

# FIRST BRIDGE CENTRE



## STAFF CODE OF CONDUCT

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## STAFF CODE OF CONDUCT

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## STAFF CODE OF CONDUCT

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1. The First Bridge Centre will foster a culture of the highest professional standards. This Code of Conduct sets out the standards expected and the duty upon staff to abide by it. All staff have a duty to keep children and themselves safe and to protect them from physical and emotional harm. This duty is, in part, exercised through the development of respectful, caring and professional relationships between adults and children and behaviour by adults that demonstrate integrity, maturity and good judgment. Following this Code of Conduct will help to safeguard staff from being maliciously, falsely or mistakenly suspected or accused of professional misconduct in relation to children.
- 1.2. Staff must feel able to raise issues of concern and everyone must fully recognise the duty to do so particularly in terms of child protection. A member of staff who, in good faith, “whistle-blows” or makes a public interest disclosure will have the protection of the relevant legislation.
- 1.3. This Code of Conduct cannot provide a complete checklist of what is, or is not, appropriate behaviour for staff. However, it does highlight behaviour that is illegal, inappropriate or inadvisable in relation to children. There will be occasions and circumstances in which staff have to make decisions or take action in the best interests of the child where no specific guidance has been given. Adults are expected to make responsible and informed judgements about their own behaviour in order to secure the best interests and welfare of the children in their charge.
- 1.4. All staff must comply with this Code of Conduct.
- 1.5. This Code of Conduct forms part of the Centre’s disciplinary rules for staff. A serious breach of the Code will be regarded as gross misconduct. A less serious breach may result in a disciplinary warning or a lesser disciplinary sanction.

Where an allegation of abuse is made against a member of staff the First Bridge Centre will follow the guidance set out in the most current “Keeping Children safe in Education” document published by the DFE and in force at the time of the allegation. This guidance is about managing allegations that might indicate that a person is unsuitable. Examples where this might be applicable are detailed below:

- o behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child; possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; or,
- o behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children

### 2. Principles of Professional Practice

- 2.1 All staff, as appropriate to the role and/or job description of the individual, must: place the well-being and learning of children at the centre of their professional practice.

- o have high expectations for all children, be committed to addressing underachievement and work to help children progress regardless of their background and personal circumstances.
- o treat children fairly and with respect, take their knowledge, views, opinions and feelings seriously and value diversity and individuality.
- o model the characteristics they are trying to inspire in children, including enthusiasm for learning, a spirit of enquiry, honesty, tolerance, social responsibility, patience, and a genuine concern for other people.
- o respond sensitively to the differences in the home backgrounds and circumstances of children, recognising the key role that parents and carers play in their children's education.
- o seek to work in partnership with parents and carers, respecting their views and promoting understanding and co-operation to support the young person's learning and well-being in and out of school.
- o reflect on their own practice, develop their skills, knowledge and expertise, and adapt appropriately to learn with and from colleagues.
- o ensure that partisan political views are not promoted in the teaching of any subject in the Centre.
- o ensure that where political issues are brought to the attention of the pupils, reasonably practicable steps have been taken to offer a balanced presentation of opposing views to pupils.

### 3. Data Protection and Confidentiality

- 3.1. Members of staff will undoubtedly have access to certain personal data about other members of staff, children, parents and other individuals who come into contact with the First Bridge Centre in order to undertake their responsibilities. In some circumstances the information may be highly sensitive and confidential.
- 3.2. The First Bridge Centre aims to ensure that all personal data is collected, stored and processed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2019. As such it is the personal responsibility of all staff and employees to be absolutely scrupulous when it comes to the handling, storage and deletion of personal data; whether it is about us or about our children or parents.
- 3.3. Confidential or personal information about a child or her/his family must never be disclosed to anyone other than on a need to know basis. In circumstances where the child's identity does not need to be disclosed the information should be used anonymously. Information must never be used to intimidate, humiliate, or embarrass the child.
- 3.4. There are some circumstances in which a member of staff may be expected to share information about a child, for example when abuse is alleged or suspected. In such cases, individuals have a duty to pass information on without delay to those with designated child protection responsibilities. Failure, in these circumstances, to pass on information will result in disciplinary action.
- 3.5. The GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 do not prevent or limit the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children and young people safe. Information which is relevant to safeguarding will often be data which is considered "special category personal data" meaning it is sensitive and personal. Where a member of staff needs to share special category personal data, they should be aware that the Data Protection Act 2018 includes "safeguarding of children and individuals at risk" as a condition that allows practitioners to share information without consent.
- 3.6. Confidential information about children must be held securely. Confidential information about children must not be held off the school site other than on security protected school equipment. Information must only be stored for the length of time necessary to discharge the task for which it is required.
- 3.7. If a member of staff is in any doubt about the storage or sharing of information s/he must seek guidance from the Headteacher.
- 3.8. Any media or legal enquiries must be passed to the Headteacher.

#### **4. Propriety, Behaviour, Reputation and Appearance**

- 4.1. All staff have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of children. They should adopt high standards of personal conduct in order to maintain the confidence and respect of their peers, children and the public in general. An individual's behaviour, either in or out of the workplace, should not compromise her/his position within the work setting or bring the First Bridge Centre into disrepute.
- 4.2. A person's dress and appearance are matters of personal choice and self-expression. However staff must ensure they are dressed decently, safely and appropriately for the tasks they undertake. Those who dress or appear in a manner which could be considered as inappropriate could render themselves vulnerable to criticism or allegations of misconduct. Please refer to the First Bridge Centre's Staff Appearance and Dress Code Policy.
- 4.3. Personal property of a sexually explicit nature such as books, magazines, DVDs or such material on any electronic media must not be brought onto or stored on the First Bridge Centre's premises.
- 4.4. Social networking sites and blogging are extremely popular. Staff must not post material which damages the reputation of the First Bridge Centre or which causes concern about their suitability to work with children and young people. Those who post material which could be considered as inappropriate could render themselves vulnerable to criticism or allegations of misconduct.
- 4.5. The First Bridge Centre prohibits the involvement of staff from any form of social networking with children. If there is any doubt about whether communication with children is appropriate advice should be sought from the Headteacher.

#### **5. Sexual Contact with Children and Young People and Abuse of Trust**

- 5.1. Any sexual behaviour, whether by a member of staff, with or towards a child or young person, is illegal. Children and young people are protected by the same laws as adults in relation to non-consensual sexual behaviour. They are additionally protected by specific legal provisions regardless of whether there is consent or not. All adults working in the First Bridge Centre who have contact with children are in positions of trust.
- 5.2. Sexual behaviour includes non-contact activities, such as causing a child or young person to engage in or watch sexual activity or the production of indecent images of children. 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' defines sexual abuse as "forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening'.
- 5.3. There are occasions when adults embark on a course of behaviour known as 'grooming' where the sole purpose is to gain the trust of a child or young person and manipulate that relationship so that sexual abuse can take place. Staff should be aware that conferring special attention without good reason or favouring a child has the potential to be construed as being part of a 'grooming' process, which is a criminal offence.

- 5.4. A relationship between a member of staff and a child cannot be a relationship between equals. There is potential for exploitation and harm of children and all adults have a responsibility to ensure that the unequal balance of power is not used for personal advantage or gratification.

## 6. Infatuations and Crushes

- 6.1. Adults must recognise that a child may be strongly attracted to a member of staff and/or develop an infatuation. A member of staff, who becomes aware that a child may be infatuated with him/herself or a colleague, must report this without delay to the Headteacher so that appropriate action can be taken. The situation will be taken seriously and the adult should be careful to ensure that no encouragement of any kind is given to the child. It should also be recognised that careless and insensitive reactions may provoke false accusations. Whilst the risk of infatuation is not limited to younger members of staff, newly qualified staff must recognise their particular vulnerability to adolescent infatuation.
- 6.2. Seeking advice in circumstances where concerns arise. Examples of situations which must be reported are given below:
- o Where a member of staff is concerned that he or she might be developing a relationship with a child which could have the potential to represent an abuse of trust;
  - o Where a member of staff is concerned that a child is becoming attracted to him or her or that there is a developing attachment or dependency;
  - o Where a member of staff is concerned that actions or words have been misunderstood or misconstrued by a child such that an abuse of trust might be wrongly suspected by others;
  - o Where a member of staff is concerned about the apparent development of a relationship by another member of staff, or receives information about such a relationship.

## 7. Gifts

- 7.1. Staff need to take care that they do not accept any gift that might be construed by others as a bribe, or lead the giver to expect preferential treatment. There are occasions when children or parents wish to pass small tokens of appreciation to staff e.g. at Christmas or as a thank-you and this is acceptable. However, it is unacceptable to receive gifts on a regular basis or of any significant value.
- 7.2. Personal gifts must not be given to children. This could be misinterpreted as a gesture either to bribe, or single out the young person. It might be perceived that a 'favour' of some kind is expected in return. Any reward given to a child should be consistent with the Centre's Behaviour Policy, recorded, and not based on favouritism.

## 8. Social Contact and Social Networking

- 8.1. Staff in the First Bridge Centre must not establish or seek to establish social contact with children for the purpose of securing a friendship or to pursue or strengthen a relationship.

This includes social networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat and blogging sites, even if a child seeks to establish social contact, or if this occurs coincidentally, the member of staff should exercise her/his professional judgment in making a response and be aware that such social contact in person, by phone or on the internet could be misconstrued and may place the member of staff in a very vulnerable position.

Staff should ensure that the privacy protection facility is used and they should not use their work email address or account to access these sites. The workplace should not be named on networking sites.

- 8.2. Staff must not give their personal details such as home/mobile phone number; home or e-mail address to children.

## 9. Physical Contact and Personal Privacy

- 9.1. There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for staff to have physical contact with children, but it is crucial that they only do so in ways appropriate to their professional role. When physical contact is made with children this should be in response to their needs at the time, of limited duration and appropriate given their age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity and background. 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.
- 9.2. Physical contact should never be secretive or casual, or for the gratification of the adult, or represent a misuse of authority. If a member of staff believes that an action could be misinterpreted, the incident and circumstances should be reported.
- 9.3. Physical contact, which occurs regularly with a child or children, is likely to raise questions unless the justification for this is part of a formally agreed plan (for example in relation to children with SEN or physical disabilities). Any such contact should be the subject of an agreed Centre policy and subject to review. 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.
- 9.4. There may be occasions when a distressed child needs comfort and 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.
- 9.5. Where a member of staff has a particular concern about the need to provide this type of care and reassurance s/he should seek further advice from the Headteacher or the BCBA.

- 9.6. Some staff will on occasions have to initiate physical contact with children in order to support a child so they can perform a task safely, to demonstrate the use of a particular piece of equipment/instrument or assist them with an exercise. Contact under these circumstances should be for the minimum time necessary to complete the activity and take place in an open environment. Staff should remain sensitive to any discomfort expressed verbally or non-verbally by the child.
- 9.7. Children are entitled to respect and privacy when changing clothes or taking a shower. However, there needs to be an appropriate level of supervision in order to safeguard children, satisfy health and safety considerations and ensure that bullying or teasing does not occur. This supervision should be appropriate to the needs and age of the children concerned and sensitive to the potential for embarrassment.
- 9.8. Staff with a job description which includes intimate care duties will have appropriate training and written guidance. No other member of staff should be involved in intimate care duties except in an emergency. Please see the FBC Intimate Care Policy.

## **10. Behaviour Management and Physical Intervention**

- 10.1. All children have a right to be treated with respect and dignity. Corporal punishment is unlawful in all schools and early years settings. Staff must not use any form of degrading treatment to punish a child. The use of sarcasm, demeaning or insensitive comments towards children is not acceptable in any situation. Shouting aggressively or hectoring is not acceptable in any situation. Deliberately intimidating children by overweening physical presence is not acceptable in any situation.
- 10.2. The circumstances in which staff can physically intervene with a child are covered by the 1996 Education Act. Staff may legitimately intervene to prevent a child from committing a criminal offence, injuring themselves or others, causing damage to property, engaging in behaviour prejudicial to good order and to maintain good order and discipline. Staff should have regard to the health and safety of themselves and others.

Under no circumstances should physical force be used as a form of punishment. The use of unwarranted physical force is likely to constitute a criminal offence. The First Bridge Centre has a separate policy on the use of physical intervention (FBC Positive Handling Policy) which forms part of this Code of Conduct.

- 10.3. Our Centre has trained first aiders/appointed persons. Staff must have had the appropriate training before administering first aid or medication except in an emergency.

## **11. One to One Situations and Meetings with Children**

- 11.1. Staff working in one to one situations with children are more vulnerable to allegations. Staff must recognise this possibility and plan and conduct such sessions accordingly.

Every attempt should be made to ensure that the safety and security needs of both staff and children are met. Leaders should undertake a risk assessment in relation to the specific nature and implications of one to one work for each worker and child. Where such a session is demonstrably unavoidable it is advisable to avoid remote or secluded areas of the Centre and to ensure that the door of the room is left open and/or

visual/auditory contact with others is maintained. Any arrangements should be reviewed on a regular basis.

- 11.2. Pre-arranged meetings with children away from the First Bridge Centre premises or on the Centre site when the Centre is not in session are only permitted when organised and approved by First Bridge Leaders.

## **12. Transporting Children**

- 12.1. In certain situations e.g. out of school activities, staff may agree to transport children only with appropriate insurance and parental consent. Wherever possible transport arrangements should be made in advance by a designated member of staff. Wherever possible and practicable transport should be provided other than in private vehicles, with at least one adult additional to the driver acting as an escort.
- 12.2. Adults should ensure that their behaviour is safe and that the transport arrangements and the vehicle meet all legal requirements. They must ensure that the vehicle is roadworthy and appropriately insured and that the maximum capacity is not exceeded.

## **13. Educational Visits and After-School Clubs.**

- 13.1 Staff should take particular care when supervising children in the less formal atmosphere of an educational visit or after-school activity. Staff remain in a position of trust and the same standards of conduct apply. The First Bridge Centre has a policy on Outings and Visits which forms part of this Code of Conduct.

## **14. Curriculum**

- 14.1. The curriculum can sometimes include or lead to unplanned discussion about subject matter of a sensitive nature. Responding to children' questions can require careful judgement and staff must take guidance in these circumstances from a senior member of staff.
- 14.3. Staff should always encourage pupils to respect the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

## 15. Photography, Videos and Other Creative Arts

- 15.1. Many Centre activities involve recording images. These may be undertaken as part of the curriculum, extra school activities, for publicity, or to celebrate achievement. The Data Protection Act 1998 affects the use of photography. An image of a child is personal data and it is, therefore, a requirement under the Act that consent is obtained from the parent of a child for any images made such as those used for Centre website, productions or other purposes.
- 15.2. Staff need to be aware of the potential for such images to be misused to create indecent images of children and/or for 'grooming' purposes. Careful consideration should be given as to how these activities are organised and undertaken. Particular regard needs to be given when they involve young or vulnerable children who may be unable to question why or how the activities are taking place. Children who have been previously abused in this way may feel threatened by the use of photography, filming etc. in the teaching environment.
- 15.3. Staff should remain sensitive to any child who appears uncomfortable and should recognise the potential for misinterpretation. It is also important to take into account the wishes of the child, remembering that some children do not wish to have their photograph taken.
- 15.4. Using images of children for publicity purposes will require the age-appropriate consent of the individual concerned and their legal guardians. Images must not be displayed on websites, in publications or in a public place without such consent. The definition of a public place includes areas where visitors to the school have access.
- 15.5. When using a photograph/videos the following guidance must be followed:
- if the photograph is used, avoid naming the child;  
if the child is named, avoid using the photograph;
  - images must be securely stored and used only by those authorised to do so;
    - be clear about the purpose of the activity and about what will happen to the photographs when the activity is concluded;
    - ensure that a senior member of staff is aware that the photography/image equipment is being used and for what purpose;
    - ensure that all images are available for scrutiny in order to screen for acceptability; be able to justify the images made;
  - do not make images in one to one situations;
    - do not take, display or distribute images of children unless there is consent to do so; video material shown in class must be age and content appropriate.
- 15.6. The First Bridge Centre has additional guidance on the use of images which includes a consent form. The guidance forms part of this Code of Conduct.

## 16. Internet Use and Electronic Communication

16.1. The First Bridge Centre has separate policies on internet use, electronic communication and security which form part of this Code of Conduct. See the FBC IT and Internet Safety Policy, FBC Mobile Phone Policy.

16.2. Under no circumstances should adults in the First Bridge Centre access inappropriate images. Deliberately accessing pornography on First Bridge Centre equipment will be treated as gross misconduct and may be a criminal offence. Accessing indecent images of children on the internet, and making, storing or disseminating such material, is illegal and is likely lead to criminal prosecution and may result in barring from work with children and young people.

## 17. Sharing Concerns and Recording Incidents

17.1 All staff must be vigilant and share concerns and report incidents. Whistleblowing is the mechanism by which staff can voice their concerns, made in good faith, without fear of repercussion. See the FBC Whistleblowing policy. Any inappropriate action by a member of staff that may result in an allegation of misconduct in relation to safeguarding children must be reported immediately to the Headteacher. The following “Red Flag Behaviours” give indications of the kinds of situations which should be shared with a senior member of staff.

An adult who:

- Allows a child/young person to be treated badly; pretends not to know it is happening;
- Gossips/shares information inappropriately;
- Demonstrates inappropriate discriminatory behaviour and/or uses inappropriate language;
- Dresses in a way which is inappropriate for the job role;
- Does not treat children fairly - demonstrates favouritism;
- Demonstrates a lack of understanding about personal and professional boundaries;
- Uses his/her position of trust to intimidate, threaten, coerce or undermine;
- Appears to have an inappropriate social relationship with a child or children;
- Appears to have special or different relationship with a child or children;
- Seems to seek out unnecessary opportunities to be alone with a child.

## 18. Child Safeguarding Competences for staff and volunteers who work with Children and Young People

18.1 The following competences are necessary:

### **Emotional Awareness:**

- Aware of the range of emotions in self and others; o Demonstrates empathy for the concerns of others;
- Listens to and understands directly and indirectly expressed feelings; o Encourages others to express themselves openly;
- Manages strong emotions and responds constructively to the source of problems; o Listens to personal comments without becoming defensive;
- In highly stressful situations, keeps own feelings in check, takes constructive action and calms others down;
- Has a range of mechanisms for dealing with stress, can recognise when to use them and does so;
- Shows respect for others' feelings, views and circumstances.

### **Working within Professional Boundaries:**

- Demonstrates professional curiosity;
- Accepts responsibility and accountability for own work and can define the responsibilities of others;
- Recognises the limits of own authority within the role;
- Seeks and uses professional support appropriately;
- Understands the principle of confidentiality.

### **Self-awareness:**

- Has a balanced understanding of self and others;
- Has a realistic knowledge of personal strengths & weaknesses;
- Can demonstrate flexibility of approach;
- Shows a realistic appreciation of the challenges of working with this client group.

**Ability to Safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people:**

- Appreciates the significance of safeguarding and interprets this accurately for all individual children and young people whatever their life circumstances;
- Has a good understanding of the safeguarding agenda;
- Can demonstrate an ability to contribute towards a safe environment;
  - Is up-to-date with legislation and current events;
- Can demonstrate how s/he has promoted 'best practice';
  - Shows a personal commitment to safeguarding children.