

St Louise's
Comprehensive College, Belfast
A Specialist College

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR STAFF



Mission Statement

"In partnership with parents, guardians, staff, governors and students, St Louise's promotes excellence in learning and teaching within a Catholic, Vincentian, Comprehensive ethos"

SECTION 1

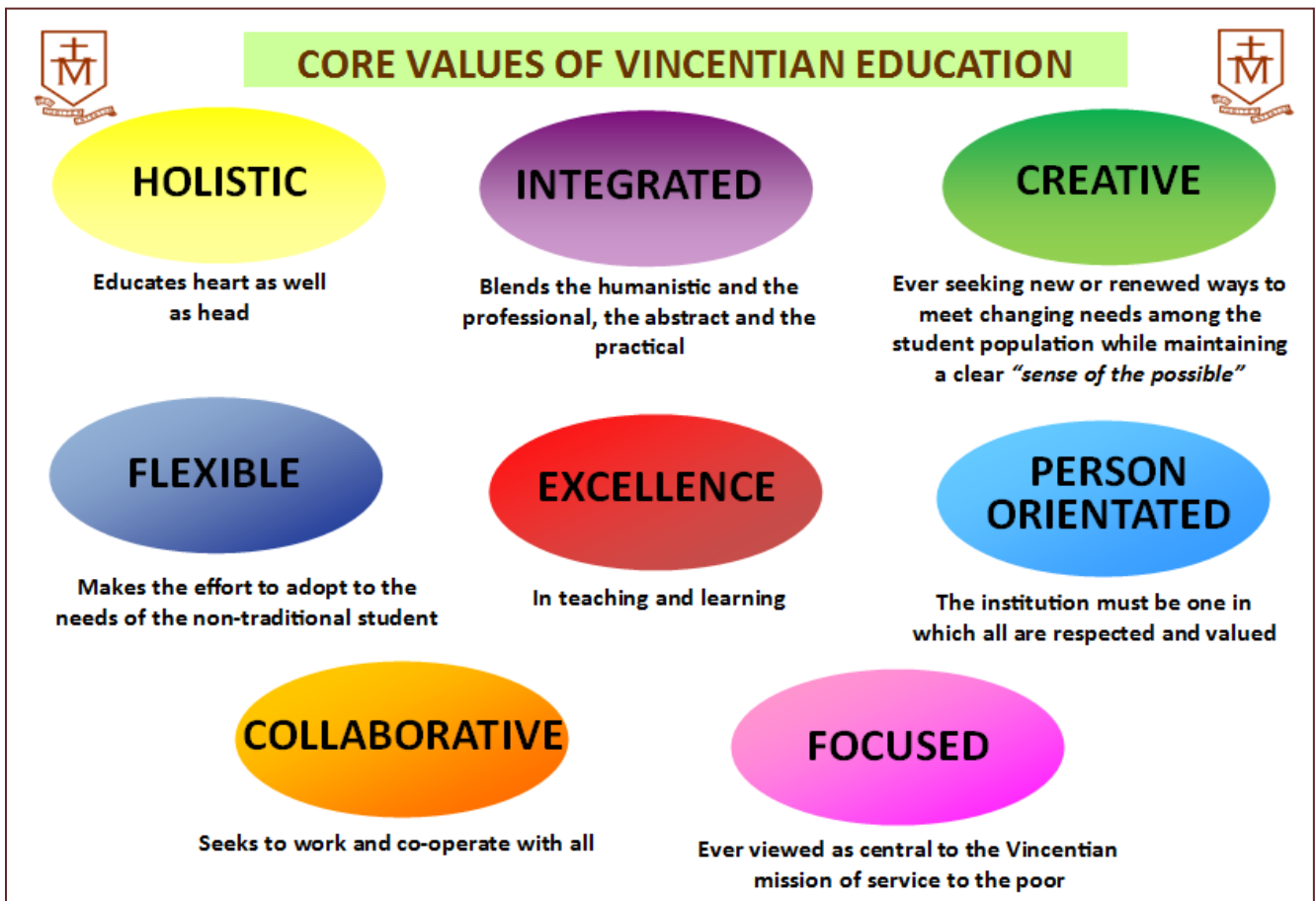
INTRODUCTION

THE VALUES UNDERPINNING OUR PRACTICE

St Louise's seeks to provide a safe and supportive environment, which secures the well-being and best possible outcomes for students and staff. Our values are set out in our Mission Statement and are underpinned by the Core Values of Vincentian Education.

Mission Statement and Core Values

In partnership with parents, guardians, staff, governors and students, St Louise's promotes excellence in learning and teaching within a Catholic, Vincentian, Comprehensive ethos.



Our value system underpins the standards of teaching, knowledge, skill, competence and conduct that are defined in our school policies and procedures. The four key facets of our practice are:

Respect – teachers in St Louise’s uphold human dignity and promote equality and emotional and cognitive development of our students. In their professional practice, teachers demonstrate respect for the spiritual and cultural values, diversity, social justice, freedom, democracy and the environment.

Care – teachers’ practice in St Louise’s is motivated by the best interests of the students entrusted to their care. Teachers show this through positive influence, professional judgement and empathy in practice.

Integrity – honesty, reliability and moral purpose are embodied in integrity. Teachers in St Louise’s exercise integrity on a daily basis through their professional commitments, responsibilities and actions.

Trust – teachers’ relationships with students, colleagues, parents, school leadership – Board of Governors and the public are based on trust. Trust embodies in our staff a culture of openness, fairness and honesty.

SECTION 2

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR STAFF

2.1 Overview of Code of Conduct

All actions concerning children and young people must uphold the best interests of the young person as a primary consideration. Staff must always be mindful of the fact that they hold a position of trust and that their behaviour towards children and young people, who are considered a vulnerable group, must be beyond reproach.

This Code of Conduct is not intended to detract from the enriching and positive experiences that children and young people gain from positive interaction with adults.

It is intended to

- assist staff to be aware of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in a variety of scenarios, which may create vulnerable and/or abusive situations to young people or staff
- communicate with staff expectations of their conduct as a member of the College community
- safe-guard all members of St Louise's school community.

This document should clarify what is expected in terms of professional behaviour; it gives clear advice about what constitutes illegal behaviour and what may be considered as misconduct. It also describes safe practice in order to safeguard all staff and the majority of situations that may arise. This document will be updated on a on-going basis.

Please note that it may not allow for every eventuality. It is expected that when other circumstances arise which are not contained within this document staff will seek

guidance and support from the Principal, Senior Colleague. If circumstances arise that involves the Principal guidance and support will be sought from the Chair of the Board of Governors.

2.2 Guiding Principles

- ✓ The welfare of students is paramount
- ✓ Staff are responsible for their own actions and behaviour and should avoid any conduct which would lead to any reasonable person to question their intentions and motivation
- ✓ Staff should work, and be seen to work in an open and transparent way
- ✓ Staff should discuss and/or take advice promptly from the Principal or another senior member of staff over any incident, which may give rise for concern (all incidents must be reported to the Principal)
- ✓ Records should be made of any such incident and of decisions made/further action agreed
- ✓ Staff should apply the same professional standards in keeping with school policy and procedures
- ✓ All staff should know the name of their designated and deputy designated teacher(s) for Child Protection, be familiar with child protection arrangements and understand their responsibilities to safeguard and protect students
- ✓ Staff should be aware that breaches of the law and other professional guidelines could result in criminal or disciplinary action being taken against them

2.3 Expectations of Staff

Staff are expected to:

- ✓ help students work to their full potential and develop and nurture their self-worth
- ✓ communicate positively, regularly and meaningfully with parents
- ✓ maintain consistent standards of behaviour for all students
- ✓ demonstrate respect for all students, staff and parents
- ✓ prepare students for the full responsibilities of citizenship
- ✓ adhere to school policies and curriculum guidelines
- ✓ lead by example
- ✓ be positive role models

SECTION 3

SAFE WORKING PRACTICES FOR THE PROTECTION OF STAFF AND STUDENTS

This guidance has been produced to help all staff establish the safest possible learning and working environments. The aims are to safeguard young people and staff.

3.1 Duty of Care

Teachers and other staff in St Louise's are accountable for the way in which they exercise authority; manage risk; use resources; and protect students and other staff from discrimination and avoidable harm.

All staff in St Louise's, whether paid or voluntary, have a duty to keep young people safe and to protect them from physical and emotional harm. This duty is partly exercised through the development of respectful, caring and professional relationships between staff and students and behaviour by staff that demonstrates integrity, maturity and good judgement.

This means that staff should:

- ✓ always act and be seen to act, in the child's best interest
- ✓ avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions
- ✓ take responsibility for their own actions and behaviour

The Board of Governors and Principal will provide a safe working environment for staff and guidance about safe working practices.

This means that the BOG and Principal will:

- ✓ ensure that safeguarding procedures are in place and reviewed

- ✓ ensure that systems are in place for concerns to be raised
- ✓ ensure that adults are not placed in situations that render them particularly vulnerable

3.2 Exercise of Professional Judgement

Individuals are expected to make judgements about their behaviour in order to secure the best interests and welfare of the children in their charge and in so doing, will be seen to act reasonably.

This means that where no specific guidance exists staff should:

- ✓ discuss the circumstances that informed their action, or proposed action, with the Principal (in her absence a member of the Senior Leadership Team). This will help to ensure that the safest practices are employed and reduce the risk of actions being misinterpreted
- ✓ always discuss any misunderstanding, accidents or threats with a member of the Senior Leadership Team
- ✓ always record discussions and actions taken with their justifications

3.3 Power and Positions of Trust

All adults working with students in St Louise's are placed in positions of trust in relation to the young people in their care. A relationship between a member of staff and a student cannot be a relationship between equals. Staff have the ultimate responsibility to ensure that an unequal balance of power is not used for personal advantage or gratification.

Staff should always maintain appropriate professionalism and wherever possible, they should avoid behaviour which might be misinterpreted by others, and report and record any incident with this potential.

Where a person aged 18 or over is in a position of trust with a child under 18 and/or a student within the school (even if the student is over 18), it is an offence for that person to engage in sexual activity with or in the presence of that child, or to cause or incite that child to engage in or watch sexual activity.

This means that staff should not:

- ✓ use their position to gain access to information for their own advantage and/or a child's or family's detriment
- ✓ use their power to intimidate, threaten, coerce or undermine pupils
- ✓ use their status and standing to form or promote relationships with children, which are of a sexual nature
- ✓ talk about children in a detrimental or disparaging manner
- ✓ inflict emotional hurt on students

3.4 Confidentiality

Members of staff will have access to confidential information about students in order to undertake their every day responsibilities. In some circumstances staff may be given additional highly sensitive or private information. They should never use confidential or personal information about a student or his/her family for their own, or others' advantage. Information must never be used to intimidate, humiliate, or embarrass a student. Confidential information should be properly stored at all times.

If a member of staff is in any doubt about whether to share information or keep it confidential he or she must seek advice from a member of the Senior Leadership Team. Any media or legal enquiries should be passed straight to Principal (or through the Principal's PA).

Staff need to be aware that although it is important to listen to and support students, they must not promise

confidentiality or request students to do the same under any circumstances.

Additionally concerns and allegations about adults should be treated confidentially and passed to the Principal and Designated Teachers for Child Protection without delay.

This means that staff are expected:

- ✓ to treat information they receive about children and young people in a discreet and sensitive manner
- ✓ to seek advice from a senior member of staff if in any doubt about sharing information they hold or which has been requested of them
- ✓ to be cautious when passing information to others about a child/young person continue to observe their duty of confidentiality after they have left the employment of the College
- ✓ to always refer any concerns about potential child abuse to the Designated or Deputy Designated Teacher and/or Principal

3.5 Propriety and Behaviour

All staff have the responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of students. They should adopt high standards of personal conduct in order to maintain confidence and respect of their peers, students and the public in general.

This means that staff should:

- ✓ behave in a manner which would lead any reasonable person to question their suitability to work with students or act as a role model
- ✓ not attend school under the influence of alcohol
- ✓ not consume or bring alcohol onto site
- ✓ not consume alcohol in the company of students at school-related social events
- ✓ behave in a professional manner in the company of pupils at social events

- ✓ not drink alcohol on trips
- ✓ not make inappropriate remarks to a student (including email, text messages, phone, letter etc)
- ✓ not discuss their own sexual relationships with or in the presence of students
- ✓ not discuss a student's sexual relationship in inappropriate settings or contexts
- ✓ not make (or encourage others to make) unprofessional personal comments in any form of communication (email, conversations or social networking sites)
- ✓ avoid discussions of a sensitive nature in any public place

3.6 Dress and Appearance

Staff should consider the manner of dress and appearance appropriate to their professional role. We require our boys and girls to be smart in their uniform. Smart and professional appearance is expected at all times for staff. Staff should ensure that they are dressed decently, safely and appropriately for the tasks they undertake.

This means that staff should ensure that they:

- ✓ wear clothing which promotes a positive and professional image and is appropriate to their role
- ✓ act as role models to prepare children for the world of work
- ✓

3.7 Gifts

Staff should be aware of the school's policy regarding arrangements for the declaration of gifts received and given. There are occasions when students or parents wish to pass small tokens of appreciation to staff, and this is acceptable. However, it is unacceptable to receive gifts on a regular basis of any significant value. The gifts of significant value must be declared.

Members of staff may not give personal gifts to students. It is acceptable to offer prizes of small value in certain tasks or competitions.

This means that staff should:

- ✓ ensure that gifts received or given in situations which may be misconstrued are declared
- ✓ ensure that gifts of significant value are declared
- ✓ generally, only give gifts to an individual young person as part of an agreed reward system
- ✓ where giving gifts other than as above, ensure that they are of insignificant value and given to all students equally

3.8 Infatuations

Staff should be aware that it is not uncommon for students to be strongly attracted to a member of staff and/or develop an infatuation. A member of staff who becomes aware that a student may be infatuated with themselves or a colleague should discuss this at the earliest opportunity with a member of the Senior Leadership Team. In this way, steps can be taken to avoid hurt and distress to all concerned.

This means that staff should:

- ✓ report any indications (verbal, written or physical) that suggest a student may be infatuated with a member of staff
- ✓ ensure all relationships with students are appropriate and acceptable

3.9 Personal Living Space

No student should be in or invited into the home of an adult who works with them, unless the reason for this has been firmly established and agreed with parents and a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

This means that staff should:

- ✓ be vigilant in maintaining their privacy and mindful of the need to avoid placing themselves in vulnerable situations
- ✓ be mindful of the need to maintain professional boundaries

3.10 Communication with students (including the use of Technology)

Communication between students and adults, by whatever method, should always take place within clear and explicit professional boundaries. This includes the wider use of technology such as mobile phones, text messaging, e-mails, digital cameras, videos, web-cams, social networking sites, online gaming and blogs. Adults should not share any personal information with a student. They should not request, or respond to, any personal information from the student, other than that which might be appropriate as part of their professional role. Adults should ensure that communications are open and transparent to scrutiny.

Adults should not exchange any personal details with students. This is clearly defined to the Acceptable Use Policy for Staff.

Communication with ex-students who are over 18 is left to staff discretion. Please be conscious of the fact that ex-students may have contact with our current students.

Staff must be aware that actions that bring the school into disrepute could lead to disciplinary procedures being taken.

This means that staff should:

- ✓ never exchange personal details with students
- ✓ communicate with students in an appropriate and professional manner

- ✓ only make contact with students for professional reasons
- ✓ not use internet or web based communication channels to send personal messages to a student
- ✓ not have images of students stored on personal cameras, devices or home computers
- ✓ not make images of students available on the internet, other than through the school website/ network, and with permission from the E-learning Co-ordinator
- ✓ be cautious in their contact with ex-students, maintaining only professional contact

3.11 Social Contact

Staff should not establish or seek to establish social contact with students, or their families, for the purpose of securing a friendship or to pursue or strengthen a relationship. Even if a young person seeks to establish social contact, or if this occurs coincidentally, the member of staff should exercise his/her professional judgement in making a response but should always discuss this with the Principal/member of the Senior Leadership Team. Staff must be aware that social contact, in certain situations, could be misconstrued as grooming.

Staff should not give personal details such as their home or email address; social network sites, gamer tags or web pages to students unless the need to do so is agreed with the Principal/member of the Senior Leadership Team. If students do become aware of your gamer tag it is good practice to change this.

This means that staff should:

- ✓ have no secret contact with students
- ✓ consider the appropriateness of social contact according to their role and nature of their work
- ✓ always approve any planned social contact with a member of the Senior Leadership Team, for example

when it is part of a reward scheme or pastoral care programme

- ✓ advise the Principal/member of the Senior Leadership Team of any regular social contact they have with a student or parent which may give rise for concern
- ✓ report and record any situation, which they feel, might compromise the school or their own professional standing

3.12 Social Networking and Online Gaming

To ensure that you are safeguarded fully, your personal profile and photos should be 'locked down' as private so that students or parents do not have access to your personal data and images. Staff must deny students access to your profile so you do not put yourself in a vulnerable position.

Staff should be aware that they leave themselves open to disciplinary action if images of a member of staff in a compromising situation are made available on a public profile by anyone.

If a student gains access to a profile of a member of staff by fraudulent means (impersonation or hacking) the Principal/member of the Senior Leadership Team should be informed immediately.

This means that staff should:

- ✓ lock down their profile to ensure that data and images are not freely available
- ✓ do not permit students or parents to have access to your profile
- ✓ ensure that all passwords are kept strong and secure
- ✓ be aware that images of others should be protected as you would your own

3.13 Physical Contact

Staff should use their professional judgement at all times about the appropriateness of any physical contact.

Physical contact should never be secretive, 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 made clear to the Principal/member of the Senior Leadership Team.

This means that staff should:

- ✓ be aware that even well intentioned physical contact may be misconstrued by the child, an observer or by anyone to whom this action is described
- ✓ never touch a child in a way which may be considered indecent
- ✓ always be prepared to explain actions and accept that all physical contact be open to scrutiny

3.14 Physical Education and other activities which require physical contact

In some situations, for example, those who teach PE and games, or who offer music tuition, will on occasions have to initiate physical contact with students in order to support a student so they can perform a task safely. This should be done with the student's agreement.

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 student.

This means that staff should:

- ✓ consider alternatives, where it is anticipated that pupil might misinterpret any such contact, perhaps involving

another member of staff, or a less vulnerable pupil in the demonstration

- ✓ be familiar with and follow departmental policy
- ✓ always explain to a pupil the reason why contact is necessary and what form that contact will take

3.15 Showers and Changing

Young people 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 students, 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 students concerned and sensitive to the potential for embarrassment. Staff, therefore, need to be vigilant about their own behaviour and be mindful of the needs of the students.

This means that staff should:

- ✓ avoid any physical contact when children are in a state of undress
- ✓ avoid any visually intrusive behaviour and where there are changing rooms announce their intention of entering
- ✓ avoid remaining in the room unless pupil needs require it
- ✓ not change in the same place as children

3.16 Students in Distress

There may be occasions when a distressed student needs comfort and reassurance. This may include age – appropriate physical contact. Staff should be self-aware at all times in order that their contact is not threatening, intrusive or subject to misinterpretation.

This means that staff should:

- ✓ consider the way in which they offer comfort to a distressed pupil

- ✓ always tell a colleague/key personnel when and how they offered comfort to a distressed child
- ✓ record situations which may give rise to concern

3.17 Behaviour Management

All students have the right to be treated with respect and dignity. Staff should not use any form of degrading treatment to punish a student. The use of humour can help diffuse a situation. The use of sarcasm, demeaning and insensitive comments towards students is not acceptable in any situation.

This means that staff should:

- ✓ adhere to the school's behaviour management policy
- ✓ not phone parents to complain about their children (only senior pastoral staff may make direct contact with parents by phone)
- ✓ try to diffuse situations before they escalate
- ✓ take care to ensure that their relationships with pupils reflect the age, gender and maturity of pupils
- ✓ be caring but professional
- ✓ be conscious of child protection issues

3.18 Care, Control and Physical Intervention

Staff may legitimately intervene to prevent a student 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.

In all cases where physical intervention is deemed as necessary, the incident and subsequent actions should be documented and reported.

This means that staff should:

- ✓ not use force as a form of punishment
- ✓ adhere to the school's Reasonable Force Policy

- ✓ always seek to defuse situations
- ✓ always use minimum force for the shortest period necessary

3.19 Sexual Contact with Students

Any sexual behaviour by a member of staff with or towards a student is both inappropriate and illegal. Students 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 the child or young person consents or not. This includes the prohibition on adults in a position of trust.

This means that staff should:

- ✓ not pursue sexual relationships with children and young people either in or out of school
- ✓ avoid any form of communication with a child or young person which could be interpreted as sexually suggestive or provocative i.e. verbal comments, letter, notes, electronic mail, phone calls, texts, physical contact

3.20 One to One Situations

Staff working in one-to-one situations with children and young people are more vulnerable to allegations. Teachers and others should recognise this possibility and plan and conduct such meetings accordingly. Every attempt should be made to ensure the safety and security needs of both staff and students are met.

This means that staff should:

- ✓ avoid meetings with students in remote, secluded areas of school
- ✓ ensure there is visual access and/or an open door in one to one situation
- ✓ not arrange meetings with individual students off the school premises in the evenings, at weekends or on the

- school premises at non term time without the prior approval of the Principal and parents
- ✓ exercise caution about inviting students to home, meeting them socially or exchanging contact numbers or email addresses

3.21 Relationships with Students Outside of Work Declaration

In circumstances whereby Staff and Volunteers of the school are known to students outside of work, for example, private tutoring, membership of Sports Clubs, family connections; staff must complete the "Relationships with students Outside of Work Declaration" form and return this form to the Principal.

3.22 Transporting Students

Wherever possible and practicable it is advisable that transport is undertaken other than in private vehicles, with at least one additional adult. The driver must have appropriate insurance and appropriate permission must be sought from the parent/guardian.

This means that staff should:

- ✓ ensure that they are alone with a child for the minimum time possible
- ✓ be aware that the safety and welfare of the child is their responsibility until this is safely passed over to a parent/carer
- ✓ ensure that their behaviour and all arrangements ensure vehicle, passenger and driver safety

3.23 Extra Curricular Activities

Staff should take particular care when supervising students in the less formal atmosphere of a residential setting or after school activity.

This means that staff should:

- ✓ adhere at all times to the Educational Visits/Trips Policy
- ✓ adhere to the Extra Curricular Policy
- ✓ ensure that their behaviour remains professional at all times

3.24 First Aid and Administration of Medication

The First Aid and Medical Care Policy must be adhered to at all times.

3.25 Intimate Care

All children have a right to safety, privacy and dignity when contact of an intimate care nature is required. A care plan will be drawn up and agreed with parents for all children who require intimate care on a regular basis. When assistance is required, staff should ensure that another appropriate adult is in the vicinity and is aware of the task to be undertaken.

This means that staff should:

- ✓ make other staff aware of the task being undertaken
- ✓ explain to the child what is happening
- ✓ consult with colleagues where any variation from agreed procedure/care plan is necessary
- ✓ record the justification for any variations to the agreed procedure/care plan and share this information with parents

3.26 Curriculum

The curriculum can sometimes include or lead to unplanned discussion about subject matter of a sexually explicit or otherwise sensitive nature. Responding to students' questions can require careful judgement and

staff may wish to take guidance from a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

Care should be taken to abide by the RSE Policy.

This means that staff should:

- ✓ have clearly written lesson plans
- ✓ not enter into or encourage inappropriate or offensive discussion about sexual activity

3.27 Photography, I-movies/Podcasts and the Creative Arts

Using images of children for the school's publicity purposes has already had consent. The list of students who are not allowed to be photographed will be issued to staff by the Designated Teacher for Child Protection on a yearly basis.

This means that staff should:

- ✓ never take photographs of students or video students without having ensured that student and parental consent has been obtained
- ✓ never display or distribute images of children unless student and parental consent has been obtained
- ✓ be clear about the purpose of the activity and about what will happen to the photographs when the lesson/activity is concluded
- ✓ ensure that all images are available for scrutiny in order to screen for acceptability
- ✓ be able to justify images of children in their possession
- ✓ avoid making images in one to one situations
- ✓ never store images on any personal equipment

3.28 Internet Use

St Louise's has an Acceptable Use Policy for ICT. Please refer to the Acceptable Use Policy for further guidance. Under no circumstances should adults in the school access

inappropriate images or share inappropriate images with other staff and/or students.

3.29 Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing is the mechanism by which staff can voice their concerns, made in good faith, without fear of repercussion.

This means that staff should:

- ✓ report any behaviour by colleagues that raises concern

3.30 Sharing and Recording Incidents

All staff should be aware of the school's child protection procedures including procedures for dealing with allegations against staff. Allegations made against staff will be shared with the member of staff by the key person dealing with the allegation.

Members of staff should feel able to discuss with a member of the Year Team/Senior Leadership Team any difficulties or problems that may affect their relationship with students so that appropriate support can be provided and action taken.

This means that staff:

- ✓ report any incident or any concerns which they may have following any incident where they feel their actions may have been misinterpreted, or where a student, parent or third party has complained to them about their own actions or the actions of another member of staff
- ✓ be familiar with the College system for recording concerns
- ✓ take responsibility for recording any incident, and passing on that information where they have concerns about any matter pertaining to the welfare of an individual in the College

3.31 Other Key Areas defined in the Code of Conduct

Attendance

This means that staff should:

- ✓ adhere to the Attendance Policy

Conflict of Interest and Ordering of Goods and Services

This means that staff should:

- ✓ ensure that their conduct should be such that there should not exist any suspicion of a conflict of interest in the performance of their duties
- ✓ ensure that any possible conflict of interest is identified and appropriate action taken
- ✓ ensure that all business links are declared and follow procurement and ordering procedures at all times. All ordering using school funds must be done centrally through the Main Office.

Official Information

This means that staff should:

- ✓ not publish any written work, deliver any lecture, discuss or debate in public nor give any interview to the press or other broadcast media on any subject relating to the College or their work without the approval of the Principal

Relations with the Public

This means that staff should:

- ✓ deal with the members of the public sympathetically, efficiently, promptly and without bias or maladministration
- ✓ offer the public the highest standards of conduct and service

Smoking

This means that staff should:

- ✓ only smoke in the designated smoking shelter to the rear of the Junior Assembly Hall (*smoking of e-cigarettes is treated the same as tobacco cigarettes*)

Use of Resources

This means that staff should:

- ✓ endeavour to ensure proper, economical, effective and efficient use of resources at all times
- ✓ not use school resources for **any** personal use such as postage, photocopying, production of booklets without seeking permission from the Principal
- ✓ not use school electronic or other equipment for personal use
- ✓ not use any materials, resources for personal use
- ✓ not make personal telephone calls using school phone-lines

Bringing of Children to School

This means that staff should:

- ✓ not bring their children to school when they are exercising their teaching duties during normal school hours

Conclusion

This Code of Conduct has been produced to help all staff establish the safest possible learning and working

environments to safeguard children and staff at all times. This will be updated when the need arises.

This code does not replace or take priority over other College Policies and links clearly to the following Policies:

- ✓ Child Protection Policy
- ✓ Acceptable Use of ICT Policy
- ✓ E-Safety Policy
- ✓ Extra Curricular Policy
- ✓ Trips Policy
- ✓ RSE Policy
- ✓ Attendance Policy for Staff (Refer Circulars)
- ✓ First Aid Policy
- ✓ Medical Care Policy
- ✓ Complaints Policy
- ✓ Use of Reasonable Force Policy
- ✓ Behaviour Policy