St Marks Pre-school Practitioner Behaviour Policy

St Marks Pre-school is committed to providing positive academic, social and emotional outcomes for our children, underpinned by a strong safeguarding ethos. We are equally committed to the welfare of our practitioners, who are expected to adhere to the highest standards of professional behaviour to maintain confidence and respect of the general public and colleagues.

St Marks Pre-school will fulfil its local and national responsibilities as laid out in the following key documents:

- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2022)
- The procedures of Safeguarding Vulnerable People Partnership (SVPP)

This policy:

- is based on the Guidance for Safer Working Practice for those working with children and young people in education settings (May 2019 with April 2020 Addendum).
- aims to provide a guide for practitioners about acceptable and desirable conduct to ensure that practitioners maintain safe working practice and so safeguard both children and adults.
- does not provide a complete checklist of appropriate behaviour for practitioners in every circumstance. Practitioners must make judgements about their behaviour to secure the best interests and welfare of the children in their charge and, in so doing, will be seen to be acting reasonably.

In *very exceptional* circumstances where a member of the practitioner team believes it is the best interest of a child to breach these guidelines, that person **must** tell the pre-school manager the justification for any proposed, or action already taken, at the earliest opportunity. The pre-school manager will make a written record of that discussion including any areas of disagreement and actions taken.

This policy applies to all practitioners and volunteers working at St Marks Pre-school.

Expectations

All practitioners:

- are familiar with this policy and have an opportunity to contribute to its review.
- understand their responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- are aware that failure to meet the standards of behaviour and conduct in this policy may result in disciplinary action. This includes dismissal, criminal action and/or other proceedings including barring by the Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) from working in regulated activity.

Confidentiality

The sorting and processing of personal information is governed by GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations 2018) - see St Marks Pre-school Data Protection Policy.
Child records are shared with those who have a professional need to see them. When practitioners have access to confidential information about colleagues, children or their parents/carers, the practitioner must treat such information in a sensitive and confidential way, sharing it only in the interests of a child and when legally permitted to do so.
Committee Members should not routinely access child records. Exceptions to this would be for the purpose of an investigation in line with the pre-school's complaint policy and procedures.

Practitioners and committee members will not use their position to gain access to information for their own advantage and/or a child's or family's detriment.

If a practitioner is concerned that a child is being abused, is at risk of being abused or may have been abused in the past, they will follow the agreed procedure set out in the flowchart 'What to do if you are worried about a child', displayed in the pre-school hallway or office See St Marks Pre-school Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

If a practitioner is ever in any doubt about whether to share information or not, they should get advice from the designated safeguarding lead.

Practitioner responsibilities
All practitioners know that:

- they are in positions of trust in relation to all children on roll. They ensure that the power imbalance is never used for personal advantage or gratification. They avoid behaviour which might be interpreted by others as an abuse of the position of trust and report any incident with this potential to the manager. This includes sharing personal contact details with children or families.
- they have a legal duty to protect the interests of children and accept the obligations inherent in that responsibility.
- It is important that they determine how best to build trusted relationships with children and young people which facilitated communication, using professional curiosity and speaking to the DSL/DDSL if they have concerns about a child.
- they must not establish or seek to establish social contact with children to secure a friendship or to pursue or strengthen a relationship.
- they must inform the preschool manager of any pre-existing (prior to the practitioner or child starting at the pre-school) or new relationship with a child or close family member, which they feel, might compromise the pre-school or their own professional standing.
- they should disclose any relationship or association (in the real world or online) that may impact on the pre-school's ability to safeguard children.
- it is an offence (Sexual Offences Act 2003) for a practitioner in a position of trust to engage in **any** form of sexual activity with a child under the age of 18.

Certain behaviours are at odds with a position of trust. These include, but are not limited to:

- Harassment or discrimination based on any characteristic protected by the Equality Act 2010

- Loss of personal civility including, personal attacks or insults, displays of temper (such as throwing objects), unwanted physical contact (pushing, shoving, hitting) or the threat of the same.
- Practitioners must not swear, blaspheme or use offensive language in front of children, nor use language which is discriminatory and demeaning in any way.

Such behaviours are disciplinary offences and may be referred to the police.

Communication with children and parents, including social contact outside of the workplace
Practitioners must use their professional judgement when requesting or accepting any social contact (including through social media). This means that they must:

- Not accept any request from children/parents for contact via any social media platform
- Make a judgement about whether to maintain a connection in any cases where contact was made before a child started at pre-school. Practitioners must discuss any decision to maintain such contact with the Pre-school Manager.

St Marks Pre-school acknowledges that practitioners may have friendships and social contact with parents of children outside of school. Practitioners will not engage in conduct outside work that could damage their professional reputation or the reputation of the pre-school.

Any contact between pre-school and/or parents that is deemed to bring the pre-school into disrepute or that might lead a reasonable person to question the practitioners' motivation or intentions will always be investigated and could lead to disciplinary action.

Practitioners must not make sexual innuendos or any comments of a sexual nature to any child nor make any comments trivialising alcohol or drug abuse.

Practitioners must inform the manager of any proposed or pre-existing arrangements between them and the families of children on roll that take place outside school e.g. baby-sitting.

Gifts, rewards, favouritism and exclusion

Practitioners must:

- Declare any gift they receive from a parent or child. This does not include small tokens of appreciation such as Christmas or end of the year.
- Not give gifts to individual children. Any rewards or treats will be given only as part of the pre-school's agreed behaviour policy.
- Advise the Pre-school Manager about the offer of any gift or hospitality, from outside or inside the pre-school, which might be interpreted as an attempt to influence practitioner conduct towards children, parents or colleagues.

Physical contact including intimate/personal care and behaviour management
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. Any physical contact will be in response to the child's needs, of limited duration and appropriate to their age, stage of development, gender, background and any agreed support or care plan.

Practitioners understand that:

- on a daily basis, it is entirely appropriate and proper for practitioners to have physical contact with children and that they do so in ways appropriate to their professional role and in relation to the child's individual needs.
- Some children are more comfortable with touch than others and/or may be more comfortable with touch from some practitioners than others. Practitioners will always be sensitive to any signs that the child may be uncomfortable or embarrassed. A practitioner may also seek the child's permission before initiating contact.
- they have a responsibility to ensure the way they offer comfort to a distressed child is age appropriate.
- they must never touch a child in a way which may represent a misuse of authority or considered indecent.
- physical contact must never be secretive, or for the gratification of the adult.
- they should be aware of cultural or religious views about touching and be sensitive to the issues of gender.

If a practitioner believes that an action by them or a colleague could be misinterpreted, or if an action is observed which is possibly abusive, the incident and circumstances will be immediately reported to the D/DSL and recorded in writing on a Safeguarding Concern form or a Low Level Concern form. If appropriate, the pre-school manager will consult with the Designated Officer for Allegations (DOfA).

Practitioners understand that a child who has suffered previous abuse or neglect may associate physical contact with such experiences. They recognise that such a child may seek out inappropriate physical contact and know to deter the child sensitively to help them to understand the importance of personal boundaries. Practitioners know that they must never indulge in play that involves rough-and-tumble or fun fights.

Children with disabilities may require more physical contact to assist their everyday learning. The arrangements are understood and agreed by all concerned, justified in terms of the child's needs, consistently applied and open to scrutiny. Practitioners always allow/encourage children, where able, to undertake self-care tasks independently.

If a child's behaviour presents a serious risk to themselves or others, a robust risk assessment and, where relevant, a physical intervention plan is always put in place and reviewed regularly. In all cases where physical intervention takes place, practitioners record the incident and subsequent actions and report these in line with the pre-school's behaviour and safeguarding policies.

First Aid

Practitioner's adhere to the pre-school health and safety policy, the policy for supporting pupils with medical conditions and for administering first aid or medication.

One-to-one situations

Practitioners carefully consider the welfare needs of children when with them in a one-to-one situation. All spaces in the pre-school are set up to allow any activity to be easily observed by other practitioners in the pre-school. Windows and doors are kept clear from display materials to allow rooms to be overlooked. Internal doors remain open when practicable. Practitioners will record any time a child has appeared upset/angry during any 1-1 session and will report this to the Pre-school Manager.

Home visits

All work with children and parents/carers is whenever possible undertaken in pre-school. There are however occasions where it may be necessary to arrange a home visit e.g. as part of a child's induction programme.

In such situations, these activities will only be undertaken with the knowledge and consent of the pre-school manager. Practitioners will work in pairs, a risk assessment will be undertaken and pre-school will ensure practitioners understand the purpose and limitations of their home visit.

Educational Visits

Practitioners remain in a position of trust during pre-school activities that take place off the pre-school site, they will ensure that their behaviour cannot be interpreted as seeking to establish an inappropriate relationship or friendship.

Risk assessments for each visit will be completed and Health and Safety guidelines linked to the visit venue will be adhered to. Practitioner/child ratios will be specified.

Practitioner appearance

Practitioners must dress appropriately for the work activities that are involved in their role at pre-school, ensuring that this includes shoes that are not open toed, and that long hair is tied back. Any clothing worn that is additional to the pre-school uniform must not be likely to be viewed as offensive, revealing or sexually provocative. It should not distract, cause embarrassment, or give rise to misunderstanding. Political slogans must be avoided.

Any practitioners with tattoos that might be viewed as offensive, provocative or likely to give rise to misunderstanding must ensure those tattoos always remain covered when that practitioner is working at pre-school.

The acceptable use of technologies

Practitioners must not engage in inappropriate use of social network sites which may bring themselves or the pre-school into disrepute. Practitioners should ensure that they adopt suitably high security settings on any personal profiles they may have.

Practitioners must be circumspect in their use of **all** social media or any other web based presence that they may have, including written content, videos or photographs, and views expressed directly or by association with websites/pages or posts established by others (eg 'liking', reposting or forwarding). This includes the use of dating websites where practitioners could encounter parents either with their own profile or acting covertly.

They must consider the long-term implications of any content published by them online, specifically how it might ever have an adverse effect:

- on their reputation as an individual working in an education setting
- their ability to maintain good professional boundaries with parents and with children
- on the reputation of the pre-school.

Practitioners must not access any content from the internet on personal device during school hours, on the school site, or on a school computer or device at any time that could bring the school into

disrepute or that might lead a reasonable person to question the staff member's motivation or intentions.
If practitioners become aware of any misuse by a colleague (in or out of school), they should escalate those concerns using a safeguarding concerns/low level concerns form.

Photography and recording
Practitioners are not permitted to not use their phones, cameras, smart technology, or any device that can be used for photographing or recording children, when on duty for any purpose. Phones are kept in lockers in the office and only used during lunchbreaks in the kitchen or outside space where children are not present. Any pictures taken of children by the school will be in accordance with the St Marks Pre-school e-safety policy.

Practitioners will not:

- take images of a child's injury, bruising or similar (eg following a disclosure of abuse)
- make audio recordings of a child's disclosure.

Whistleblowing
All practitioners and volunteers should feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and potential failures in the school safeguarding regime (or whistleblowing). All practitioners within the school who wish to raise an issue relating to the organisation with someone in confidence can use the following whistleblowing procedures:

In the first instance, concerns about poor or unsafe practice within must be raised with:

Rachel Schendel, Pre-school Manager

Or

St Marks Pre-school Committee Chair

committeechair@stmarks-preschool.co.uk

Where a practitioner feels unable to raise an issue with the pre-school or feels that their genuine concerns are not being addressed, other whistleblowing channels may be open to them:

- The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline is available for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally. Staff can call: 0800 028 0285 or email: help@nspcc.org.uk if:
  - they think the concern will not be dealt with properly or
  - may be covered up or
  - if they raised a concern but it has not been acted upon or if they are worried they are being treated unfairly.

Allegations against practitioners and volunteers
If a member of the practitioner team is concerned about the behaviour of a person working or volunteering at the school, they will follow the agreed procedure set out in the flowchart 'Allegation against adults', displayed in pre-school hallway and office. See St Marks Pre-school Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
The pre-school operates a 'low-level' concerns policy in accordance with KCSIE. 'Low level' refers to behaviour that is: inconsistent with expectations set out in this policy, including inappropriate

conduct outside of work, and/or does not meet the allegations threshold, or is otherwise not considered serious enough to consider a referral to the DOfA.
All concerns, no matter how small, will be shared with responsibly and with the right person, recorded and dealt with promptly and appropriately. This will serve the pre-school commitment to create and embed a culture of openness, trust and transparency in which the pre-school's values and expected behaviour set out in this policy are constantly lived, monitored and reinforced by all practitioners.
'Low-level' concerns could include, but are not limited to:

- Being over-friendly with children
- Having favourites
- Taking photos of children on their mobile phone
- Engaging with children on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door; or,
- Using inappropriate sexualised language, intimidating or offensive language.

At St Marks Pre-school we encourage all practitioners to self-refer to their Room Leader/Deputy Manager/Pre-school Manager where they have found themselves in a situation which could be misinterpreted, might appear compromising to others, and/or on reflection they believe they have behaved in a way that they consider falls below expected professional standards.

Induction
The welfare of all children on roll is of paramount importance. All staff including volunteers are informed of this policy at induction and given the chance to question and discuss the expectations set out.

Practitioner support
Working with young children is both rewarding and demanding. St Marks Pre-school supports practitioners by prioritising time to discuss the challenges of their role linked to any aspect of this Staff Behaviour Policy with their line manager and seek further support as appropriate.

Exceptional operating circumstances
If St Marks Pre-school is required to change the way we offer our provision to children due to exceptional circumstances eg during a pandemic lockdown, practitioner safeguarding responsibilities to children will continue to apply, in line with the safeguarding policy.

The DSL will ensure practitioners, children, and families are provided with written:

- temporary changes to procedures for working with children.
- timescales for such changes so that all children, families and practitioners understand when such arrangements will end, and arrangements revert to those in place prior to the events leading to the need for the temporary changes.

This policy was adopted at a meeting of the pre-school committee held on ……..(date)

Signed on behalf of the pre-school: …….

Also see:

- Promoting Positive Behaviour policy
- SEND policy
- E-safety policy
- Health and safety policy
- Whistleblowing policy
- Code of Conduct

January 2023