

Schools HR Policy & Procedure Handbook



Bicton C.E. Primary School and Nursery

Learning for a Lifetime




Maintaining Appropriate Relationships with Pupils Policy

This Policy/Procedure has been shared with the following professional associations and Trade Unions representing Teachers, Headteachers and Support Staff:

- National Education Union
- National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers
- National Association of Headteachers
- Association of School and College Leaders
- Unison
- GMB

This policy was adopted by the Governing Body of Bicton C.E. Primary School and Nursery in September 2022.

This policy is due for review in September 2023.

Signed  Head teacher

Signed  Chair of Governing Body

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Maintaining Appropriate Relationships with Pupils Policy

1. Introduction

At Bicton CE Primary School and Nursery, we are committed to ensuring we provide a safe learning environment for our pupils. The school understands that successful teaching is underpinned by setting professional boundaries.

Staff should understand the distinction between professional and private boundaries, as safeguarding pupils, and protecting themselves from risk are key professional priorities. Maintaining professional boundaries does not translate to a cold and detached approach to teaching; staff can still offer enthusiastic and sincere support to pupils and their families.

This policy outlines the school's approach to maintaining appropriate relationships with pupils, which must be followed by all school staff.

Staff must also ensure they keep themselves up-to-date with the *Guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings* document, and ensure they fully adhere to it.

2. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- DfE (2022) 'Keeping children safe in education'
- DfE (2018) 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'
- Education Act 2002
- Sexual Offences Act 2003

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies and guidance:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy
- Professional Code of Conduct for Staff
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Low Level Safeguarding Concerns Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings

3. Professional relationships with pupils

The Headteacher will ensure all staff and pupils are aware that it is an offence for a person aged 18 or over to have a sexual relationship with a child under the age of 18 where that person is in a position of trust in respect to that child, even if the relationship is consensual.

All staff will:

- Ensure that all pupils are treated with warmth and compassion.
- Always maintain professional boundaries and relationships with pupils and consider whether their actions are warranted, proportionate, safe and necessary.
- Act in an open and transparent way that would not lead to others questioning their actions.
- Ensure that the needs of children who have experienced significant trauma and/or with Attachment Disorder and/or SEND are considered carefully when establishing appropriate relationships with vulnerable children.
- Ensure that they do not establish social contact with pupils for the purpose of securing a friendship, or to pursue or strengthen a relationship.
- Ensure that they do not develop personal or sexual relationships with pupils. This includes making sexual remarks and discussing their own sexual relationships with, or in the presence of, pupils.
- Only contact pupils via the school's established mechanisms; personal phone numbers, email addresses or social media platforms will not be used to contact pupils.

In the case that any inappropriate contact is made with pupils, it will be raised with the Headteacher, and handled in line with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Professional Code of Conduct for Staff.

In the case that a pupil is consistently attempting to befriend or contact a member of staff on social media, staff will inform the Headteacher as soon as possible.

The Headteacher will ensure all staff understand that this policy applies both within school hours, and outside of school.

4. Former pupils

Staff are strongly discouraged from:

- forming personal relationships with former pupils;
- befriending former pupils on social media;
- befriending the parents of any pupils on social media.

If a staff member does befriend former pupils or parents on social media, they must inform the Headteacher immediately.

Where a close relationship develops between a member of school staff and a former pupil which may raise concerns about the member of staff's suitability to work with children, the Headteacher will contact the LA designated officer (LADO) for advice and guidance.

In the case that any inappropriate contact is made with former pupils, it will be raised with the Headteacher, and handled in line with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Professional Code of Conduct for Staff.

5. Duty of care

The Headteacher will communicate to all staff that:

- They are in a unique position of trust, care, responsibility, authority and influence with their pupils; meaning there is a power imbalance within a pupil-teacher dynamic.
- They are prohibited from engaging in any form of sexual contact with a person in their care, even if they are over the age of 16.
- They have the responsibility to have the best interest of pupils in mind at all times.
- Any activities of a sexual nature can be deemed an abuse of responsibility of authority.
- The Education Act 2002 imposes clear duties to provide acceptable levels of care to protect children and young people from all reasonably foreseeable risks.

6. Appropriate language and physical contact

Staff must be aware that pupils should not be treated as friends.

Staff will avoid:

- Teasing children by using nick names or other forms of address which are likely to embarrass or humiliate.
- Allowing inappropriate conversations or enquiries of a sexual nature to occur.
- Inappropriately commenting on a pupil's appearance, including personal flattery or criticism.
- Treating pupils disrespectfully or discriminatorily, based upon their perceived or actual sexual orientation, gender, ethnicity and any other pupil characteristic.
- Subjecting pupils to humiliation, profanity or vilification.

- Allowing or partaking in suggestive humour, banter, jokes or innuendos of a sexual nature.
- Using obscene or inappropriate gestures and language.

The school understands that there are circumstances in which it is entirely necessary for staff to have physical contact with pupils, e.g., when applying first aid and assisting with intimate care, but staff will only do so in a professional and appropriate manner in line with the school's policy.

When any physical contact is made with pupils, it will be conducted in a way which is responsive to the pupil's needs, is of limited duration and is appropriate to their age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity and background.

Staff will seek the pupil's permission, where possible, before initiating contact.

Staff will always use their professional judgement when determining what physical contact is appropriate, as this may differ between pupils. As such, the pupil's feelings and wishes must be taken into account.

Staff will never touch a pupil in a way which is indecent and will always be prepared to explain their actions.

Staff will be aware that even well-intentioned physical contact may be misconstrued by a pupil, an observer or by anyone to whom this action is described and, therefore, will be prepared to justify their actions.

Staff will not engage in rough play, tickling or play fights with pupils.

Extra caution will be taken where it is known that a pupil has previously suffered from abuse or neglect.

Physical contact will never be secretive; if a member of staff believes an action could be misinterpreted, this will be reported to the Headteacher and appropriate procedures will be followed.

If a pupil is in distress and in need of comfort as reassurance, staff may use age-appropriate physical contact, such as placing their hand on the pupil's shoulder. Staff will remain self-aware of their actions at all times and ensure that their contact is not threatening, intrusive or subject to misinterpretation.

Staff may also use reasonable force as a means of physical contact with pupils for restraint purposes; such instances will always be handled in accordance with the school's policy.

7. Information sharing

Staff should limit the personal information they share with pupils to that which is in the public domain such as marital status, education or children. The use of elements of personal experience may be appropriate to illustrate a point made in a lesson or in a pastoral conversation.

Staff will avoid corresponding in a personal nature through any medium, e.g. phone calls, text messages, social media unless it is within the staff member's role and via an approved communication method, e.g. school emails.

Staff will not adopt an ongoing support role beyond the scope of their position.

Staff will not photograph, audio record or film pupils without authorisation from the School Leadership Team (SLT) and consent from the pupil's parent.

Staff will not use personal equipment for approved activities, such as a personal camera, unless approved in writing by the SLT.

Staff will not correspond with pupils, via any medium, where a violation of professional boundaries is indicated and where the correspondence has not been approved by the SLT.

Staff will never permit or facilitate access to pornographic content.

Staff will remain alert to sexual harassment amongst pupils.

Staff will never save images, videos or audio recordings of pupils on personal devices, unless authorised by the SLT or parents.

Staff will never upload images, videos or audio recordings of pupils to any location without parental or SLT consent.

Staff will not discuss or share information regarding other pupils or members of staff (except when there is a risk of harm to a child); staff should be aware of their surroundings when speaking to others, as their conversations may be overheard.

8. Private life

Staff must be aware that they must not:

- Invite or allow pupils to visit their home.
- Allow pupils to access staff members' social media devices and personal devices.
- Attend pupils' homes or their social gatherings, unless approved by the SLT.

- Be alone with a pupil outside of teaching responsibilities, unless approved by the SLT.
- Enter changing rooms or toilets occupied by pupils, when supervision is not required or appropriate, use toilet facilities allocated to pupils, or undress in facilities intended for use by pupils.
- Transport an unaccompanied pupil without permission.
- Carry out one-to-one tutoring, mentoring or coaching of pupils, unless approved by the Headteacher or SLT.
- Give personal gifts or special favours.
- Disproportionately single specific pupils out for special duties or responsibilities, other than as part of a SEND or Behaviour Plan agreed with SLT.
- Offer overnight, weekend or holiday care as a respite to parents without the approval of the Headteacher.

9. Allegations

The Headteacher will be the 'case manager' in the event that an allegation is made against a member of staff. They will be responsible for deciding with the LADO the course of action of each allegation.

Should an allegation be made against the Headteacher, it will be brought to the attention of the chair of governors immediately.

In the case that an allegation is made, the school will follow the Managing Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy.

Concerns which are deemed to be 'low level' will be reported in line with the Low Level Safeguarding Concerns Policy.

10. Monitoring and review

The Headteacher, in collaboration with the governing body will review this policy on an annual basis.