

# **Code of Behaviour**

**for**

## **Staff and Volunteers**

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## **1.0 Policy Statement**

The Diocese values the participation of children/young people in Parish activities and would encourage all staff/volunteers involved in the running of these activities to treat the children/young people in their care with the dignity and respect they deserve. All staff/volunteers in the Parish will be asked to read the following Code of Behaviour and agree to adhere to the guidelines outlined below. Having read the code they will be asked to sign a declaration stating they agree to abide by the guidelines. This signed declaration will be stored securely with the parish child protection records.

## **2.0 Purpose of Policy**

The purpose of this code of behavior is to provide adult leaders with guidelines as to their expected behavior when dealing with children and young people.

## **3.0 Scope**

This code of behavior applies to all adults working with children and young people on a professional or voluntary basis in Church related activities within the Diocese of Killaloe.

## **4.0 General Conduct**

- Children and young people will be treated with courtesy, respect and dignity at all times.
- Treat all children and young people with equal respect; favouritism is not acceptable. Do not spend a disproportionate amount of time with any particular child or group of children.
- Avoid spending time alone with a child or young person. Should circumstance arise where this is unavoidable, immediately inform another responsible adult, by telephone if necessary. Make a diary note that the meeting with the young person took place, including the reasons for it.
- Workers and volunteers should not undertake any car or minibus journey alone with a child or young person. If in certain circumstances only one adult is available, there should be a minimum of two children or young people present for the entire journey. In the event of an emergency where it is necessary to make a journey alone with a child, make a record of this and inform the child's parents or guardians as soon as possible. Inform a colleague at the time if the parents/guardians are not available.
- Unless there are at least two adults present avoid permitting children and young people to work or remain in churches and parish property.
- Be cognisant of the imbalance in power inherent in adult-child relationships.

- Do not engage in or tolerate any behaviour – verbal, psychological or physical that could be construed as bullying.
- Under no circumstances, give alcohol, tobacco or drugs to children or young people. Do not use alcohol, tobacco or drugs when supervising or working with children and young people.
- Use only age-appropriate language, media products and activities when working with children and young people. Sexually explicit or pornographic material is never appropriate.
- Personal details of children and young people will be held only by the named leader/designated person.
- Adults working with children and young people will not give their personal details to children and young people in their care.
- Texting young people or using other social media to contact young people without parental consent is not appropriate.
- Where there is a conflict between safeguarding the child/young person and the rights of carers and adults, the welfare and best interest of the child/young person are the first and primary considerations.
- All concerns will be dealt with by the Diocesan Safeguarding Team who will liaise with the civil authorities in accordance with established policy guidelines.

## **5.0 Physical Integrity**

- Respect the physical integrity of children and young people. Do not engage in inappropriate physical contact in any form. This should not prevent appropriate contact where it is necessary to comfort a child and ensure their safety and well-being; neither should it preclude normal expressions of warmth or happiness provided that they are acceptable to all parties concerned.
- Do not engage in any rough or physical play or horseplay with children or young people. Be alert to the risks involved in participating in some contact sports. (For further information see *Personal and Intimate Care Policy for Diocese of Killaloe*)

## **6.0 Respect for Privacy**

- Respect the privacy of children and young people at all times.
- Particular care must be taken with respect to places such as changing areas, swimming pools, showers and toilets. Separate provision must be made for boys and girls.
- There must be adequate and gender appropriate supervision of boys and girls. Ensure at all times there is more than one adult supervising young people in these situations.

- Never take photographs of children or young people while they are in changing areas (for example, in a locker room or bathing facility).
- Never do things of a personal nature (for example, helping with toileting, washing or changing clothing) for children and young people that they can do themselves.
- Make every effort to ensure that the child respects the bodily privacy of others.

## **7.0 Discipline**

- The activity code of conduct should be explained to children/young people and their parents/guardians.
- Children/young people should be asked to sign up to the code.
- Sanctions for breaches of discipline should be clearly explained to parents/guardians and young people at the start of the activity.
- Corporal punishment of children is never permitted.
- Discipline problems should be brought to the attention of the activity leader.
- Discipline problems should be handled in partnership with parents/guardians.
- Leaders or volunteers who fail to follow the above code may be subject to sanction.

## **8.0 Meetings with Children and Young People**

- Being alone with a child or young person is not appropriate practice. Should circumstances arise where it is unavoidable a) immediately inform another responsible adult, by telephone if necessary, and b) make a diary note that the meeting with the young person took place.
- If the pastoral care of a young person necessitates the arrangement of an individual meeting, do not meet in isolated environments. Schedule meetings at times and locations that allow for transparency and accountability. Limit both the length and number of sessions. Make necessary referrals and appropriate contact with parents/guardians. Keep a diary record of all such meetings.
- Do not conduct meetings in, or encourage visits to, private homes or personal living quarters.
- When the need for a visit to the home of a child or young person arises professional boundaries must be observed at all times.

## **9.0 Photography and Multi-media**

Always ensure that:

- The content of the photo/ film is appropriate.
- One-to-one photo sessions with children are supervised and only take place with parent/guardian consent.
- Parents and children consent to the taking and the use of an image and that this consent is recorded.
- Photographs/ images likely to be published in press or on the Internet should avoid using children's full names (first name and surname) and detailed addresses.
- Parents and children are aware of the way the image will be used to represent the Church organisation or activity.
- There is a clear policy with regard to the use of mobile phones by young people during an activity.

(For further information see *Mobile Phone/Photography/IT Policy for Diocese of Killaloe*)

## **10.0 Complaints Procedure**

A complaint concerning any aspect of an activity with children/young people can be made to the appropriate activity leader, parish priest or the Director of Safeguarding.

- Make the complaint verbally or in writing using *General Complaint Form 3*
- The completed complaint form is forwarded to the parish priest/administrator.
- A signed copy is retained by the complainant.
- Feedback on the complaint will be within 10 working days
- If a resolution to the complaint is not found at parish level, it can be referred to the Director of Safeguarding, Diocesan Office, Westbourne, Ennis.

## **11.0 Guidance for Creating and Maintaining Safe Environments**

**It is important for all personnel to:**

- Treat all children with respect and dignity.
- Treat all children equally.
- Model positive, appropriate behaviour to all children we come into contact with.
- Be aware of the Church's child protection and child safeguarding policy.
- Challenge and report abusive and potentially abusive behavior.

- Develop a culture of openness, honesty and safety.
- Develop a culture where children have permission to tell and to talk about any concerns or worries that they may have.
- Respect each child's boundaries and support them to develop their own understanding and sense of their rights.
- Be aware of their responsibility for the safety of all children in their care.
- Work in open environments.
- Help children to know what they can do if they have a problem.

**Adults must never:**

- Hit or otherwise physically assault or abuse children.
- Develop sexual relationships with children.
- Develop relationships with children that could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive.
- Act in any way that may be abusive or may place a child at risk of abuse.
- Use language, make suggestions or offer advice that is inappropriate, offensive or abusive.
- Do things for a child of a personal nature that they can do themselves.
- Condone or participate in behaviour that is illegal, unsafe or abusive.
- Act in any way that is intended to intimidate, shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade.
- Engage in discriminatory behaviour or language in relation to race, culture, age, gender, disability, religion, sexual orientation or political views.
- Consume alcohol, tobacco or illegal drugs while having responsibility for or in the presence of children/young people.

**In general, it is inappropriate to:**

- Take children away or to your own home, especially where they will be alone with you
- Involve children in one-to-one contact; activities should usually be supervised by at least two adults However, there may be two circumstances where this may occur.
- In a reactive situation, for example when a young person requests a one-to-one meeting with you without warning, or where a young person has had to be removed from a group as part of a code of behavior.
- As part of a planned structured piece of work (for example one-to-one music tuition).