



# Code of Conduct & Guidance for Safer Working Practice for staff and volunteers at Valence School

**This guidance/code was originally based upon** Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Staff and volunteers working with Children and Young People (*Allegation Management Advisors*)

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# **Code of Conduct & Guidance for Safer Working Practice for staff and volunteers at Valence School**

## **THE SCHOOL'S MISSION STATEMENT, AIMS & CORE VALUES**

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

**Student's views and rights are central to the ethos of Valence School.**

**Its mission is to provide a learning community where there is quality education, care, access and therapy in order to promote each student's intellectual, physical, social, emotional and spiritual development.**

**Our work is about enabling children and young people who have Special physical, medical and sensory needs to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding together with the confidence, self-esteem and self-dependence necessary for them to participate in and contribute to society in the way each chooses.**

### **CORE VALUES**

**When working with students and their families at Valence School, it is important to embed the following values in your practice:**

- **Put the wellbeing, health, development and progress of students first.**
- **Help students to become confident and successful learners.**
- **Promote the independence of students whilst protecting them as far as possible from danger or harm.**
- **Protect the rights and promote the interest of students, alongside ensuring that their behaviour does not harm themselves or other people.**
- **Strive to establish and maintain the trust and confidence of students and their families, by demonstrating openness, honesty and integrity**
- **Be accountable for the quality of your work and take responsibility for maintaining and improving your knowledge and skills.**
- **Be accountable and take personal responsibility for your actions and omissions in your practice. Always ensure you are able to justify your decisions.**
- **Work cooperatively and professionally as part of a whole-school team.**

## 1. Context

All staff and volunteers who work with children and young people have a crucial role to play in shaping their lives. They have a unique opportunity to interact with children and young people in ways that are both affirming and inspiring. This Code and guidance has been produced to help staff and volunteers establish safe and responsive environments which safeguard young people and reduce the risk of staff and volunteers being unjustly accused of improper or unprofessional conduct.

Staff and volunteers are required to promote and work within the school's Mission Statement. Staff and volunteers are also required to promote the values underpinning the Valence Code and model it through their behaviour.

## 2. 'Unsuitability'

This 'code' identifies what behaviours are expected of staff and volunteers who work with children and young people at Valence School. Staff and volunteers whose practice deviates from this guidance and/or their professional or employment-related code of conduct may bring into question their suitability to work at the School and generally with children and young people.

Failure to adhere to this Code of Conduct may lead to disciplinary action which may result in dismissal.

## 3. Duty of Care

All staff and volunteers who work with, and on behalf of children are accountable for the way in which they exercise authority; manage risk; use resources; and safeguard children and young people.

Staff and volunteers have a duty to keep children and young people safe and to protect them from sexual, physical and emotional harm. Children and young people have a right to be treated with respect and dignity. It follows that trusted staff and volunteers are expected to take reasonable steps to ensure the safety and well-being of children and young people. Failure to do so may be regarded as neglect.

The duty of care is in part, exercised through the development of respectful and caring relationships between staff and volunteers and children and young people. It is also exercised through the behaviour of the adult, which at all times should demonstrate integrity, maturity and good judgement.

The School expects high standards of behaviour from staff and volunteers who work with children and young people. Staff and Volunteers working at Valence School need to understand and acknowledge the responsibilities and trust inherent in their role.

*This means that this Code:*

- *applies to **all** staff and volunteers at Valence School*
- *may provide guidance where an individual's suitability to work with children and young people has been called into question.*
- *must be used to promote outcomes for children and young people in accordance with the Mission Statement and the principles and practices contained within this code*

*This means that staff and volunteers should:*

- *have a clear understanding about the nature and content of this document*
- *discuss any uncertainties or confusion with their line manager*
- *understand what behaviours may call into question their suitability to continue to work at the School or generally with children and young people*

*This means that staff and volunteers should:*

- *understand the responsibilities, which are part of their employment or role, and be aware that disciplinary action will be taken if these provisions are breached*
- *always act, and be seen to act, in the child's best interests*
- *avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions*
- *take responsibility for their own actions and behaviour*

*This means that Valence School will:*

In accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, Valence School has a duty to provide Staff and Volunteers with a safe working environment and guidance on 'safe practice'. The school also have a duty of care for the well-being of employees and to ensure that they are treated fairly and reasonably in all circumstances. The Human Rights Act 1998 sets out important principles regarding protection of individuals from abuse by state organisations or people working for those institutions. Where a member of staff is subject to an allegation, the school will follow the KCC Managing Allegations Against Staff within Schools and Education Services Procedures.

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 also imposes a duty on employees to take care of themselves and anyone else who may be affected by their actions or failings. Staff and Volunteers must adhere to Valence School's Health and Safety Policy.

- *ensure that appropriate safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures are in place, implemented and monitored*
- *ensure that this Code is regularly monitored and reviewed along with other policies and procedures*
- *ensure that, where services or activities are provided by another body, the body concerned has appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures*
- *foster a culture of openness and support*
- *ensure that systems are in place for concerns to be raised*
- *ensure all staff and volunteers have access to and understand this Code and related, policies and procedures*
- *ensure that all job descriptions and person specifications clearly identify the competences necessary to fulfil the duty of care.*

#### **4. Confidentiality**

Staff and volunteers have access to confidential information about children and young people in order to undertake their responsibilities. Such information must be shared with School's colleagues whose work requires them to have such information. In some circumstances they may have access to or be given highly sensitive or private information. These details must be kept confidential at all times and only shared when it is in interests of the child to do so. Such information must not be used to intimidate, humiliate, or embarrass the child or young person concerned.

If staff and volunteers have any doubt about whether to share information or keep it confidential he or she should seek guidance from a senior member of staff or one of the school's Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs). Any actions should be in line with locally agreed information sharing protocols.

Child protection information is limited to DSLs and staff who need to know, to carry out their role to support the child.

The storing and processing of personal information about children and young people is governed by the Data Protection Act 1998.

Whilst staff and volunteers need to be aware of the need to listen and support children and young people, they must also understand the importance of not promising to keep secrets. Neither should they

*This means that staff and volunteers:*

- *should be clear about when information can be shared and in what circumstances it is appropriate to do so*
- *are expected to treat information they receive about children and young people in a discreet and confidential manner*
- *should seek advice from a senior member of staff if they are in any doubt about sharing information they hold or which has been requested of them*
- *must report concerns or allegations in accordance with Valence School's Child Protection Policy*
- *should not discuss matters relating to a child or young person when confidentiality, privacy and dignity*

request this of a child or young person under any circumstances.

*could be compromised.*

Communication between staff, people and students about confidential matters must be conducted in an appropriate place to ensure privacy.

## **5. Making a Professional Judgement**

This Code does not provide a complete checklist of what is, or is not appropriate behaviour for staff and volunteers in all circumstances. There may be occasions and circumstances in which staff and volunteers have to make decisions or take action in the best interests of the child or young person which is not covered by this Code or guidance. Individuals are expected to make judgements about their behaviour in order to secure the best interests and welfare of the children and young people in their charge. Such judgements, in these circumstances, should always be recorded and shared with a senior manager. In undertaking these actions individuals will be seen to be acting reasonably.

Staff and volunteers should always consider whether their actions are warranted, proportionate, safe and applied equitably.

## **6. Power and Positions of Trust**

As a result of their knowledge, position and/or the authority invested in their role, all staff and volunteers working with children and young people are in positions of trust in relation to the children and young people in their care. Broadly speaking, a relationship of trust can be described as one in which one party is in a position of power or influence over the other by virtue of their work or the nature of their activity. It is vital for all those in positions of trust to understand the power this can give them over those they care for and the responsibility they must exercise as a consequence of this relationship.

A relationship between an adult and a child or young person cannot be a relationship between equals. There is potential for exploitation and harm of vulnerable children and young people. Staff and volunteers have a responsibility to ensure that an unequal balance of power is not used for personal advantage or gratification.

*This means that where no specific guidance exists staff and volunteers should:*

- *discuss the circumstances that informed their action, or their proposed action, with a senior manager at the earliest opportunity.*
- *report any actions which could be misinterpreted to their senior manager*
- *always discuss any misunderstanding, accidents or threats with a senior manager*
- *always record discussions and reasons why actions were taken and pass the report to the line manager.*
- *record any areas of disagreement about a course of action taken and if necessary refer to the Principal*

*This means that staff and volunteers should not:*

- *use their position to gain access to information for their own or others' advantage*
- *use their position to intimidate, bully, humiliate, threaten, coerce or undermine children or young people*
- *use their status and standing to form or promote relationships which are of a sexual and/or exploitative nature, or which may become so.*
- *ensure that their relationships with students and their families are entirely professional and are not compromised by the development of any personal or social relationships with those students and their families.*

Staff and volunteers should always maintain appropriate professional boundaries and avoid behaviour which might be misinterpreted by others. They should report and record any incident with this potential.

Where a person aged 18 or over is in a specified position of trust with a child under 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.

## **7. Propriety and Behaviour, Dignity and Respect**

All staff and volunteers have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of children and young people. It is therefore expected that they will adopt high standards of personal conduct in order to maintain the confidence and respect of the school, colleagues and the public in general and all those with whom they work.

There may be times, for example, when an adult's behaviour or actions in their personal life come under scrutiny from local communities, the media or public authorities. This could be because their behaviour is considered to compromise their position in their workplace or indicate an unsuitability to work with children or young people. Misuse of drugs, alcohol or acts of violence would be examples of such behaviour. Staff and volunteers should therefore understand and be aware, that safe practice also involves using judgement and integrity about behaviours in places other than the work setting.

The behaviour of an adult's partner or other family members may raise similar concerns and require careful consideration by the school as to whether there may be a potential risk to children and young people in the workplace.

All staff and volunteers have the right to be treated with dignity and respect but equally have the obligation to treat others in a manner that does not humiliate, denigrate or may be seen as offensive. The School will not tolerate any conduct which has the purpose or the effect of violating an individual's dignity.

- *Use their position to inappropriately discourage or encourage a student to complain*

*This means that staff and volunteers should not:*

- *behave in a manner which would lead any reasonable person to question their suitability to work with children or to act as a role model.*
- *make, or encourage others to make, unprofessional personal comments which scapegoat, demean or humiliate, or which might be interpreted as such*

*This means that staff and volunteers should:*

- *be aware that behaviour in their personal lives may impact upon their work with children and young people*
- *understand that the behaviour and actions of their partner (or other family members) may raise questions about their suitability to work with children and young people*
- *be responsible for treating others with dignity and respect,*
- *deal with conflicts constructively and challenge inappropriate behaviour in others*

*This means that Valence School will:*

- *ensure that the School maintains a culture which promotes positive relationships*
- *work proactively to ensure that everyone concerned with its work are treated with dignity and respect, fairly and without discrimination*
- *investigate and take disciplinary action against those instigating or perpetrating acts of harassment and/or bullying*

## 8. Dress, Appearance

A person's dress and appearance are matters of personal choice and self-expression. However staff and volunteers should dress in ways which are appropriate to their role and this may need to be different to how they dress when not at work.

Staff and volunteers will take care to ensure they are dressed appropriately for the tasks and the work they undertake.

## 9. Staff' use of hand held device

The School will provide hand held devices for some members of staff in their professional role. Staff should not use their own hand held device except in an emergency. If necessary for staff and volunteers to use their own hand held device for emergencies, they should notify these to a senior manager to obtain permission. Hand held devices may not be used by a member of staff or volunteer except during their break time.

## 10. Personal Living Space (Sleeping in rooms, staff and volunteer accommodation – on site and off site)

No child or young person 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 managers.

It is not appropriate for any other organisations to expect or request that private living space be used for work with children and young people.

Under no circumstances should children or young people assist with chores or tasks in the home of an adult who works with them. Neither should they be asked to do so by friends or family of that adult.

*This means that staff and volunteers should:*

- *wear clothing which is appropriate to their role*
- *follow Valence School's dress code.*
- *wear clothing which is not likely to be viewed as offensive, revealing, or sexually provocative*
- *wear clothing which does not distract, cause embarrassment or give rise to misunderstanding*
- *wear clothing which is absent of any political or otherwise contentious slogans*
- *wear clothing which is not considered to be discriminatory and is culturally sensitive*
- *wear clothing which is consistent with safety, hygiene and decency.*
- *not use their hand held device when working*
- *keep their hand held device switched off when at work, except during breaks*
- *not having their hand held devices on their person unless agreed with a senior manager*

*This means that staff and volunteers should:*

- *not invite students and/or their family members to their own home, the homes of other people or staff sleeping-in accommodation*
- *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*
- *refrain from asking children and young people to undertake personal jobs or errands*

## **11. Gifts, Rewards and Favouritism**

Valence School does not allow to give personal gifts as the giving of such gifts can be misinterpreted by others as a gesture either to bribe or groom a young person. The giving of gifts or rewards to children or young people will be part of an agreed policy for supporting positive behaviour or recognising particular achievements. In some situations, the giving of gifts as rewards may be accepted practice for a group of children, whilst in other situations the giving of a gift to an individual child or young person will be part of an agreed plan. Such gifts and rewards will be funded by the School and will not be attributed to the individual member of staff.

Staff and volunteers should exercise care when selecting children and/or young people for specific activities or privileges to avoid perceptions of favouritism or unfairness. Methods and criteria for selection should always be transparent and subject to scrutiny.

Care should also be taken to ensure that staff and volunteers do not accept any gift that might be construed as a bribe by others, or lead the giver to expect preferential treatment.

There are occasions when children, young people or parents wish to pass small tokens of appreciation to staff and volunteers e.g. on special occasions 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.

## **12. Infatuations**

Occasionally, a child or young person may develop a crush or an infatuation with an adult who works with them. These staff and volunteers should deal with these situations sensitively and appropriately to maintain the dignity and safety of all concerned. They should remain aware, however, that such infatuations carry a high risk of words or actions being misinterpreted and should therefore make every effort to ensure that their own behaviour is above reproach.

An adult, who becomes aware that a child or young person is developing an infatuation, should discuss this at the earliest opportunity with a senior manager so appropriate action can be taken to avoid any hurt, distress or embarrassment.

## **13. Communication with Children and Young People (including the Use of Technology)**

Communication between children and staff and volunteers, by whatever method, should take place within clear and explicit professional boundaries. This includes the wider use of technology

*This means that staff and volunteers should:*

- *Should not give students gifts*
- *ensure that gifts received are declared and those given are funded by the School*
- *ensure that all selection processes which concern children and young people are fair and that wherever practicable these are undertaken and agreed by more than one member of staff*
- *not loan children and young people money except in exceptional circumstances which should be reported to senior managers*

*This means that staff and volunteers should:*

- *report and record any incidents or indications (verbal, written or physical) that suggest a child or young person may have developed an infatuation with an adult at the School*
- *always acknowledge and maintain professional boundaries*

*This means that the Valence School has an:*

- *Acceptable User Policy. Privacy and Confidentiality Statement and*

such as hand held devices, text messaging, e-mails, digital cameras, videos, web-cams, websites and blogs. Staff and volunteers should not share any personal information with a child or young person. They should not request, or respond to, any personal information from the child/young person, other than that which might be appropriate as part of their professional role. Staff and volunteers should ensure that all communications are transparent and open to scrutiny.

Staff and volunteers should also be circumspect in their communications with children so as to avoid any possible misinterpretation of their motives or any behaviour which could be construed as grooming. They should not give their personal contact details to children and young people including e-mail, home or mobile telephone numbers, unless the need to do so is agreed with senior management and parents/carers. E-mail or text communications between an adult and a child young person outside agreed protocols may lead to disciplinary and/or criminal investigations. This also includes communications through internet based web sites.

Internal e-mail systems should only be used in accordance with the School's Online Safety Policy and Acceptable Use Policy.

## 14. Social Networking

Social Networking by students at School will be allowed in accordance with clear training, guidelines and agreed and supervised on an individual basis. Staff are not permitted to use social networking sites at work.

It is recognised that social networking is very common and popular as a means of people conducting their social lives online. Whether or not members of staff or volunteers engage in social networking is a matter for the individual and the School does not seek to create any policy around whether or not members of staff join social networking groups. The School does, however, have an obligation to uphold its reputation and the confidence that parents and carers as well as members of public, statutory authorities and agencies have in its work with vulnerable children and young people and the integrity and conduct of staff and volunteers who work at the School. Members of staff and volunteers must therefore recognise that the requirements in this Code under Section 7 (Propriety and Behaviour) apply to all information and images that they choose to post about

### *Guidelines.*

*This means that staff and volunteers should:*

- *not give their personal contact details to children or young people, including their mobile telephone number*
- *only use equipment e.g. hand held devices, provided by the School to communicate with children, making sure that parents have given permission for this form of communication to be used*
- *only make contact with children for professional reasons and in accordance with any organisational policy*
- *recognise that text messaging is rarely an appropriate response to a child in a crisis situation or at risk of harm. It should only be used as a last resort when other forms of communication are not possible*
- *not use internet or web-based social network site to converse or link with students or ex-students at school and at home*
- *Be prepared to discuss the appropriateness and reason for communicating with ex-students with a senior manager.*

*This means that Valence School will:*

- *advise staff, on request, for advice on the 'safest' privacy settings when using social networking*
- *assist members of staff who are concerned about postings on social networking sites where others are seeking to bring the reputation of that member of staff or of the School into disrepute*

*This means that staff and volunteers should:*

- *adhere to the School's Online Safety*

themselves on social networking sites. Staff members and volunteers should therefore remember that any such postings on social networking sites that are available for the School's management, parents/carers, governors, statutory authorities and agencies and the general public to see must not compromise the reputation of the School or lead any reasonable person to question the suitability of a staff member to work with vulnerable children and young people. Staff and volunteers must be aware that material posted on social networking sites is subject to libel laws where such material damages the reputation of an individual or organisation. In English libel law people have to prove that what they have written is true.

Staff members and volunteers should note that the safest privacy settings on social networking sites are not a complete guarantee that information and images will not get into the public domain.

Staff members and volunteers should note that use of School's ICT service is dependent upon agreement and signing of the Online Safety Policy and Acceptable Use Policy.

*Policy and Acceptable Use Policy and sign it*

- *adopt privacy settings when using social networking that restricts access to their personal information to 'friends' only*
- *accept that whatever privacy settings they apply to their social networking sites that they remain totally responsible for any information or images that get into the public domain from postings that they have made on their sites*
- *NOT post information (including the use of abusive, obscene and vulgar language) and photos about themselves or other staff members that they wouldn't want the School's management, governors, colleagues, students or parents/carers to see or that could bring the School or members staff into disrepute*
- *NOT identify Valence School on social networking sites (including personal profiles) either directly or indirectly without the expressed permission of the School*
- *report to the School any postings they encounter which could compromise the safety and wellbeing of students or call into question the reputation of the School or the suitability of any staff member who works at the School*
- *not use internet or web-based social network site to converse or link with students or ex-students or families at school and at home*

## **15. Social Contact**

Staff and volunteers who work with children and young people should not seek to have social contact with them or their families, unless the reason for this contact has been firmly established and agreed with senior managers. If a child or parent seeks to establish social contact, or if this occurs coincidentally, the adult should exercise her/his professional judgement in making a response but should always discuss the situation with their manager. Staff and volunteers should be aware that social contact in certain situations can be misconstrued as grooming.

*This means that staff and volunteers should:*

- *have no secret social contact with children and young people, their parents or other family members*
- *consider the appropriateness of the social contact according to their role and nature of their work*
- *always approve any planned social*

It is recognised that some staff and volunteers may support a parent who may be in particular difficulty. Care needs to be exercised in those situations where the parent comes to depend upon the adult for support outside their professional role. This situation should be discussed with a senior manager and a Declaration should be signed (Staff Social Networking and Emailing and Telephone Contact Declaration).

*contact with children or parents with senior colleagues*

- *advise senior management of any social contact they have with a child or a parent with whom they work.*
- *report and record any situation, which may place a child at risk or which may compromise the School's or their own professional standing*
- *Understand that some communications may be called into question and need to be justified.*
- *Sign the Declaration*

## 16. Sexual Contact

All staff and volunteers should clearly understand the need to maintain appropriate boundaries in their contacts with children and young people. Intimate or sexual relationships between children/young people and the staff and volunteers who work with them will be regarded as a grave breach of trust. Allowing or encouraging a relationship to develop in a way which might lead to a sexual relationship is also unacceptable.

Any sexual activity between an adult and the child or young person with whom they work may be regarded as a criminal offence and will always be a matter for disciplinary action.

Children and young people are protected by specific legal provisions regardless of whether the child or young person consents or not. The sexual activity referred to does not just involve physical contact including penetrative and non-penetrative acts. It may also include non-contact activities, such as causing children to engage in or watch sexual activity or the production of pornographic material. Keeping Children Safe in Education<sup>1</sup>, 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".

There are occasions when staff and volunteers embark on a course of behaviour known as 'grooming' where the sole purpose is to gain the trust of a child, and manipulate that relationship so sexual abuse can take place. Staff and volunteers should be aware that consistently conferring inappropriate special attention and favour upon a child might be construed as being part of a 'grooming' process and as such will give rise to concerns about their behaviour.

*This means that staff and volunteers should not:*

- *have sexual relationships with children and young people*
- *have any form of communication with a child or young person which could be interpreted as sexually suggestive or provocative e.g. verbal comments, letters, notes, electronic mail, phone calls, texts, physical contact*
- *make sexual remarks to, or about, a child/young person*
- *discuss their own sexual relationships with or in the presence of children or young people*

*This means that staff and volunteers should:*

- *ensure that their relationships with children and young people clearly take place within the boundaries of a respectful professional relationship*
- *take care that their language or conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Attitudes, demeanour and language all require care and thought, particularly when members of staff are dealing with adolescent boys and girls.*

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<sup>1</sup> Keeping Children Safe in Education 2016, page 11

## **17. Physical Contact for support and comfort (other than personal care)**

There are also occasions when it is entirely appropriate for other staff and volunteers to have some physical contact with the child or young person with whom they are working. However, it is crucial that in all circumstances, staff and volunteers should only touch children in ways which are appropriate to their professional or agreed role and responsibilities.

Not all children and young people feel comfortable about physical contact, and staff and volunteers should not make the assumption that it is acceptable practice to use touch as a means of communication.

When physical contact is made with a child this should be in response to their needs at the time, of limited duration and appropriate to 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. Staff and volunteers nevertheless, should use their professional judgement at all times, observe and take note of the child's reaction or feelings and – so far as is possible - use a level of contact and/or form of communication which is acceptable to the child for the minimum time necessary.

Physical contact which occurs regularly with an individual child or young person is likely to raise questions unless there is explicit agreement on the need for, and nature of, that contact. This would then be part of a formally agreed plan or within the parameters of established, agreed and legal professional protocols on physical contact e.g. sport activities or medical procedures. Any such arrangements should be understood and agreed by all concerned, justified in terms of the child's needs, consistently applied and open to scrutiny.

Physical contact should never be secretive, or for the gratification of the adult, or represent a misuse of authority. If an adult believes that their action could be misinterpreted, or if an action is observed by another as being inappropriate or possibly abusive, the incident and circumstances should be reported to a DSL and a record made.

Where a child seeks or initiates inappropriate physical contact with an adult, the situation should be handled sensitively and care taken to ensure that contact is not exploited in any way. It is recognised that some children who have experienced abuse may seek inappropriate physical contact. Staff and volunteers should be particularly aware of this when it is known that a child has suffered previous abuse or neglect. In all circumstances where a child or young person initiates inappropriate physical contact, it is the responsibility of the adult to sensitively deter the child and help them understand the importance of personal boundaries. Such circumstances must always be reported to a DSL.

*This means that staff and volunteers 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 report and explain actions and accept that all physical contact be open to scrutiny*
- *not indulge in horseplay*
- *always encourage children, where possible, to undertake self-care tasks independently*
- *work within Health and Safety procedures.*
- *be aware of cultural or religious views about touching and always be sensitive to issues of gender*
- *understand that physical contact in some circumstances can be easily misinterpreted*

*This means that Valence School should:*

- *ensure they have a system in place for recording incidents and the means by which information about incidents and outcomes can be easily accessed by senior management*
- *provide staff and volunteers with guidance in respect of physical contact with children and meeting medical needs of children and young people where appropriate*
- *be explicit about what physical contact is appropriate for staff and volunteers working at the School*

## **18. Curricular and Social Activities that require Physical Contact**

Physical contact is a necessary part of staff and volunteers work, who provide learning and social care support for children and young people. Staff and volunteers must follow the policy and procedures that relate to activities where physical contact is involved.

*This means that staff and volunteers should:*

- *treat children with dignity and respect and avoid contact with intimate parts of the body*
- *always explain to a child the reason why contact is necessary and what form that contact will take*
- *seek consent of parents where a child or young person is unable to do so because of a disability.*
- *consider alternatives, where it is anticipated that a child might misinterpret any such contact,*
- *be familiar with and follow recommended guidance and protocols*
- *conduct activities where they can be seen by others*
- *be aware of gender, cultural or religious issues that may need to be considered prior to initiating physical contact*

*This means that Valence School should:*

- *have up to date guidance and protocols on appropriate physical contact in place that promote safe practice and include clear expectations of behaviour and conduct.*
- *ensure that staff are made aware of this guidance and that safe practice is continually promoted through supervision and training.*

## **19. Behaviour Management**

All children and young people have a right to be treated with respect and dignity even in those circumstances where they display difficult or challenging behaviour.

Staff and volunteers should not use any form of degrading treatment to punish a child. The use of sarcasm, demeaning or insensitive comments towards children and young people is not acceptable in any situation. Any sanctions or rewards used should be part of a behaviour management policy which is widely publicised and regularly reviewed.

The use of corporal punishment of any kind is illegal and whilst there may be a legal defence for parents who physically chastise their children, this does not extend, in any circumstances, to those staff and volunteers who work with or on behalf of children and young people.

*This means that staff and volunteers should:*

- *not use force as a form of punishment*
- *try to defuse situations before they escalate*
- *inform parents of any behaviour management techniques used*
- *adhere to the School's Behaviour Management Policy*
- *be mindful of factors which may impact upon a child or young person's behaviour e.g. bullying, abuse, and where necessary take appropriate action*

*This means that Valence School should:*

Where children display difficult or challenging behaviour, staff and volunteers must follow the students' positive behaviour plans using strategies appropriate to the circumstance and situation. The use of physical intervention can only be justified in exceptional circumstances and must be used as a last resort when other behaviour management strategies have failed.

Where a child has specific needs in respect of particularly challenging behaviour, a positive handling plan may be drawn up and agreed by all parties. Only in these circumstances should an adult deviate from the behaviour management policy of the School.

## 20. Use of Control and Physical Intervention

There are circumstances in which staff and volunteers working with children displaying extreme behaviours can legitimately intervene by using either non-restrictive or restrictive physical interventions. This is a complex area and staff and volunteers and organisations must have regard to government guidance and legislation in the development and implementation of their own policies and practice.

The use of physical intervention should, wherever possible, be avoided. It should only be used to manage a child or young person's behaviour if it is necessary to prevent personal injury to the child, other children or an adult, to prevent serious damage to property or in what would reasonably be regarded as exceptional circumstances. When physical intervention is used it should be undertaken in such a way that maintains the safety and dignity of all concerned

The scale and nature of any physical intervention must be proportionate to both the behaviour of the individual to be controlled and the nature of the harm they may cause. The minimum necessary force should be used and the techniques deployed in line with recommended policy and practice.

Under no circumstances should physical force or intervention be used as a form of punishment. The duty of care which applies to all staff and volunteers and organisations working with children and young people requires that reasonable measures are taken to prevent children being harmed. The use of unwarranted physical force is likely to constitute a criminal offence.

If staff and volunteers need to remove the electric power from a powered wheelchair this is a physical intervention and practice must adhere to the School's Behaviour Management Policy.

In all cases where physical intervention is employed the incident and subsequent actions should be documented and reported. This should include written and signed accounts of all those involved, including the child or young person. The parents/carers should be informed the same day.

- *have in place appropriate behaviour management plans*
- *where appropriate, use individual students' behavioural plans, using strategies appropriate for the situation*
- *train staff in appropriate strategies when physical intervention is needed as part of a behaviour management plan*
- *carry out risk assessments as part of the behaviour plans*

*This means that staff and volunteers should:*

- *adhere to the School's Behaviour Management and Physical Intervention policy*
- *always seek to defuse situations*
- *always use minimum force for the shortest period necessary*
- *record and report as soon as possible after the event any incident where physical intervention has been used.*

*This means that Valence School has:*

- *a Physical Intervention Policy in place that complies with government guidance and legislation and describes the context in which it is appropriate to use physical intervention*
- *ensure that an effective recording system is in place which allows for incidents to be tracked and monitored*
- *ensure staff and volunteers are familiar with the above*
- *ensure that staff are appropriately trained*

## 21. Children and Young People in Distress

Staff and volunteers will sometimes be involved in managing significant occurrences of distress and emotional upset in children. In these circumstances professional guidance should be followed and staff and volunteers should be aware of what is and what is not acceptable behaviour when comforting a child or diffusing a situation. This is particularly important when working on a one-to-one basis.

Staff and volunteers should use their professional judgement to comfort or reassure a child in an age-appropriate way whilst maintaining clear professional boundaries.

Where an adult has a particular concern about the need to provide this type of care and reassurance, or is concerned that an action may be misinterpreted, this should be reported and discussed with a senior manager.

## 22. Intimate Care

Physical contact with children and young people on a regular basis, for example assisting young children with toileting, providing intimate care for children with disabilities or in the provision of medical care is a core part of staff and volunteers work. The nature, circumstances and context of such contact should comply with professional codes of practice or guidance and/or be part of a formally agreed plan, which is regularly reviewed. The additional vulnerabilities that may arise from a physical or learning disability should be taken into account and be recorded as part of an agreed care plan.

The emotional responses of any child to intimate care should be carefully and sensitively observed, and where necessary, any concerns passed to senior managers.

All children have a right to safety, privacy and dignity when contact of a physical or intimate nature is required and depending on their abilities, age and maturity should be encouraged to act as independently as possible.

The views of the child should be actively sought, wherever possible, when drawing up and reviewing formal arrangements. As with all individual arrangements for intimate care needs, agreements between the child, parents/carers and the School must be negotiated and recorded.

## 23. Personal Care

Young people are entitled to respect and privacy at all times and especially when in a state of undress, changing clothes, bathing or undertaking any form of personal care. It is important staff and volunteers supervise student appropriately to ensure their safety and give privacy where possible to promote privacy and dignity.

Staff and volunteers should ensure young people's safety when

*This means the staff and volunteers should:*

- *consider the way in which they offer comfort and reassurance to a distressed child and do it in an age-appropriate way (see Touch Policy)*
- *be circumspect in offering reassurance in one to one situations, but always record such actions in these circumstances*
- *never touch a child in a way which may be considered indecent*
- *record and report situations which may give rise to concern from either party*
- *not assume that all children seek physical comfort if they are distressed*

*This means that staff and volunteers should:*

- *adhere to the school's Personal Care policy*
- *use the intimate care record books provided*
- *make other staff aware of the task being undertaken*
- *encourage the child to take as much control directly or indirectly of the intimate care they require*
- *explain to the child what is happening*
- *consult with senior managers 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*
- *ensure that any changes to the agreed care plan are discussed, agreed and recorded.*

*This means that staff and volunteers should:*

- *Follow the Personal Care Policy*
- *avoid any visually intrusive behaviour*
- *where they enter a room where a student may be having personal care,*



moving students, especially when young people display involuntary movement of limbs.

Staff and volunteers need to be vigilant about their own behaviour, ensure they follow agreed guidelines and be mindful of the needs of the children and young people with whom they work.

- announce their intention of entering*
- *ensure young people's safety when moving them*
- *follow risk assessment and training*

*This means that staff and volunteers should not:*

- *change in the same place as children*
- *shower or bathe with children*
- *assist with any personal care task which a child or young person can undertake by themselves*

## **24. First Aid and Administration of Medication**

When administering first aid, wherever possible, staff and volunteers should ensure that another adult is aware of the action being taken. Parents should be informed when first aid has been administered.

In circumstances where children need medication regularly a Health Care plan should have been established to ensure the safety and protection of children and the staff and volunteers who are working with them. Depending upon the age and understanding of the child, they should where appropriate, be encouraged to self administer medication or treatment including, for example any ointment, use of inhalers.

*This means that Valence School should:*

- *Ensure selected staff are trained to carry out first aid where appropriate.*
- *ensure staff understand the extent and limitations of their role in applying basic care and hygiene tasks for minor abrasions and understand where an injury requires more experienced intervention*
- *ensure that there are trained and named individuals to undertake first aid responsibilities*
- *ensure training is regularly monitored and updated*
- *have a comprehensive Administration of Medication Policy and Procedures*
- *always ensure that arrangements are in place to obtain parental consent for the administration of first aid or medication*
- *train staff in the administration of medication, monitor and update it*

*This means that staff and volunteers should:*

- *adhere to the Valence School's policy for administering first aid or medication*
- *comply with the necessary reporting requirements*
- *make other staff and volunteers aware of the task being undertaken*
- *explain to the child what is happening.*
- *always act and be seen to act in the child's best interests*
- *report and record any administration of first aid or medication*
- *have regard to any health plan which is in place*
- *always ensure that an appropriate*

*health/risk assessment is undertaken prior to undertaking certain activities*

- *report any errors in relation to the administration of medication*

## **25. One to One Situations**

It is not realistic to state that one to one situations should never take place. There are a number of occasions where one to one work will be necessary and inevitable, particularly when supporting students' with personal care.

One to one situations have the potential to make child/young person more vulnerable to harm by those who seek to exploit their position of trust. Staff and volunteers working in one to one settings with children and young people may also be more vulnerable to unjust or unfounded allegations being made against them. Both possibilities should be recognised so that when one to one situations are unavoidable, reasonable and sensible precautions are taken. Every attempt should be made to ensure the safety and security of children and young people and the staff and volunteers who work with them.

There are occasions where managers will need to undertake a risk assessment in relation to the specific nature and implications of one to one work. These assessments should take into account the individual needs of the child/young person and the individual worker and any arrangements should be reviewed on a regular basis.

Meetings with children and young people outside agreed working arrangements should not take place without the agreement of senior managers and parents or carers.

## **26. Home Visits**

Home visits may be necessary for a number of reasons. If a home visit is deemed necessary, the visit must be agreed by a senior manager.

Under no circumstances should an adult visit a child in their home outside agreed work arrangements or invite a child to their own home or that of a family member, colleague or friend. If in an emergency, such a one-off arrangement is required, the adult must have a prior discussion with a senior manager and a clear justification for such arrangement is agreed and recorded. No member of staff should do a home visit, unless there are exceptional circumstances and the visit has been agreed by a senior manager.

Where a member of staff seeks to work with a student in their home on a paid basis, they must have the express permission of the School who holds the right to refuse such permission.

*This means that staff and volunteers should:*

- *ensure that when lone working is an integral part of their role, full and appropriate risk assessments have been conducted and agreed.*
- *avoid meetings with a child or young person in remote, secluded areas,*
- *always inform other colleagues about the contact(s) beforehand, assessing the need to have them present or close by*
- *avoid use of 'engaged' or equivalent signs wherever possible. Such signs may create an opportunity for secrecy or the interpretation of secrecy*
- *always report to a senior manager, any situation where a child becomes distressed or angry*
- *carefully consider the needs and circumstances of the child/children when in one to one situations*

*These means that staff and volunteers should:*

- *agree the purpose for any home visit with senior management, unless this is an acknowledged and integral part of their role*
- *adhere to agreed risk management strategies*
- *always make detailed records including times of arrival and departure and work undertaken*
- *ensure any behaviour or situation which gives rise to concern is discussed with their manager and, where appropriate action is taken*
- *staff and volunteers should not engage in paid or unpaid work with students and their families unless they have sought permission from the School beforehand and it has been agreed*

*This means that Valence School should:*

- *ensure that all visits are justified, agreed with a senior manager and recorded*
- *ensure that staff and volunteers are not exposed to unacceptable risk*
- *ensure that staff and volunteers have access to a mobile telephone and an emergency contact person and the senior manager on call.*

## **27. Transporting Children and Young People**

Staff and volunteers will be expected to transport children as part of their duties. Staff and Volunteers will not be expected to use their own cars for work purposes. If it is explicitly agreed by the School that they may do so they must have fully comprehensive insurance cover with the appropriate business use on their policy. They must also ensure that the vehicle is roadworthy, and that the maximum capacity is not exceeded

It is a legal requirement that all passengers should wear seat belts and wheelchairs are secured properly. It is the responsibility of the staff member providing transport to ensure that this requirement is met. Staff and volunteers should also be aware of current legislation and adhere to the use of car seats for younger children.

It is inappropriate for staff and volunteers to offer lifts to a child or young person outside their normal working duties, unless this has been brought to the attention of the line manager and has been agreed.

There may be occasions where the child or young person requires transport in an emergency situation or where not to give a lift may place a child at risk. Such circumstances must always be recorded and reported to a senior manager at the earliest opportunity.

*This means that Valence School:*

- *Will have appropriate policies for transporting children and young people and public liability insurance*

*This means that staff and volunteers should:*

- *ensure they are fit to drive and free from any drugs, alcohol or medicine which is likely to impair judgement and/ or ability to drive*
- *be aware that the safety and welfare of the child is their responsibility until they are safely in the care of another responsible adult*
- *record details of the journey in accordance with agreed procedures*
- *ensure that their behaviour is appropriate at all times*
- *ensure that there are proper arrangements in place to ensure vehicle, passenger and driver safety.*
- *ensure that any impromptu or emergency arrangements of lifts are recorded and reported and can be justified if questioned*

## **28. Trips and Outings**

Staff and volunteers should take particular care when supervising children and young people on trips and outings, where the setting is less formal than Valence School. All trips are subject to the risk assessment process and external visits procedures.

Staff and volunteers remain in a position of trust and need to ensure that their behaviour remains professional at all times and stays within clearly defined professional boundaries.

*This means that staff and volunteers should:*

- *always have another adult present in out of workplace activities, unless otherwise agreed with a senior manager*
- *undertake risk assessments in line with Valence School's procedures*
- *have parental consent for the activity*
- *ensure that their behaviour remains professional at all times(see section 7)*

- *not share bedrooms unless it involves a dormitory situation and the arrangements have been previously agreed by a senior manager, parents and children and young people or if the young person care needs require a member of staff to be in the bedroom*

## **29. Photography and Videos**

Working with children and young people at Valence will inevitably involve the taking or recording of images. Any such work will take place with due regard to the law and the need to safeguard the privacy, dignity, safety and well being of children and young people. Informed written consent from parents or carers and agreement, where possible, from the child or young person, should always be sought before an image is taken for any purpose.

Careful consideration should be given as to how activities involving the taking of images are organised and undertaken. Care should be taken to ensure that all parties understand the implications of the image being taken especially if it is to be used for any publicity purposes or published in the media, or on the Internet. There also needs to be an agreement as to whether the images will be destroyed or retained for further use, where these will be stored and who will have access to them.

Staff and volunteers need to remain sensitive to any children who appear uncomfortable, for whatever reason, and should recognise the potential for such activities to raise concerns or lead to misunderstandings.

It is not appropriate for staff and volunteers to take photographs of children for their personal use or to use personal and private equipment to do so.

*This means that staff and volunteers should:*

- *be clear about the purpose of the activity and about what will happen to the images when the activity is concluded*
- *be able to justify images of children in their possession*
- *avoid making images in one to one situations or which show a single child with no surrounding context*
- *ensure the child/young person understands why the images are being taken and has agreed to the activity and that they are appropriately dressed.*
- *any images taken are done so in strict accordance with the school's policy and agreed procedures*
- *only use equipment provided or authorised by the School*
- *report any concerns about any inappropriate or intrusive photographs found*
- *always ensure they have parental permission to take and/or display photographs*

*This means that staff and volunteers should not:*

- *display or distribute images of children unless they have consent to do so from parents/carers*
- *use images which may cause distress*
- *use mobile telephones to take images of children*
- *use personal equipment to take images of children*
- *take images 'in secret', or taking images in situations that may be construed as being secretive.*

*This means that Valence School should:*

- *ensure staff have sufficient cameras for staff and volunteers to use.*

### **30. Access to Inappropriate Images and Internet Usage**

There are no circumstances that will justify staff and volunteers possessing indecent images of children. Staff and volunteers who access and possess links to such websites will be viewed as a significant and potential threat to children. Accessing, making and storing indecent images of children on the internet is illegal. This will lead to criminal investigation and the individual being barred from working with children and young people, if proven.

Staff and volunteers should not use equipment belonging to their organisation to access adult pornography; neither should personal equipment containing these images or links to them be brought into the workplace. Such activity will raise serious concerns about the suitability of the adult to continue to work with children.

Staff and volunteers should ensure that children and young people are not exposed to any inappropriate images or web links. Organisations and staff and volunteers need to ensure that internet equipment used by children have the appropriate controls through the relevant software

Where indecent images of children or other unsuitable material are found, the police and Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) will be immediately informed. Staff and volunteers should not attempt to investigate the matter or evaluate the material themselves, as this may lead to evidence being contaminated which in itself can lead to a criminal prosecution.

### **31. Whistle blowing (welfare concerns & financial misappropriation)**

Whistle blowing is the mechanism by which staff and volunteers can voice their concerns, made in good faith, without fear of repercussion. Valence School has a clear and accessible whistle blowing policy that meets the terms of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. Staff and volunteers who use whistleblowing procedure should be made aware that their employment rights are protected.

Staff and Volunteers should acknowledge their individual responsibilities to bring matters of concern to the attention of senior management and/or relevant external agencies. This is particularly important where the welfare of children may be at risk.

*This means that Valence School should:*

- *have clear e-safety policy in place about access to and use of the internet*
- *make guidance available to both staff and volunteers and children and young people about appropriate usage.*

*This means that staff and volunteers should:*

- *follow the School's Online Safety Policy and Acceptable Use Policy and guidance on the use of ICT*
- *ensure that children are not exposed to unsuitable material on the internet or otherwise*
- *ensure that any films or material shown to children and young people or accessed by them are age appropriate*

*This means that Valence School has an:*

- *appropriate whistle-blowing policy in place*
- *clear procedures for dealing with allegations against staff which are in line with KCC's 'child protection procedures for managing allegations against staff within schools and education services (formally adopted in June 2017)*

*This means that staff and volunteers have an obligation to:*

- a. *report any behaviour by colleagues that raises concern regardless of source*

### **32. Sharing Concerns and Recording Incidents**

Staff and volunteers must be aware of the School's Safeguarding, Child and Adult Protection procedures, including procedures for dealing with allegations against staff and volunteers. All allegations must be taken seriously and properly investigated in accordance with local procedures and statutory guidance. Staff and volunteers who are the subject of allegations are advised to contact their professional association.

In the event of any allegation being made, information should be clearly and promptly recorded and reported to the Principal without delay, in accordance with Valence School's Child and Adult Protection Policy and Procedure.

Staff and volunteers should always feel able to discuss with their line manager any difficulties or problems that may affect their relationship with children and young people so that appropriate support can be provided or action can be taken.

It is essential that accurate and comprehensive records are maintained wherever concerns are raised about the conduct or actions of staff and volunteers working with or on behalf of children and young people.

### **33. Support Plans**

Each child or young person has a support plan which is made of a number of assessments and plans from the various disciplines within the school. For example – eating and drinking passport and manual handling risk assessments. It is essential to follow each 'support plan' to safeguard the child or young person and to ensure safer working practice.

### **34. Attendance**

To achieve the positive outcomes with the children and young people it is essential that staff and volunteers attend unless it is absolutely necessary to be absent.

Absence undermines the work the school aims to do with the children and young people. Low staffing levels compromise our ability to promote and safeguard the wellbeing of children and young people as fully as the school wishes.

If it is necessary to be absent the School's Absence Policy must be followed.

*This means that staff and volunteers:*

- *should be familiar with the School's Child Protection Policy*
- *should 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 workplace*

*This means that Valence School:*

- *Has an effective, transparent and accessible system for recording and managing concerns raised by any individual in the workplace (Child Protection Policy)*
- *Will follow the procedures set out in the KCC's 'child protection procedures for managing Allegations against staff within schools and education services*

*This means that staff and volunteers:*

- *Must make themselves aware of and follow each child and young persons' support plan*
- *Notify their line manger if a they notice the child or young person's support plan needs adjusting to sufficiently and safely meet their needs*

*This means that staff and volunteers:*

- *Should have an excellent attendance record*
- *Follow Valence School's Absence Policy*
- *Only take time off if it is absolutely necessary*

*Agreed by Staffing Governors at the meeting of 11 March 2014 and reviewed on 28 June 2016 and on 5 February 2018.*