



Bookmark

Code of Conduct for Adults Working with Children and Young People

Code of Conduct for Adults Working with Children and Young People

We exist to change children's life stories through the joy of reading. We partner with schools to develop whole school reading cultures, and to provide one-to-one reading support.

Background

This Code of Conduct for Adults Working with Children and Young People (Code of Conduct) aims to help us protect children and young people from abuse and reduce the possibility of unfounded allegations being made. The Charity expects its trustees, employees, volunteers and others involved or associated with the Charity to be aware of this Code of Conduct and to adhere to its principles in their approach to all children and young people. Your attention is drawn to the position of trust that you hold in working with children and young people, and the power and influence you hold. The Charity expects this responsibility to be at the forefront of the minds of its trustees, employees and volunteers to ensure that these positions of trust are never abused.

Code of Conduct

The following guidance aims to:

- Keep children and young people safe by explaining the safeguarding expectations on all trustees, employees and volunteers (in conjunction with those contained in the Charity's [Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy](#))
- Guide employees and volunteers who work with or in the vicinity of children and young people (be that face-to-face or online), or those who are responsible for managing employees/volunteers who come into contact with children and young people, to work safely and responsibly, and to monitor their own standards and practice
- Set clear expectations of behaviour and/or codes of practice relevant to the activities provided by the Charity
- Give a clear message that unlawful or unsafe behaviour is unacceptable and that, where appropriate, disciplinary or legal action will be taken
- Support safe recruitment practice, and
- Minimise the risk of erroneous or malicious allegations being made against trustees, employees, and volunteers who have contact and/or interact with children and young people

The minimum expectations of all of the Charity's trustees, employees, volunteers and others involved or associated with the Charity are that:

- The welfare of the child and young person is, and must always be, paramount
- They safeguard and promote the well-being and welfare of children and young people in both face-to-face and online environments (i.e. when providing online volunteer support for children)
- They are responsible for their own actions and behaviour and avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and/or intentions



Bookmark

Code of Conduct for Adults Working with Children and Young People

- The same professional standards should always be applied regardless of ethnic origin, skin colour, nationality, national origin, gender, pregnancy and maternity, marital or civil partnership status, gender reassignment, disability (including past disabilities), religion or belief (including philosophical beliefs), age or sexual orientation, and
- They should continually monitor and review their practice and ensure they follow the guidance contained in this Code of Conduct.
- They raise concerns about anyone else's behaviour around a child or young person, including teaching staff, other volunteers, or employees

Trustees, employees, volunteers, and others involved or associated with the Charity must:

- Value and respect children and young people as individuals
- Treat all children and young people fairly, equally and with dignity
- Respect and listen to the opinions of children and young people
- Respect a child or young person's right to personal privacy as far as possible - in some cases, it may be necessary to break confidentiality in order to follow safeguarding procedures - if this is the case it is important to explain this to the child or young person at the earliest opportunity
- Only provide personal care in an emergency and make sure there is more than one adult present, unless there is no other alternative
- Be an excellent role model, display a high standard of behaviour and appearance (disciplined, committed and timely), and remember that children and young people learn by example
- Ensure any contact with children and young people is appropriate and is relevant to the requirements of the role
- Wherever possible, avoid situations which may lead to their behaviour towards a child and young person being misinterpreted
- Exercise caution when discussing sensitive issues with children and young people
- Dress in a way that represents Bookmark appropriately and professionally
- Always have reading sessions in a suitable, secure and safe space when delivered face-to-face, such as a classroom or other visible area of the school, with transparent windows in doors (if in a separate room), and/or ensuring that doors are left open and unlocked at all times
- Consider the welfare and safety of children and young people before the achievement of goals
- Establish and address the additional needs of disabled children, children with learning differences, or other vulnerable groups
- Appreciate the efforts of all children and young people, and never exert undue influence over them in order to obtain personal benefit or reward
- Give enthusiastic and constructive feedback
- Be positive, approachable, provide constructive feedback and promote the values and objectives of the Charity at all times



Bookmark

Code of Conduct for Adults Working with Children and Young People

- Develop an appropriate professional relationship with children and young people, based on mutual trust and respect, and which empowers them to share in the decision-making process
- Encourage and guide children and young people who participate in the Charity's activities to accept responsibility for their own performance and behaviour
- Encourage all children and young people not to discriminate on the grounds of ethnic origin, skin colour, nationality, national origin, gender, pregnancy and maternity, marital or civil partnership status, gender reassignment, disability (including past disabilities), religion or belief (including philosophical beliefs), age or sexual orientation
- Challenge the use of any inappropriate language by children and young people (unless they are making a disclosure), as well as adults
- Report accidents, concerns or allegations of abuse or poor practice to the appropriate body (e.g. the school's and/or Bookmark's Designated Safeguarding Lead (or deputy), Local Authority, Designated Officer (LADO) etc), in accordance with the procedures set out in the [Bookmark's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy](#)
- Keep information about children and young people confidential and ensure it is not used in such a way as to render them vulnerable to harm
- Report to the Charity's Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately any accident in which a child is hurt, or where a child seems distressed, whilst in the care of the Charity, and
- Have access to a telephone for immediate contact to emergency services, if required.

Trustees, employees, volunteers, and others involved or associated with the Charity must not:

- Allow concerns or allegations to go unreported
- Have, or be perceived to have, favourites
- Make inappropriate promises to children and young people
- Spend time alone with a child or young person unless it is necessary for the proper performance of their role and, if it is, no more time should be spent alone with a child or young person than is absolutely necessary
- Spend excessive amounts of time with any child or young person unless there are exceptional circumstances
- Harm or physically, emotionally, or sexually abuse children or young people, or act in a way that places them at risk of harm or abuse
- Enter into any sexual, romantic, or otherwise inappropriate relationship with any child or young person (regardless of whether they are over the age of consent)
- Behave or encourage a child or young person to behave in a way which is sexually provocative or allow or encourage them to view abusive or pornographic images on digital media (or otherwise)
- Use language to a child or young person which is sarcastic, insensitive, derogatory, suggestive, sexual, inappropriate, or offensive



Bookmark

Code of Conduct for Adults Working with Children and Young People

- Arrange meetings (be that face-to-face or online) with a child or young person outside of times agreed with schools to carry out the Charity's activities
- Have a child or young person in your home or vehicle or spend time in their home or vehicle
- Develop social relationships with children and young people who participate in the Charity's activities
- Provide personal contact details to children and young people (including mobile phone numbers, email, or postal address)
- Communicate, or attempt to communicate, with a child or young person through social media, such as Twitter or Facebook, or add a child or young person as a 'friend' or similar, or to membership of a group on a social media network, or accept an equivalent invitation over social media from a child or young person
- Use sanctions that humiliate or harm children and young people
- Smoke, consume alcohol or use illegal substances in the company of children and young people
- Allow any rough or dangerous play, bullying, bad language or inappropriate behaviour
- Encourage or condone behaviour of a child that is unlawful or unsafe, and
- Deter children and young people from making a disclosure of abuse, for example through fear of not being believed.

When providing online volunteer support to children, volunteers must:

- Adhere to all standard guidance set out in this Code of Conduct
- Sit against a neutral background, wherever possible. Do not sit in a bedroom but if it is absolutely necessary to do so, ensure there is a neutral background so that the child is not aware of your location
- Endeavour to inform other people in the home or volunteer setting about reading sessions, so that they do not interfere or distract from the session
- Always only use communication channels / platforms that have been approved by the Charity
- Use suitable and professional language, as should anyone else in the household / volunteer setting
- Not start the video for an online session without a member of school staff in the room with the child. The member of school staff is responsible for introducing the volunteer and child at the beginning of each session
- Never independently schedule (or attempting to schedule) an online session with a child or school – all sessions are set up by the Charity
- Close all browser tabs that are not going to be used for the online reading session, and
- Dress in a way that represents Bookmark appropriately and professionally, regardless of the remote setting (as should anyone else in the household / volunteer setting).



Bookmark

Code of Conduct for Adults Working with Children and Young People

Upholding this code of behaviour

You should always follow this code of behaviour and never rely on your reputation or that of our organisation to protect you.

Bookmark aims to support our employees and volunteers so that they are able to enjoy their roles and meet all standards required. It is hoped that if employees or volunteers find they are struggling with their role, they will speak to their Line Manager (employees) or one of the Volunteers Team for additional support.

If you have behaved inappropriately as an employee, you will be subject to our disciplinary procedures. Depending on the seriousness of the situation, you may be asked to leave Bookmark.

If you have behaved inappropriately as a volunteer, Bookmark reserves the right to judge the severity of a problem and, if necessary, may require a volunteer to stop volunteering, with immediate effect. If this happens, the volunteer will receive an explanation of why this decision has been reached.

We may also make a referral to statutory agencies such as the police and/or the local authority children's social care department and/or the Charities Commission. These measures relate to both face-to-face and online volunteering.



Bookmark

Code of Conduct for Adults Working with Children and Young People

If you become aware of any breaches of this code, you must report them to the Charity Designated Safeguarding Lead or one of the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads. . They can be reached on the Bookmark safeguarding line (020 3995 7970). To do this you should follow the [Whistle-Blowing Policy](#), [Volunteer Problem Solving Procedure](#), or - if necessary - the [Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy](#).

Emily Jack

Chief Executive Officer

emily.jack@bookmarkreading.org