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**Child Protection and Safeguarding**

**Safer Working Code of Practice**

(Volunteers)

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Date Ratified by Governing Body:

Review date: July 2018

Ready Steady Read has a responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children and young people they come into contact with.

The need for guidelines and procedures is important to ensure that this is done with understanding and clarity.

All volunteers will receive a copy of Ready Steady Read’s Child Protection and Safeguarding policy, and will be required to follow the policies and procedures within it in conjunction with the guidance in this Safer Working Code of Practice.

This Safer Working Code of Practice is not an exhaustive guide to safer working with children. A further useful publication is the Safeguarding in Schools Guidance For those Working With Children and Young People in Education Settings. All volunteers will receive a copy of this guidance to be read in conjunction with this Safer Working Code of Practice.

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4. Responsibility

Ready Steady Read must ensure that all volunteers are made aware of our responsibility for child protection and safeguarding. We therefore ask that all volunteers read and sign our commitment to Ready Steady Read’s Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy Form to show that they are aware of our principles and procedures and will act in accordance with them.

By doing so, you will be playing your part in safeguarding children and promoting their welfare, and in developing best practice in working with children.

Our copy of the document, signed by you and the member of staff present when you sign, is kept at our office

All volunteers who work directly with children will be asked to participate in training and /or refresher sessions, as appropriate to their role. You will need to complete these sessions to continue in the role.

You should be aware that action will be taken (potentially up to and including requiring the volunteer to leave our charity and / or referral to national authorities for criminal investigation and prosecution) if any volunteer fails to follow our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policies and Procedures or acts in a way contrary to our Safer Working Code of Practice

1. Summary of Safer Working Practice

**When in direct contact with children, all volunteers involved with Ready Steady Read are required to follow this Code at all times**

**Volunteers should always:**

* Treat all individuals as being of worth and in a way that is respectful of them as individuals
* Treat all children equally
* Act as a role model – set an example through your own behavior for children to follow
* Respect a child’s right to privacy
* Allow children to take care of needs of a personal nature themselves or ask the appropriate person (eg teacher) to help them
* Take all allegations, suspicions or concerns about abuse seriously (including those made against staff) and report them through the relevant procedure
* Encourage children to challenge attitudes or behavior they are uncomfortable with
* Allow children to talk about any concerns they may have
* Work in a suitable open area with more than one adult present, or at least within regular sight and hearing of others
* Set appropriate boundaries; both physical and emotional
* Ensure they are dressed decently and appropriately

**Volunteers should not:**

* Form an inappropriate relationship with a child that is an abuse of your position of trust
* Seek or agree to any form of contact with a child outside the agreed setting of your volunteering role
* Take a child away from the agreed space for your volunteering without first checking with an appropriate person that it is acceptable to do so, and never off the premises
* Give a child any kind of gift, money or otherwise
* Engage in inappropriate behavior or contact with the children
* Use inappropriate or insulting language
* Use any resources that are inappropriate to a child’s age or stage of development
* Use mobile phones in rooms where children are present
* Photograph or video a child
* Permit or accept abusive or discriminatory behavior
* Show favouritism to anyone
* Undermine or criticize others

Remember that actions and statements can be misinterpreted, no matter how innocent. Do not rely just on your good name to protect you.

Always consider if what you are doing and saying would pass the ‘reasonable person’ test

Safer Practice for Volunteers

1. **Being alone with a child**

* Volunteers should be clear about the area/s of the school that has/have been identified for reading sessions and never agree to conduct a session in a remote or secluded area – whatever the circumstances
* If the agreed area/s for your reading session is temporarily not available, request help from school staff to find an alternative, equally suitable (ie open and public area)
* If the situation recurs, report the problem to Ready Steady Read
* Take remedial action if the action of a third party (eg closing a door) alters an otherwise suitable area (ie creates a closed/ private space).

1. **Physical Contact**

* Physical contact with children can be necessary and appropriate but must be in line with our professional role. A ‘no touch’ policy is impractical
* When physical contact is made with children, 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.
* Appropriate physical contact will occur most often with younger children, the older the child, the greater the risk of misinterpretation.
* Physical contact should never be secretive, or for the gratification of the adult, or represent a misuse of authority. If a volunteer believes that an action could be misinterpreted, the incident and circumstances should be reported as soon as possible.
* Some children may *seek* inappropriate physical contact. 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 initiates inappropriate physical contact, it is the responsibility of the adult to sensitively deter the child and help them to understand the importance of personal boundaries. Such situations must always be reported and recorded

1. **Social contact outside setting / appropriate boundaries**

* All communication between children and volunteers by whatever method, should take place within clear and explicit professional boundaries
* You should avoid communications with children that are open to misinterpretation of your motives, and all behavior that could be construed as grooming
* You should never give any personal contact details, including email address or home/mobile telephone numbers to children. You should never engage in text, email or internet-based (e.g. chat rooms) communications with children
* Never arrange to meet a child outside school premises or seek to have social contact with children or their families. This includes after you have finished working directly with them (Your relationship with them remains that of a reading helper)
* If a child or parent seeks to establish social contact, or if this occurs coincidentally, you should exercise professional judgement in making your response but always report and record the matter
* Report and record any incidents or indications (verbal, written or physical) that suggests a child may have developed an infatuation with you

1. **Gifts and Favouritism**

* Use the Ready Steady Read Reward Scheme as this is what children recognise as being the way ‘doing well’ is rewarded
* Never give a child anything that could be construed as a personal gift
* Always ensure you are consistent in the way you work with children, and do nothing that could be construed as favouritism
* If a child wants to take something you have been working on / made in your session with them, always check with a suitable member of the school staff that it is acceptable to do so

1. **Behaviour management**

* The use of physical intervention will, wherever possible, be avoided and would be used by a member of staff only if it necessary to prevent 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
* Volunteers should never (knowingly) be placed or place themselves in this position. If a child’s behavior requires this type of management you are responsible for immediately seeking support from a member of the school’s staff
* Always report and record any situation where a child becomes angry or distressed in your sessions

1. **Intimate care**

* Volunteers should never be placed or place themselves in a position where making intimate physical contact with children is required. If a child’s needs suggest such support is required you are responsible for immediately seeking support form a member of the school’s staff

1. **Safe use of technology**

* Activities on social networking sites can be open to the public, which includes potentially, the children you work with and their parents. Make sure that your social networking sites are set to private. You should never respond to ‘friend requests’ from children, nor access a child’s site for any reason.

1. **Use of mobile phones and cameras**

* Volunteers must not use mobile phones or other wi-fi enable devices in rooms where children are present
* Volunteers must not use their mobile phone or camera or other devices to take, edit or share images of children from their school

1. **General guidance for volunteers on handling concerns and disclosures**

As a volunteer, you may become concerned about a child’s welfare because:

* The child selects you as a person they ‘want to tell something’ (i.e. the child makes a disclosure to you)
* You observe one or more warning signs in a child’s physical appearance and / or behavior
* A child says something directly to you ‘in passing’
* You overhear a child saying something
* You overhear someone else (another child or adult) saying something about the child
* You witness behaviour (from another child nor adult)

The nature of the concerns and disclosure can obviously vary considerably from case to case and may not require exactly the same course of action. However,there some general principles which apply.

If a child discloses to you, or you otherwise hear or observe a matter of concern you should:

* React calmly so as not to frighten the child
* In the case of a disclosure, tell them they are not to blame and reassure them that it was right to tell
* Take what the child says and/or what you observe seriously
* Repeat the words the child has said to you back to them (in the form of a question) to check understanding
* Keep other questions to the absolute minimum necessary to ensure a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said, and ask only open questions (see in Section j below)
* Do not criticize or otherwise comment on the apparent perpetrator
* Under no circumstances make promises to maintain secrecy but explain what has to be done and who has to be told
* Report the concern or disclosure to the school’s Child Protection Officer or other named person
* Make a factual record of what has been said, heard and / or seen by you
* Contact Ready Steady Read and we will ask you to complete a Notification of Safeguarding Issue form

1. **Guidance on receiving information from children**

Volunteers are well placed to receive information from children. Where a child is able (and willing) to give a free-flowing account of an event it is not usually necessary to ask questions other than for clarification. However children, especially very young children, often only give little snippets of information, making the asking of questions unavoidable. In this situation questions may be necessary in order to clarify whether there is a safeguarding concern and to establish the situation form the child’s perspective

When talking to a child about a potential safeguarding concern, volunteers should, where possible:

* Demonstrate active listening i.e. let the child know that what they are saying has been heard
* Offer neutral prompts and encouragement e.g. affirmative responses like ‘uh huh’, ‘OK’, head nodding
* Avoid the use of prompts such as ‘good’ ‘right’. The child may interpret these as a signal to provide more information of that nature in order to please you, instead of providing information which is correct
* Be aware of intentionally or unintentionally communicating approval or disapproval, including through your tone of voice or your facial expressions
* Offer reassurance ‘I know this must be difficult for you, you are doing really well…’
* Repeat back what the child has just said e.g. Child ‘so we went round to his house’ (pause) Adult ‘I see, so you went round to his house…’
* Recognise that pauses and silence can be a useful cue for eliciting further information, but be aware that they may cause the child to lose the conversational pace
* Be aware that some children provide information more spontaneously than others. In general younger children provide less free narrative than older children
* Avoid interrupting a child when he or she is speaking. Interruption may suggest that an adult does not want to listen or that only short answers are required, and may disempower the child

When asking questions to clarify or establish a potential safeguarding concern, volunteers should, where possible:

* Avoid leading questions: a leading question is one which implies the answer or assumes facts that are likely to be in dispute e.g. ‘was it your dad that hit you?’Leading questions could influence the child’s answer and also significantly distort the child’s memory
* Make use of open ended questions and ‘minimal prompts’. An open ended question or minimal prompt is one that is so worded that the child is able to provide more information about an event in a way that is not leading, suggestive, or putting them under pressure.

In general open ended questions usually start with how, what, who, when, where…

* How did you get there?
* What time of day was that?
* Who did you say heard you?
* When did you say you told your teacher that?
* Where did you find it?

‘Minimal prompts’ usually start with ‘open’ words like ‘tell’, ‘explain’, ‘describe’

* Tell me what happened….
* Tell me what you remember about that….
* Tell me more about that…
* Explain what you mean when you say…
* Describe the room to me..

On the other hand, closed questions narrow down a child’s response and only tend to allow answers of one word or a short phrase e.g. ‘did this happen yesterday?’

Other points:

* Ask only one question at a time, be patient and allow the child sufficient time to complete their answer before asking a further question
* Keep questions as short and simple as possible
* Avoid the temptation to fill pauses by asking additional questions or making irrelevant comments
* The younger the child, the shorter and more simply phrased the question should be
* Consider the child’s age and stage of development. Many concepts that are taken for granted in adult conversation are only acquired as children develop
* Concepts with which children may have difficulty include: dates and times, length and frequency of events
* Make use of information that the child has already provided
* Avoid assumptions or interpretations of what the child means

Please remember, irrespective of circumstances it is never the responsibility of a volunteer to investigate a concern, but it is always our duty to report and concern

1. **Guidance on Confidentiality**

As a volunteer you may be party to confidential and sensitive or personal information about children, their family members or friends. You are responsible for maintaining confidentiality and must not disclose information outside your role as a volunteer reader, and any such disclosure should only be in accordance with our Child Protection Policies and Procedures.

Volunteers are expected to treat information they receive about pupils and families in a discreet and confidential manner.

Volunteers should never use confidential or personal information about a pupil or her/his family for their own, or others advantage (including that of partners, friends, relatives or other organisations). Information must never be used to intimidate, humiliate, or embarrass the child.

Confidential or personal information should never be used casually in conversation or shared with any person other than on a need-to-know basis.

There are some circumstances in which a volunteer may be expected to share information about a pupil, for example when abuse is alleged or suspected. In such cases, individuals have a responsibility to pass information on without delay, but only to those with designated safeguarding responsibilities.

Concerns/allegations/disclosures must not be discussed with people other than those with safeguarding responsibilities. The child/young person and family have a right to confidentiality with only people who ‘need to know’ sharing the information.