

# CONFIDENTIALITY, INCLUDING PROPRIETY & BEHAVIOUR IN THE COMMUNITY AND DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

(includes reference to mobile phones, social media and networking sites)

## Amendment History

Revision	Author	Description of change	Date
1	Karen Walls	Amendment history added	May 2006
KASC policy	Carol Hooper	Adapted from adopted Kineton Playgroup policy	August 2006
2	CH/SM	Review only – no change needed	June 2007
3	CH	Merge KASC and Playgroup policies; update footer	September 2007
4	CH	Add ref to committee signatures, and requirement for annual updates	August 2008
5	CH/ SM/ Alison Foulds	Add ref to internet/on-line confidentiality	June 2009
6	CH	Add ref to use of mobile phones and other digital recording equipment; rota parents	July 2010
7	CH/AF	Review only – no change needed	July 2011
7a	CH/Sally Flynn	<i>Declaration of Interests: new policy introduced following safeguarding training</i>	June 2012
7b	CH/SF	<i>Propriety &amp; Behaviour in the Community: new policy introduced following safeguarding training</i>	June 2012
8	CH	Add ref to all forms of electronic and social media	July 2012
9	CH/HS	Strengthen sections on use of mobile phones and social media and networking sites	June 2013

10	CH & SF	Remove reference to staff personal mobile phones being kept in bags	September 2014
11	CH & SF	Refer to secure storage of mobile devices	June 2015
12	SF	Change of names in signature schedule	July 2016
13	CH	Refer to Code of Conduct	September 2016
14	CH & SF	Merge with existing Propriety and Behaviour in the Community and Declaration of Interests policies; edit to avoid repetition; re-name merged policy Re-issue to all staff and board members for reading and signature	November 2016
15	CH & SF	Policy reviewed; clarify contact procedure during work hours New policy to be signed at staff reviews, ready for 2017/18	June 2017
16	CH & SF	Add reference to 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'	February 2018
17	CH & SF	Added reference to children's own mobile phones and devices and to other forms of social media	January 2020
18	CH	Update signing sheets in appendix 2	July 2022
19	CH, TH & XF	Add reference to vaping Clarify that 'digital recording devices' include Smart phones which can be used for that purpose	July 2023
20	TH	Add reference to use of wearable devices	September 2024
21	TH	Reviewed; no substantive changes made	August 2025

# **CONFIDENTIALITY, INCLUDING PROPRIETY & BEHAVIOUR IN THE COMMUNITY AND DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

**(includes reference to mobile phones, social media and networking sites)**

*All references to 'Kineton Playgroup' or 'Playgroup' in this policy include Playgroup, KASC, Breakfast Club and Holiday Club.*

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

### **Statement of Intent**

It is our intention to respect the privacy of children and their parents and carers, while ensuring that they access high quality care and education. The privacy of members of staff, board members, students and volunteers should also be respected by colleagues. They are all expected to behave appropriately and in ways that are consistent with Playgroup values and policies.

It should be noted that the internet and other forms of electronic and social media are public forums, and this policy refers to all forms of such communication in the same way as to any other form of communication.

All the undertakings in this policy are of paramount importance and must be adhered to by all staff, board members, students and volunteers at Kineton Playgroup. Failure to do so may lead to disciplinary proceedings for members of staff and for summary termination of office for board members or placements for volunteers or students. This policy should be read in conjunction with 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' and all other policies, in particular the Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy and the Code of Conduct & Handbook for Staff, Volunteers & Work Experience Students.

### **Aim**

We aim to ensure that all parents and carers can share their information in the confidence that it will only be used to enhance the welfare of their children.

Members of staff may have access to confidential information about children to undertake their everyday responsibilities. They should never use confidential or personal information about a child or their family for their own, or others' advantage (including that of partners, friends, relatives or other schools/services). Information must never be used to intimidate, humiliate, or embarrass the child.

### **Methods**

To ensure that all those using and working at Playgroup can do so with confidence, we respect confidentiality in the following ways.

- Parents have ready access to the files and records of their own children but do not have access to information about any other child
- Staff will not discuss personal information given by parents with other members of staff, except where it affects planning for the child's needs and is in the child's best interests

- Staff will not discuss an identified child with other professionals or professional agencies unless with the permission of the child's parent or carer, except in emergencies or to protect the child from harm; all verbal permission must be confirmed in writing
- All members of staff are asked to sign a copy of this policy at the beginning of their period of employment; in addition, they are asked to update themselves on its contents as part of their ongoing refresher training during the year and at the start of each academic year
- Personal mobile phones and other digital recording devices, including Smart watches and 'ordinary' cameras may not be carried by any member of staff or volunteer while they are with children but may only be accessed during breaks in areas where no children are present, such as the staffroom, office or kitchen; all such equipment should be kept securely following current working practice. This does not apply to the setting's own digital recording devices which may be used to record children's activities; however, all storage and downloading of images must be carried out within the setting on Playgroup's own equipment.
- Information about children may only be shared in accordance with the Department for Education's Guidance on Information Sharing. In summary information may not be passed on to third parties without permission, except in circumstances of public function or where to do so might create or increase harm to a child; in all other circumstances prior written permission will be sought but in emergencies verbal permission followed by written permission is acceptable.
- Staff induction includes an awareness of the importance of confidentiality in the setting.
- Any concerns/evidence relating to a child's personal safety are kept in a confidential file in a secure location and are shared with as few people as possible on a "need-to-know" basis.
- Personal information about children, families and staff, including photographs, is kept securely whilst remaining as accessible as possible.
- Issues to do with the employment of staff, whether paid or unpaid, remain confidential to the people directly involved with making personnel decisions.
- Issues concerning the management and administration of Kineton Playgroup Ltd, including matters discussed at committee and board meetings, remain confidential unless and until they are recorded in the minutes of the meeting, and then become publicly available.
- All members of staff at Playgroup, including students on placement and volunteers, are advised of this policy and are required to read it, and to sign a copy agreeing to respect it.
- All parent volunteers are also informed of the terms and details of the policy; a copy is available in the office for them to read and sign.
- All board members are also advised of this policy and are asked to read and sign a copy agreeing to respect its terms at the start of every year (as well as at the start of their time in office).
- On a practical level care should be taken when discussing any matters relating to Playgroup business, or to the children attending the setting; these matters should not

be discussed when they may be overheard by others. Care must be taken at handover times at the beginning and end of sessions when other parents are waiting, on the primary school playground and at social occasions within the village community.

## **FOR THE AVOIDANCE OF DOUBT:**

### **Use of mobile phones**

The mobile phone is an essential element in 21st century life for education, business and social interaction. This policy intends to give advice to staff and board or committee members relating to the use of mobile phones and similar portable devices while at work or within Helen's Place. 'Mobile phone' also relates to similar electronic and digital devices.

### **Guidelines for use of mobile phones at work**

Personal mobile phones should not be used in the children's areas or when children are present. They may be used during breaks in working hours in the setting if their use is appropriate and such use takes place in areas where no children are present such as the staff room, office or kitchen. The use of a mobile phone must not detract from the quality of supervision or care of children.

Personal mobile phones should be kept securely according to current policy and may only be used in the staff room or elsewhere (as above) away from the children's areas during breaks. If anyone is expecting an **URGENT** call, where the caller only has their mobile number, they should advise someone in the office and may then take the call or text in the staff room as soon as an appropriate person is available to take their place with the children. Normally the office landline should be provided as a first contact number during working hours; a message will be taken and passed on to the person concerned.

Setting mobile phones and walkie-talkies (without cameras or internet connection) are available for use in the setting, at the Forest School site, and on trips away from the setting.

### **Children's mobile phones**

Children may not bring mobile phones to Playgroup. Any inappropriate use, by children, of social media will be dealt with under the behaviour management policy in the same way as any other behavioural issue.

### **Use of Wearable devices**

Wearable devices such as smart watches, Apple watches and Fitbits which have the capability to connect to the internet can be worn in setting but must NOT be connected to a phone/the internet whilst with children. Any wearable devices that have the capability to take photos must NOT be worn whilst in the setting. This applies to staff, volunteers and children within the setting.

## **Use of social media**

The internet is an essential element in 21st century life for education, business and social interaction and this policy recognises that staff and board or committee members will, and should, be able to use the Internet for these reasons. This policy intends to give advice to staff and board or committee members relating to the information that is shared on the Internet, with references to social networking sites.

The internet provides many ways in which staff and board, or committee members may wish to communicate including, but not limited to, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, X, and personal blog sites.

This policy should not be seen as restricting anyone's access to social networking sites and blogging. If it is done in an appropriate manner, these sites are a valuable method of keeping in touch with friends and work colleagues.

## **Guidelines for use of social media or networking sites**

This section of the policy intends to give guidelines for staff and board or committee members to follow. When communicating through social networking sites, information about children, parents or daily activities at Playgroup should not be included. Information about work colleagues, which will adversely impact on them or the reputation of Playgroup, should not be shared on these sites.

Information that staff and board members would not want shared with **all** parents should not be included in communication – these sites are accessible to many people. It is important to bear in mind that staff and board members hold responsible positions at playgroup and are seen as figures of authority with the respect of the local community and therefore would not want information shared on the internet that would bring these roles into question. Staff are advised not to include their place of work as part of their profile on any sites. Staff should declare if they are a member of a school parents' WhatsApp group.

It is not acceptable for staff or board members to include any photographs of children taken at Playgroup or at Playgroup related events on these sites.

## **PROPRIETY AND BEHAVIOUR IN THE COMMUNITY**

### **Statement of Intent**

All adults working with children have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of children. It is therefore expected that they will adopt high standards of personal conduct to maintain the confidence and respect of their colleagues, children, other professionals and the public in general and all those with whom they work. Such high standards should be maintained online and through electronic and digital media in the same way as they are in person.

### **Methods**

It is recognised that all staff and board members interact with others within a rural community where they are known (by uniform and otherwise) as representatives of Kineton Playgroup. They will always be associated with Kineton Playgroup.

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There may be times 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. Misuse of drugs or alcohol, or acts of violence, are examples of such behaviour.

Adults in contact with children should therefore understand and be aware, that safe practice also involves using judgement and integrity about behaviours in places other than the work setting.

At any time whilst wearing Kineton Playgroup staff uniform, staff must be aware of the image they are portraying to the village community and members of the public in general. Members of staff should not smoke, vape or drink alcohol whilst wearing uniform or looking after Playgroup children; staff should always act in a professional manner.

The behaviour of the partner or other family members of a member of staff or board member may raise similar concerns and may lead to careful consideration as to whether it may bring Kineton Playgroup into disrepute or whether there may be a potential risk to children in the workplace.

Confidential information about a child or young person should never be used casually in conversation or shared with any person other than on a need-to-know basis. In circumstances where the child's identity does not need to be disclosed the information should be used anonymously.

### **Declaration of Interests: other working and personal relationships and friendships**

It is recognised that staff may have other working and employment relationships as well as personal relationships and friendships with parents of Playgroup children or may be in contact with Playgroup in other capacities (e.g. as youth group volunteers or childminders). It is vital that these relationships and interests are declared and that staff make clear boundaries between their work at Playgroup and these other activities (employment, work and personal relationships and friendships).

While it is not sought to restrict the social interaction of members of staff, it is important both to protect the reputation of Kineton Playgroup and individual members of staff that they are not open to accusations of bias, favouritism or misconduct associated with their outside lives and interests.

All members of staff and the board are asked to complete and update at least annually a declaration of interests form, so that all such relationships and outside interests are known and are not compromising Kineton Playgroup. Such information will be kept confidential in each person's personnel file.

It is the responsibility of each member of staff and the board to ensure such records are up to date, although they will also be asked to check and amend such records on a regular basis as part of the staff review programme or at board meetings.

Professionalism and confidentiality must be maintained in all cases. Staff and board members should be particularly cautious in social and friendship situations to prevent any conflict. They should avoid discussing any issues relating to playgroup matters outside of playgroup, even if they relate to the other person's own child. If any staff or board members feel at all compromised or concerned at any time they must speak to the Manager or Chair as soon as possible.

It is intended that by keeping these issues open and honest, any negative feedback will be avoided.



# **CONFIDENTIALITY, INCLUDING PROPRIETY & BEHAVIOUR IN THE COMMUNITY AND DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

## **APPENDIX 1**

Example of Declaration of Interest forms

# **CONFIDENTIALITY, INCLUDING PROPRIETY & BEHAVIOUR IN THE COMMUNITY AND DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

## **APPENDIX 2**

Example of signature sheets