

# Bunscoil Mhic Reachtain

## Code of Conduct for Staff and Volunteers

As per DE Guidance (Oct. 2024)

*'The protection and promotion of the welfare of children and young people is a responsibility for all members of staff ... [who] should work towards a culture of mutual trust and respect in school through which the best interests of the children and young people entrusted to their care is paramount.'*

– DE (Safeguarding & Child Protection, 2024)

## Objective, Scope and Principles

This Code of Conduct, which *applies to all teaching staff, support staff and volunteers in our school*, is designed to give guidance on the standards of behaviour which should be observed.

School staff and volunteers are fully expected to be sound role models, in a unique position of influence and trust and their behaviour should set a good example to all the pupils within the school. It does not form part of any employee's contract of employment. It is merely for guidance and specific breaches of the Code must not be viewed as a disciplinary offence.

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*It should be noted that, terms of breaches of Child Protection and Safeguarding, the school will contact the relevant authorities when required. These include PSNI.*

The Code includes sections on:

- Setting an Example
- Relationships and Attitudes
- Private Meetings with Pupils
- Physical Contact with Pupils
- Honesty and Integrity
- Conduct Outside of Work
- E-Safety and Internet Use
- Confidentiality
- Setting an Example

### 1.1 Setting an Example

All staff and volunteers in schools set examples of behaviour and conduct which can be copied by pupils. Staff and volunteers are required, for example, to avoid using inappropriate or offensive language at all times, and demonstrate excellent standards of conduct in order to encourage our pupils to do the same. *All staff and volunteers should be familiar with all school policies and procedures* and to comply with these so as to set a good example to pupils.

1.2 Staff and volunteers must always comply with statutory requirements in relation to such issues as discrimination, health and safety and data protection. **All adults in the school are fully expected to act in good faith.**

## 2. Relationships and Attitudes

2.1 All staff and volunteers should **treat pupils with respect and dignity** and not in a manner which demeans or undermines them, their parents or carers, or colleagues. Staff and volunteers should ensure that their relationships with pupils are appropriate to the age and maturity of their pupils. They should not demonstrate behaviours that may be perceived as:

- sarcasm;
- unmannerly;
- making jokes at the expense of pupils;
- embarrassing or humiliating pupils;
- discriminating against or favouring pupils.

Attitudes, demeanour and language all require thought to ensure that conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Relationships with pupils must be professional at all times and sexual relationships with current pupils are not permitted and may lead to criminal conviction.

## 2.2

Staff and volunteers may have less formal contact with pupils outside of school; perhaps through mutual membership of social groups, sporting organisations, or family connections. Staff and volunteers should not assume that the school would be aware of any such relationship and should therefore consider whether the school should be made aware of the connection.

## 2.3

Staff and volunteers should always behave in a professional manner, which, within the context of this Code of Conduct, includes such aspects as:

- acting in a fair, courteous and mature manner to pupils, colleagues and other stakeholders;
- co-operating and liaising with colleagues, as appropriate, to ensure pupils receive a coherent and comprehensive educational service;
- respect for school property;
- taking responsibility for the behaviour and conduct of pupils in the classroom and sharing such responsibility elsewhere on the premises;
- being familiar with communication channels and school procedures applicable to both pupils and staff and volunteers;
- respect for the rights and opinions of others.

### 3. Private Meetings with Pupils

3.1 It is recognised that there will be occasions when confidential interviews with individual pupils must take place. As far as possible, staff and volunteers should conduct interviews in a room with visual access or with an open door and ensure that another adult knows that the interview is taking place. Where possible, another pupil or (preferably) another adult should be present or nearby during the interview.

### 4. Physical Contact with Pupils

4.1 To avoid misinterpretations, and so far as is practicable, staff and volunteers are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with a pupil.

4.2 Staff and volunteers should therefore be cognisant of the guidance issued by the Department on the use of reasonable force as per Section 10.3 of the main safeguarding guidance document (Circular 1999/09 and guidance document 'Towards a Model Policy in Schools on Use of Reasonable Force').

### 5. Honesty and Integrity

5.1 All staff and volunteers are expected to maintain the highest standards of honesty and integrity in their work. This includes the handling and claiming of money and the use of school property and facilities.

5.2 Gifts from suppliers or associates of the school (e.g. a supplier of materials) must be declared to the Principal. A record should be kept of all such gifts received. This requirement does not apply to 'one off' token gifts from pupils or parents e.g. at Christmas or the end of the school year. Staff and

volunteers should be mindful that gifts to individual pupils may be considered inappropriate and could be misinterpreted.

## 6. Conduct outside of Work

6.1 Staff and volunteers should not engage in conduct outside work which could damage the reputation and standing of the school or the staff/ volunteer's own reputation or the reputation of other members of the school community.

6.2 Staff and volunteers may undertake work outside school, either paid or voluntary and should ensure it does not affect their work performance in the school. Advice should be sought from the Principal when considering work outside the school.

## 7. E-Safety and Internet Use

7.1 A staff member or a volunteer's off duty hours are their personal concern but all staff and volunteers should exercise caution when using information technology and be fully aware of the risks to themselves and others. For school-based activities, advice is contained in the school's Online Safety Policy.

7.2 Staff and volunteers should exercise particular caution in relation to making online associations/friendships with current pupils via social media and using texting/email facilities to communicate with them. It is preferable that any contact with pupils is made via the use of school email accounts or telephone equipment when necessary.

## 8. Confidentiality

8.1 Staff and volunteers may have access to confidential information about pupils including highly sensitive or private information. It should not be shared with any person other than on a need-to-know basis. In circumstances where the pupil's identity does not need to be disclosed the information should be used anonymously.

8.2 There are some circumstances in which a member of staff or volunteer may be expected to share information about a pupil, for example when abuse is alleged or suspected. In such cases, individuals should pass information on without delay, but only to those with designated child protection responsibilities.

8.3 If a member of staff or volunteer is in any doubt about whether to share information or keep it confidential, he or she should seek guidance from a senior member of staff. Any media or legal enquiries should be passed to senior leadership.

8.4 Staff and volunteers need to be aware that although it is important to listen to and support pupils, **they must not promise confidentiality or request pupils to do the same** under any circumstances. Additionally concerns and allegations about adults should be treated as confidential and passed to the Principal or a member of the safeguarding team without delay.

8.5 The school's child protection arrangements should include any external candidates studying or sitting examinations in the school.

The draft Code of Conduct will be ratified at first governors' meeting in Nov. 2024

Review Date: Oct. 2025

## Notes

The guidance below is from DE's policy document on Safeguarding (Oct. 2024) and suggest that this code of conduct / DE guidance should be read in conjunction with:

**'Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland'** (August 2017) at:  
Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland;

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The Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland's (SBNI) Policies and Procedures which can be found on the SBNI website at: **Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland Procedures Manual**

The Education Authority (EA) Safeguarding site also provides useful information on all aspects of safeguarding and child protection.

DE's **Safeguarding and Child Protection**, available at: [Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools - A Guide for Schools | Department of Education \(education-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/safeguarding-and-child-protection-in-schools-a-guide-for-schools)