



Stella Maris School

Safer Working Practice for Staff

Updated: Sept 2025

Review Date: Sept 2026

Stella Maris School is committed to Safeguarding and promoting the welfare and well-being of all members of the school. All school staff and volunteers who work in the school are expected to share this commitment and vision.

This Policy was written in consultation with the Trustees, Headteacher and the staff of Stella Maris School with due regard to our mission statement.

“At Stella Maris we endeavour to put the children at the centre of everything we do. Our mission is to educate, nurture and instil traditional values and cherish our children. We inspire them to achieve their best in every aspect of their lives.”

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone’s responsibility. This guidance provides simple but detailed and practical advice to all staff and volunteers working in our school. This guidance should be read alongside the DfE statutory guidance Keeping children safe in education 2024.

Overview and Purpose of this Guidance

This document is based upon the information made available by the Safer Recruitment Consortium.

It was initially issued as those working with children had expressed concern about their vulnerability and requested clearer advice about what constitutes illegal behaviour and what might be considered as misconduct. Education staff asked for practical guidance about which behaviours constitute safe practice and which behaviours should be avoided. This safe working practice document is NOT statutory guidance from the Department for Education but is a model of good working practice within our organisation.

The document seeks to ensure that the responsibilities of senior leaders of educational settings towards children and staff are discharged by raising awareness of illegal, unsafe, unprofessional and unwise behaviour. It should assist staff to monitor their own standards and practice and reduce the risk of allegations being made against them. It is also recognised that not all people who work with children work as paid or contracted employees. The principles and guidance outlined in this document still apply and should be followed by any person whose work brings them into contact with our children at Stella Maris School.

The guidance will also support the management of Stella Maris School in giving a clear message that unacceptable behaviour will not be tolerated and that, where appropriate, legal or disciplinary action is likely to follow. Stella Maris School may refer to this document in any disciplinary proceedings.

Whilst every attempt has been made to cover a wide range of situations, it is recognised that any guidance cannot cover all eventualities. There may be times when professional

judgements are made in situations not covered by this document, or which directly contravene the guidance given by the management of the school.

All staff have a responsibility to be aware of our systems, processes and procedures which support safeguarding and these are clearly explained as part of staff induction and in regular staff training sessions at the start of each staff meeting.

This includes our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and our Staff Code of Conduct, of which this document will become a part.

It is recognised that most adults who work with children act professionally and aim to provide a safe and supportive environment which secures the well-being and very best outcomes for children in their care. Achieving these aims is not always straightforward, as much relies on child and staff interactions where tensions and misunderstandings can occur. This document aims to reduce the risk of these.

It must be recognised that some allegations will be genuine as there are people who seek out, create or exploit opportunities to harm children. However, allegations may also be false or misplaced and may arise from differing perceptions of the same event. When they occur, they are inevitably distressing and difficult for all concerned. It is therefore essential that all possible steps are taken to safeguard children and ensure that the adults working with them do so safely.

Underpinning Principles

- The welfare of the child is paramount
- Staff should understand their responsibilities to safeguard the welfare of pupils
- Staff are responsible for their own actions and behaviour and should avoid any conduct which would lead to their actions or intentions being questioned
- Staff should always take care with how they work, and be seen to work, in an open and transparent way and not put themselves in a vulnerable position
- Staff should be aware that deliberately invented or malicious allegations are very rare but all concerns should be reported and recorded immediately
- Staff should discuss and take advice promptly from the Headteacher if they have acted in a way which may give rise to concern
- Staff should apply the same professional standards regardless of culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and sexual orientation
- Staff should not consume or be under the influence of alcohol or any substance when their children are under their care either in school or on any school related trip or event
- If staff are on prescribed medication which is affecting their ability to carry out their duty of care towards children they should not be in school

- Staff should be aware that breaches of the law and other professional guidelines could result in disciplinary action being taken against them, criminal action and/or other proceedings including barring by the Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) from working in regulated activity, or for acts of serious misconduct prohibition from teaching by the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA)
- The management of Stella Maris School, in consultation with the Headteacher and DSL's will continually monitor and review practice to ensure this guidance is being followed
- Staff should be aware of and understand the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, arrangements for managing allegations against staff, Staff Code of Conduct, Whistle Blowing Procedures and the procedures of the relevant Multi-agency Partnership (MAP).

Responsibilities

Staff are accountable for the way in which they: exercise authority; manage risk; use resources; and safeguard children.

Staff should understand the responsibilities which are part of their employment or role and be aware that action will be taken by the school if these provisions are breached.

It is expected that staff will always act in the best interests of the children in their care and take responsibility for their actions and behaviour.

The Management of Stella Maris School will promote a culture of openness and support and ensure that systems, processes and procedures are in place so that concerns can be raised if necessary. They have a duty of care towards their employees and must never place them in situations which would render them particularly vulnerable.

The Management of the school will ensure that appropriate policies covering safeguarding and child protection are in place. It is their duty to provide a safe working environment for staff. Legislation also imposes a duty on Staff to take care of themselves and anyone who may be affected by their actions.

Making Professional Judgements

This guidance cannot provide a complete checklist of what is, or is not, appropriate behaviour for staff. However, it does highlight behaviour which is illegal, inappropriate or inadvisable. Adults should always consider whether their actions are proportionate and safe. Individuals are expected to make judgements about their behaviour in order to secure the best interests and welfare of the pupils in their charge and, in so doing, will be seen to be acting reasonably.

These judgements should always be recorded.

Power and Positions of Trust and Authority

As a result of their knowledge, position and/or the authority invested in their role, all those working with children at Stella Maris School are in a position of trust in relation to all pupils.

The relationship between a person working with a child is one in which the adult is in a position of power or influence. It is vital for adults to understand this power and recognise that the relationship between a child and an adult cannot be one between equals.

The potential for exploitation and harm of vulnerable pupils means that adults have a responsibility to ensure that an unequal balance of power is not used for personal advantage or gratification. Staff should always maintain appropriate boundaries and avoid any behaviour which could be misinterpreted in any way.

Confidentiality

All staff need to know who the DSL and the Deputy DSL are. They need to have read all relevant policies and show a sound understanding of them.

Staff are expected to treat information in a confidential way and not pass on any information about our children or parents unless it is for the benefit of the child. It is expected in line with our Staff Code of Conduct that staff will not gossip about school business or families who are part of the school community in any way.

If staff have any concerns about what to do with confidential information they are expected to seek advice from the Headteacher or Senior Teacher. They need to be clear about what information they can share about a child and with whom. This is set out in our Safeguarding Policy.

Staff need to know the procedures for responding to allegations against staff and to whom any concerns or allegations should be reported.

They also need to know that where personal information is recorded electronically that our systems and devices are kept secure.

Standards of Behaviour

All staff have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and the best interests of children in their care. They should behave in a manner which is befitting their role and profession.

This is outlined in our Staff Handbook and in the Staff Code of Conduct.

They should be aware that their behaviour, either in or out of the workplace could compromise their position and that of Stella Maris School. This could lead to a loss of confidence in the member of staff and the organisation for which they work.

Such behaviour could lead to disciplinary action by the management of the school and could also result in a prohibition from teaching by the Teaching Regulation Agency (**TRA**).

The Board of Trustees of Stella Maris School has a clear expectation that staff will discuss with the Headteacher or the Chair of Trustees any relationship in or out of school which may have implications for the safeguarding of children at Stella Maris School. The culture at the school should enable staff to feel able to raise these issues.

Stella Maris School has a duty of care towards all staff members and they will be supported if this is necessary.

Dress and Appearance

Staff should wear clothing which promotes a positive and professional image when working in school and which is appropriate to their role. Dress and demeanour should not be offensive, revealing or provocative. The appearance of a member of staff should not distract, cause embarrassment or give rise to any misunderstanding. Clothing should be absent of any political messages or contentious slogans.

Gifts

It is accepted that many families like to give small gifts to class teachers at Christmas and at the end of the year. While this is appropriate in the context in which a gift is given, staff are aware that should a gift be excessive or feel wrong in its value, it should be brought to the attention of the Headteacher. Staff need to take care because by accepting such a gift it might be construed as a bribe by others or lead the giver to expect preferential treatment for their child.

Similarly, it is inadvisable to give personal gifts to pupils or their families as this could be misinterpreted as a gesture to bribe or groom. Giving out treats in class, where all the children receive the same, is acceptable.

Within this context staff also need to exercise care when selecting a child for specific activities or privileges in order to avoid perceptions of favouritism or injustice.

Infatuations

Staff need to recognise that it is not uncommon for pupils, even at primary level, to be strongly attracted to a member of staff or develop an infatuation for a particular member of staff. In this situation staff need to make the Headteacher aware, so that the situation can be monitored and appropriate early intervention can be taken in order to prevent the situation from escalating. This will also avoid embarrassment and distress for those concerned.

Staff must never put themselves in a situation where a relationship can be misconstrued or misinterpreted by others.

Staff are also reminded that any relationship with parents must be professional and related to their role. Parents must never be led to feel that certain individuals or families get preferential treatment from staff. If a member of staff feels that a parent is getting “too friendly” or looking for any kind of preferential treatment, the matter must be referred to the Headteacher immediately. Likewise, if a member of staff is concerned about a colleague developing this kind of relationship with parents they must bring this to the attention of the Headteacher for consideration. All information will be treated with confidentiality.

Staff should refrain from social contact with parents and pupils outside of school and avoid sending any form of personal communication, unless linked to school activities. This area is covered widely in our Social Media and E-Safety Policies. For more information please refer to these policies.

Communication with Pupils

Staff should not seek to communicate with or contact pupils outside of school. Care must also be taken when communicating with parents. It is school policy that staff do not give their email addresses to parents, or communicate with parents in this way, out of school hours. All email communication goes through Headteacher.

We have processes in school where parents can communicate with teachers during the working day. Teachers are available to speak with parents at the beginning of the day and after school has finished in the afternoon. Communication books go home with each child daily.

Any emergency contact a parent needs to make with a member of staff outside of school hours will be addressed to the Headteacher, via email. The Headteacher will only inform the member of staff in an urgent situation otherwise the communication will be held over until the next school day.

All staff are aware of this and **MUST NOT** use school email or personal email to communicate with parents outside of school hours.

Our school policy on acceptable internet and computer use and online safety guidance can be found in our E-Safety and Social Media Policies, which are on our website for parents to read. Staff are aware that personal devices should not be used when conducting school business and all photographic evidence of class activities and school events/trips should only be taken, using either the school camera or a school IT device.

Photographs taken and not used should always be deleted immediately. When children take photographs in school for educational reasons they must be supervised by a member of staff. Children are not allowed to take photographs of each other without the permission of the member of staff they are working with.

When the photographs, which have been taken for educational reasons, have been finished with, they should be deleted by the member of staff.

Physical Contact

There are occasions when it is appropriate and proper for staff to have physical contact with children. However, it is crucial that they only do so in ways appropriate to their professional role and in relation to the pupil's individual needs and any agreed care plan.

Staff need to be aware that even well-intentioned physical contact may be misconstrued by the pupil or others who may observe it.

Children have different perceptions of what they feel comfortable with in terms of physical contact and this must always be appreciated. Any physical contact should be in response to the child's needs at the time, be of appropriately limited duration and factor in the child's age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity and background.

Staff should always use professional judgement and must ensure that all incidents are recorded.

Our Intimate Care Policy outlines our processes and procedures in this area. A general culture of Safe Touch is adopted in school, where appropriate, to the individual requirements of each child. Any child with a SEND need will have an identified arrangement, which is understood and agreed to by all staff who come into contact with that child.

In certain Curriculum areas, such as PE, Drama or Music staff may need to initiate some physical contact with children in order to demonstrate, adjust a position or to support a child. This physical contact should only take place when it is necessary and should take place in a safe and open environment so there can be no misconception or misinterpretation of what has occurred.

Staff should always be aware, in this Curriculum setting, where physical contact is necessary of the child's gender, cultural and religious background. There is much guidance from Sports Governing bodies and other organisations which staff can draw on and is available from the Headteacher if a teacher feels that it may be needed because of the likelihood of these situations taking place.

It is good practice that all parties clearly understand at the outset, what physical contact is necessary and appropriate in undertaking specific activities. Keeping parents informed of the extent to which their child requires physical contact may also prevent allegations of misconduct or abuse arising.

Intimate/Personal Care

Stella Maris School has an Intimate Care Policy in place for staff to adhere to should any pupil require intimate care. All First Aiders are also aware of this policy, as in the administering of first aid the Intimate Care Policy may need to be followed. Staff are aware that in a situation where intimate/personal care is being given it is important to explain to the child what is happening before a care procedure begins. Pupils are always entitled to respect and privacy.

A signed record should be kept of all intimate/personal care tasks which are undertaken and, where these have taken place, and by whom. More information about this and the processes we use can be found in the Intimate Care Policy.

Behaviour Management

Staff should have a sound understanding of the Stella Maris Behaviour and Discipline Policy and follow this policy when managing behaviour. Parents also know about this policy and a copy is available on the school website.

Staff should not use any form of corporal or degrading treatment to punish a child. The use of sarcasm, demeaning or insensitive comments towards children is completely unacceptable.

Staff should avoid shouting at children in anger. Any form of shouting should only be used as a warning in an emergency or safety situation. This practice is clearly outlined in our Staff Code of Conduct.

Where children display difficult or challenging behaviour staff should follow the Behaviour and Discipline Policy, using strategies appropriate to the circumstances of the behaviour and the age of the child and always behave as a good role model for the child.

If a child has a medical condition which may result in this challenging behaviour then an agreed plan of action must be in place so that all staff deal with the challenging behaviour in a uniform way, otherwise the child will be confused by the different responses to their challenging behaviours.

The Use of Control and Physical Intervention

Stella Maris staff are aware and understand that under no circumstances should physical force be used as a form of punishment when dealing with a disruptive child or one who is displaying bad behaviour.

All staff follow the Staff Code of Conduct and understand that the law states that adults may reasonably intervene to prevent a child from:

- Committing a criminal offence
- Injuring themselves or others
- Causing damage to property belonging to the school or another person
- Engaging in behaviour prejudicial to good order

Good order and discipline must be maintained at all times.

It is recognised as good practice that if an incident occurs where physical intervention was necessary the Headteacher is made aware of this immediately and a record of the incident is kept.

Parents will always be notified in such a situation.

If it is anticipated that physical intervention is likely to be required for a particular pupil, a plan should be put in place which the pupil and the parents are aware of and have agreed to.

Parental consent does not permit schools to use unlawful physical intervention or deprive a pupil of their liberty.

Sexual Conduct

Staff must never have any form of sexual contact with any pupil from the school and must avoid any form of touch or comment which is or may be considered by others to be indecent.

They should also avoid any form of communication which may be misinterpreted as sexually suggestive or provocative.

Pupils are protected by the same laws as adults in relation to non-consensual behaviour.

There are occasions when adults embark on a course of behaviour known as “grooming” where the purpose is to gain the trust of a child and manipulate the relationship so that sexual abuse can take place. All staff have embarked on safeguarding training and are aware of these behaviours.

It is their responsibility to always report any concerns to the Headteacher or the DSL if they suspect that a child may be being groomed by another member of staff.

One-to-One Situations

Staff are advised never to put themselves in a vulnerable position with a child in a one-to-one setting. Wherever possible, if a child is on their own with a member of staff there must be visual access and/or an open door.

Private tutoring in school is not allowed and staff are advised not to partake in private tutoring of a pupil from the school out of school hours and off the premises.

Home Visits

All work with pupils and parents should take place within the school building. However, if there was an urgent situation where a home visit had to be undertaken the Headteacher will accompany the staff member.

Staff must never attend on their own and without the Headteacher’s permission.

A detailed record of why this had to be made would be kept by the Headteacher.

A risk assessment should be undertaken prior to the visit taking place and should include an evaluation of any known factors regarding the pupils or parents. Following the risk assessment, appropriate risk management measures will be put in place, before the visit is undertaken.

Transporting Pupils

Staff at Stella Maris School do not transport pupils for any reason.

However, in certain emergency situations there may be a need to do this and will always be undertaken by the Headteacher or Senior Teacher. There will always be another member of staff present in the vehicle if this situation occurs.

Staff must never offer lifts to children or enter into private arrangements with parents.

Educational Visits

Staff are expected to follow the Code of Conduct when present on an educational trip and be familiar with the Department of Education's advice on Health and Safety. Staff will always be accompanied by another adult, even if the number of children partaking in the trip is low.

Risk assessments will always be carried out and signed by the Headteacher, at least 48 hours before a trip is due to leave. For residential trips the risk assessment must be completed at the time of booking.

For best practice and where reasonably possible, the lead in any trip is advised to visit the venue prior to the trip being confirmed, to ensure that everything is as it should be and that the risk assessment is accurate and reflects the expectations for the trip. Changes should not be made during the trip, unless for safety or emergency reasons and the Headteacher would be made aware of this.

Staff are expected to always behave in a professional manner and not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs while in a supervisory role with the children. Failure to adhere to this regulation may result in disciplinary action by the Board of Trustees.

On a residential trip staff should not share a bed with a child or sleep in the same room as a child, unless the lay-out of the dormitory necessitates that all staff and pupils share the same space. If this is the case it needs to be discussed and agreed to by the Headteacher and be communicated on the risk assessment form.

Staff must always be vigilant when supervising pupils in the less formal atmosphere of an educational visit where a more relaxed discipline or informal dress and language code may be acceptable. They must remain in a position of trust and responsibility and have clear guidelines for the children in their care. It is important that behaviour or a change in the usual approach by a member of staff is not interpreted as seeking to establish an inappropriate relationship or friendship with the pupil.

In all circumstances those members of staff who have the responsibility for organising trips and outings should pay careful attention to ensuring there is a safe staff/child ratio on the trip and a suitable gender mix of staff.

First Aid and Medication

Stella Maris School has 6 staff who are trained first aiders. This training is regularly monitored and updated and certificates are displayed in the office. Training is delivered by a professional company who follow the national First Aid guidance and legislation.

Our First Aid Policy clearly states the roles and responsibilities of all staff who are trained in this area. School procedures are agreed to by all staff.

Our Medical Needs Policy also sets out the procedures for the safety and support of any pupils or staff with medical needs. If a child has a health care plan this will be made known to all staff who work with this child to ensure that the plan is followed at all times.

We have clear procedures for dealing with children who are on medication and require this medication during the school day. These are explained in more detail in our Medical Needs Policy.

Appropriate risk assessments are undertaken prior to school trips and outings and the procedures for the completion of these risk assessments and time scales are set out in our school policies.

In a first aid situation the child involved will have everything which is happening explained to them. Staff will always act with the child's best interests at heart. A record of all accidents and incidents will be taken in line with the procedures for the reporting of accidents as set out in our First Aid Policy. Parents will always be contacted should the need arise and if a child has sustained a minor injury in school the parents/guardians will be informed verbally at the end of the school day by the class teacher.

If staff are taking medication, they must be certain that no side effects from this medication will impact on their duties in school. If they are uncertain in any respect, they must seek the advice of the doctor and inform the Headteacher. Risk assessment recommends that staff medication, which needs to be on the premises, must be securely always stored and out of the reach of children.

Photography, videos and other multi-media usage

Staff need to be familiar with the rules and regulations surrounding our policies in this area. These are clearly set down in the Staff Code of Conduct and in various safeguarding policies and within our Social Media Policy and E-Safety Policy.

Staff must only publish images of pupils where explicit written consent has been obtained from their parents. It is also important that the child feels happy about being photographed.

We will only retain images when there is a clear and agreed purpose for doing so and will store them in an appropriate and secure place in school.

Staff who are using school equipment for photographing children on school trips must communicate the reasoning for this to the Headteacher and ensure that they are able to justify why they have taken these photographs.

It is understood by staff that pupils will not take photographs of each other, unless it forms part of a lesson and will then only be allowed if the procedure is being supervised by the class teacher or club leader.

Staff should always take care not to put themselves in vulnerable positions or where their actions may lead to misinterpretation by photographing children in various stages of undress if they are taking photographs during a PE lesson. They must never take images which could be considered as indecent or sexual.

Children's images should not be displayed in a public place without consent and we understand that a public place could also mean any displays in school where visitors could have access to them.

Staff must never use their own devices or cameras to take images of children. All photographs must be taken using the school camera or other equipment belonging to the school.

Exposure to Inappropriate Images

Staff should take extreme care to ensure that children are not exposed to inappropriate or indecent images. This means that staff must abide by the school's acceptable use and E-Safety policies and ensure that vigilance is always exercised.

It is essential that all films or any other teaching materials which are used by means of internet or TV are age appropriate and have been researched and watched by staff to ensure they are suitable. Any screening of films or trips to the cinema will only involve the viewing of U rated movies.

For more information on how staff can keep the children and themselves safe when accessing images or photographic teaching materials please refer to our E-Safety Policy.

Curriculum

Some areas of the Curriculum, particularly in Science or PSHE lessons may include or raise subject matter which could be of a sensitive nature. Staff must always take care when encouraging pupils to use self-expression and use their professionalism to recognise when pupils are overstepping the mark.

Staff should not enter into inappropriate discussions with pupils which may offend. Any inappropriate discussion initiated by a pupil should be brought to the attention of the DSL as a precaution, in case a potential safeguarding situation may be involved.

The Headteacher should also be made aware of this.

Any part of the Curriculum or associated discussion should not undermine fundamental British Values or good Citizenship.

Staff should not express any prejudicial views. They should also be careful not to be seen to express personal political opinions with a view to persuade or coerce pupils to believe in the views which are being expressed. Although staff are encouraged to actively motivate children to discuss current affairs and put forward their own opinions and views, they must be careful to remain impartial at all times.

Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing is the mechanism by which staff can voice their concerns, made in good faith, without fear of repercussion. Our Whistleblowing Policy at Stella Maris School forms part of our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Staff have clear written guidelines as to the procedures involved in this and have been trained in how to manage this scenario as part of their safeguarding training. They have clear understanding of dealing with allegations against persons working in the school or on behalf of the school and know how to escalate their concerns if they believe that a child is not being protected.

Sharing Concerns and Recording Incidents

All staff are aware of the safeguarding procedures at Stella Maris School. Through statutory LA training and regular training as part of staff meetings they have a sound understanding of our policies, processes and procedures. All staff who work in the school or on behalf of the school know who the DSL and the Deputy DSL are.

They are aware of their statutory obligations to take responsibility for recording any incident and passing on that information to the DSL/Deputy DSL where they have concerns pertaining to the welfare or safety of a child in their care. They have read and understood the changes to the KCSIE 2023 and receive regular safeguarding updates from the DSL.

All staff are aware of the new Operation Encompass programme and that Stella Maris School now operates this programme in school with named Key Adults. It is expected that all staff know who the Key Adults are and the role they perform.

Stella Maris School recognises its responsibility to safeguard all staff as well as pupils and have produced this guidance document on Safer Working Practices to safeguard all who work in the school or on behalf of the school.