries are maintained between staff and students in this arena, as in all others. It is **strongly recommended** that no member of our staff communicate with pupils via social networking sites.

Information directly related to the school community should never be posted on personal social networking sites. Staff should also be mindful of content attributable to them, posted on others sites (e.g. friends and family) who may not have the privacy settings recommended. Where it is proven that a staff member has posted negative / derogatory comments about the school or those in the school community this may lead to their being subject to disciplinary actions. Careful consideration should be given to choice of contacts through social media. It is school policy to avoid communicating with parents of pupils in the school via social media unless they already exist in your family / social circle.

Staff will be expected to sign up to Gaelscoil Uí Néill's e-safety policy including acceptable use, which outlines restrictions to staff use of social media during pupil contact time.

- We value greatly the easy relationships which exist between staff and students in Gaelscoil Uí Néill and we would wish to see those maintained. It is always necessary, however, to ensure that these relationships are appropriate and professional so that the warm and caring atmosphere which is an integral part of the community of Gaelscoil Uí Néill and which is so nourishing for everyone, is enabled to flourish.

### **Confidentiality**

- Information should never be shared with anyone other than a need to know basis. In circumstances where the pupil's identity does not need to be disclosed the information should be used anonymously.
- In a case where abuse is alleged or suspected information should be passed without delay, but only to those with designated child protection responsibilities.

### **Relationships and Attitudes**

All staff and volunteers must declare any relationships that they may have with pupils outside of school: this may include mutual membership of social groups, sports clubs, tutoring, or family connections. 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. Staff must recognise their responsibility to act as a positive role model within the school community

Staff and volunteers should ensure that all verbal exchanges are conducted in a calm and professional manner. Only in unusual circumstances, for example in emergency situations or when attracting attention in large areas, or with large groups of children, will voices be raised. Staff should avoid using inappropriate or offensive language. Sarcastic, threatening or demeaning verbal interaction is not acceptable. Furthermore, humiliating or frightening pupils as a means of punishment is not acceptable. The use of humour can be helpful in diffusing situations but the humour used must be understood and appropriate.

## **Conclusion**

It would be impossible and inappropriate to lay down hard and fast rules to cover all the circumstances in which employees inter-relate with children and 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 section or how they should act in particular circumstances, they should consult the Principal or a representative of their professional association.

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

This code is subject to review in accordance with changes to relevant legislation and guidance.

Date agreed:

Date Ratified

## Relationships with Students Outside of Work Declaration

Employee Name	Pupil Name	Relationship

I can confirm that I am fully aware of the code of conduct relating to contact out of school with pupils in line with this policy.

If I am tutoring a student outside of school, I am aware that the following must be adhered to:

- I do not teach the child in question as part of my year group.
- I emphasise to parents that this is done completely independently of the school.
- No monies come through the school.
- No private tutoring is to take place on school premises.

I confirm that if these circumstances change I will complete a new form to ensure the school are aware of any relationships.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

