



Code of Conduct for Staff and Governors

1 INTRODUCTION

At Maine Integrated Primary School, we aim to celebrate diversity, enjoy learning from each other and together we hope every child will reach their full potential.

All actions concerning children and young people must uphold the best interests of the young person as the primary consideration. Adults in school 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 gain from positive interaction with staff within school. However, in conjunction with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy (available from <http://maineips.com/policies>), it will 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.

2 RATIONALE

A Code of Conduct is designed to give clear guidance on the standards of behaviour all adults in school are expected to observe. School staff are in a unique position of influence and must adhere to behaviour that sets a good example to all the pupils within the school. This Code of Conduct applies to all staff who are employed by the school, including the Principal and also applies to the Board of Governors at the school.

3 MONITORING THE APPLICATION OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Under Safeguarding and Employment Regulations, the monitoring of the actions described in the Code of Conduct is the responsibility of all staff and Governors. Any breaches of the Code must be reported according to the Child Protection Policy or to the Principal, the Deputy Designation Teacher for Child Protection, or to a member of the Board of Governors. The matter will then be dealt with according to Child Protection Procedures or the Disciplinary Procedures.

4 SETTING AN EXAMPLE

All adults who work in schools set examples of behaviour and conduct which can be copied by pupils. All adults must, therefore, demonstrate high standards of conduct in order to encourage our pupils to do the same. They must also avoid putting themselves at risk of allegations of abusive or unprofessional conduct. This code helps all staff to understand what behaviour is and is not acceptable.

5 PRIVATE MEETINGS WITH PUPILS

- a) 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. Staff should conduct such interviews in a room with visual access, or with the door open.
- b) Where possible another pupil should be present or nearby during the interview.

6 PHYSICAL CONTACT WITH PUPILS

- a) As a general principle, staff are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with their pupils.
- b) 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.
- c) 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*)).
- d) Physical punishment is illegal, as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour, unless it is by way of necessary restraint.
- e) 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.**
- f) Any physical contact which would be likely to be misinterpreted by the pupil, parent or other casual observer should be avoided.
- g) 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.
- h) 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.

7 CHOICE AND USE OF TEACHING MATERIALS

- a) Teachers should avoid teaching materials, the choice of which might be misinterpreted and reflect upon the motives for the choice.
- b) When using teaching materials of a sensitive nature a teacher should be aware of the school policy and follow guidelines set down in the agreed policy.
- c) If in doubt about the appropriateness of a particular teaching material, the teacher should consult with the Principal before using it.

8 RELATIONSHIPS AND ATTITUDES

Adults in school 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, particularly when staff are dealing with young children.

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

In all circumstances, professional judgement will be exercised and for the vast majority of adults in school this Code of Conduct will serve only to confirm what has always been their practice. If staff or governors have any doubts about points in this guide, or how they should act in particular circumstances, they should consult the Principal, a representative of their professional association or the Chair of the Board of Governors.

From time to time, however, it is prudent for all staff to reappraise their teaching styles, relationships with children and their manner and approach to individual children. Governors should be aware of their involvement in any activities that would put them in contact with the children in school or have access to their personal data. This is to ensure that they give no grounds for doubt about their intentions, in the minds of colleagues, of children or of their parents/guardians.

8.1 PERSONAL LETTERS AND ONLINE COMMUNICATIONS

If a member of staff believes it is necessary to write a personal note to a pupil, they should discuss the purpose and context with the Principal or Designated Teacher if they require further advice.

The increased availability of internet 'chat rooms' and Social Networking Sites such as Facebook or Twitter also poses risks for children, staff and governors. All staff and governors are strongly advised not to make internet contact with pupils unless through a C2K Managed Service as part of an official activity. Comments made in on-line discussions can be misinterpreted or used maliciously. All staff and governors are strongly advised not to discuss the work of the school, their pupils or colleagues on public discussion sites. See the Anti-Bullying Policy and the Policy on the Use of Mobile Phones in School.

9 PUPILS' CODE OF CONDUCT

If a pupil engages in an act of violence against the person or property of a member of the school staff, governor, or to an immediate member of the member of their family, at any time whether inside or outside school, disciplinary action will be taken against the pupil in-line with the schools Behavioural Policy including the option to suspend or expel the child.

10 APPEARANCE AND DRESS

Our appearance reflects the high expectations of the school in terms of teaching and learning, behaviour and pupils' uniform.

The image that staff project as professionals is associated with how staff present themselves. The image of the school in the community is related to how all adults in the school dress. It is, therefore, important to dress appropriately.

All staff should not dress in a way that may cause embarrassment to pupils, parents, colleagues, other stakeholders or visitors (e.g. consider the appropriateness of T-shirts with slogans). Staff members are role models for pupils and appearance and dress should reflect this important and unique position.

11 HOURS OF WORK AND ATTENDANCE

It is important that all staff are in school at their agreed starting time and do not leave before their agreed finishing time. Bad timekeeping and poor attendance increases costs, causes disruption for others and has an adverse effect on pupils' education.

The Governors recognize that the majority of staff are punctual and do not take time off without good cause or obtaining prior permission.

All staff are expected to:

- Attend work in accordance with their contract of employment and associated terms and conditions in relation to hours, days of work and holidays.
- Wherever possible, staff should make routine medical and dental appointments out of working hours or during holidays. The only exceptions to this requirement will be in the event of an emergency or particular difficulty, in relation to hospital appointments (which are rarely negotiable) or to attend for ante-natal care if you are pregnant. Pregnant employees are entitled to paid time off for ante-natal appointments. In any circumstances, however, staff should agree time off with the Principal at the earliest opportunity to ensure that adequate cover arrangements can be made.
- Prior to making any request, staff should refer to the school's policy on special leave if they need time off for any reason other than personal illness. Any member of staff taking such leave without permission will be subject to disciplinary action.
- All staff are expected to follow the school's absence reporting procedure when they are absent from work due to illness or injury.

12 KEEPING WITHIN THE LAW

Staff and governors are expected to operate within the law. Unlawful or criminal behaviour, at work or outside work may lead to disciplinary action, including dismissal. Staff and governors must ensure that they uphold the law in school and never commit a crime away from school which could damage public confidence in them or the school eg submitting false/fraudulent claims, sexual offences or crimes of dishonesty which render them unfit to hold a position of trust.

Staff should write to the Principal (or Chair of Governors if they are the Principal) immediately if they are charged with, or convicted of any crime whilst they are an employee of the school. (This includes outside of their working hours.)

Governors should write to the Chair of Governors (or Vice-Chair of Governors if they are the Chair) immediately if they are charged with, or convicted of any crime whilst they are a Governor of the school.

Staff and Governors must not engage in conduct outside work which could seriously damage the reputation and standing of the school or the individual's own reputation or the reputation of other members of the school community. This includes behavior online.

Staff may undertake work outside school, either paid or voluntary, provided that it does not conflict with the interests of the school nor be to a level which may contravene the working time regulations or affect an individual's work performance.

13 CONFIDENTIALITY

Where staff or governors have access to confidential information about pupils their parents or carers, they must not reveal such information except to those colleagues who have a professional role in relation to the pupil.

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

However, staff and governors have an obligation to share with their Principal or the school's Designated Deputy Teacher for Child Protection any information which gives rise to concern about the safety or welfare of a pupil. Adults in school must **never** promise a pupil that they will not act on information that they are told by the pupil.

14 DISCIPLINARY ACTION

All staff need to recognise that failure to meet these standards of behaviour and conduct may result in disciplinary action, including dismissal. In the case of governors, failure to meet these standards of behavior should be cause for their resignation from the Board and conduct may result in action by the Department for Education along with action from the appropriate authorities.