



**Belong Learning -  
Professional Ethics, Values  
and Principles for Working  
with Children**

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'Guidance for safer working practice for those working with Children and young  
people in education settings – May 2019, Safer Recruitment Consortium**

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## Introduction

The purpose of these guidelines is to advise all BELONG LEARNING staff on the ethical standards, values, principles and professional boundaries which must be upheld at all times to ensure that they are able to perform their duties in a manner which respects and protects children, the staff themselves, colleagues and the wider community. It aims to continue to develop a deep-rooted culture of keeping children safe in education that is understood, owned and shared by all.

Professional guidelines of this type provide a very clear direction for the types of behaviour expected of staff when working with BELONG LEARNING. It is the responsibility of every member of staff to check with their line manager if they are unclear about what is acceptable, or if a particular situation is not covered within these guidelines.

BELONG LEARNING has a range of policies that inform staff on procedure relating to individual roles that need to be read in conjunction with this document and those policies are informed by these professional guidelines. Key documents are:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding – BELONG LEARNING School (region specific) 2021
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021 (part 1)
- Positive Touch Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Whistle Blowing Policy

These documents can be found online in the company policies section

## 1. Professional ethics

### General principles

BELONG LEARNING staff perform their duties to meet the unmet of children and their families.

**BELONG LEARNING staff must understand therefore, that they have privileged access to children. They have a professional role which brings with it ethical and practical responsibilities which they must respect and adhere to.**

- All children have a right to place trust in the relationship that they develop with a member of BELONG LEARNING staff.
- All children who receive our service are vulnerable and are in need of support.

There will always be an unequal power relationship between the adult worker and the child. BELONG LEARNING staff must not abuse the balance of power in the relationship and must be very careful to establish and maintain clear boundaries to the relationship. This involves ensuring that a proper professional distance is maintained in the relationship between the BELONG LEARNING staff member and the child. This should be made explicit to the young person so that dependency relationships are avoided and professional relationships are not confused with friendships.

In order to maintain proper professional standards, **BELONG LEARNING staff must not**

- Develop physical, sexual or emotional relationships with children who are, have been or could be associated with their work (see positive touch policy).
- Develop a relationship with the child that blurs the boundaries in any way between professional and personal relationships.
- Form friendships outside of working time with a child, or their families, with whom they are working.
- Use language that is inappropriate or could be misconstrued by a child
- Behave physically in a manner which could be misconstrued by a child
- Condone, or participate in, behaviour exhibited by children that is illegal, unwise from a safety point of view, or which is discriminatory or oppressive to others (see BELONG LEARNING Equal Opportunities Policy).

- Behave in a manner that is disrespectful of the physical or emotional privacy of a child

## 2. Ethical and Professional Principles

### Ethical Principles

All BELONG LEARNING staff have a commitment to:

- Treat each child with respect**, valuing each individual and avoiding negative discrimination.
- Respect and promote the rights of the child to make up their own decisions and choices**, whilst placing upmost importance on safeguarding and ensuring the welfare or legitimate interests of themselves or others are not seriously threatened.
- Promote and ensure the welfare and safety of each child**, while supporting them to learn through undertaking positive, well-considered risk.
- Contribute towards the promotion of social justice** for children and in society generally, through encouraging respect for difference and diversity and challenging discrimination (practice would include promoting just and fair behaviour, challenging discriminating actions, encouraging children to respect and value differences and diversity, promoting the participation agenda).

### Professional Principles

BELONG LEARNING staff have a commitment to:-

- Recognise the boundaries between personal and professional life** and be aware of the need to balance a caring and supportive relationship with a child with an appropriate professional distance.
- Recognise the need to be accountable** to the child, their parents or guardians, colleagues, commissioners, managers and wider society with a relevant interest in the work, and that these accountabilities may be in conflict.

- g) **Develop and maintain the required skills and competence** to do the job, particularly focusing on those set out in the job description/contract and supported through the BELONG LEARNING performance management system

### **3. The role of a BELONG LEARNING worker**

The relational work provided by BELONG LEARNING staff means that we are building our practice around the needs of the individual child/ young person. Our model uses the well-being curriculum to provide a holistic education to each young person. Key to this is the enhancement of the young person's **personal and social development**.

Educational attainment, employment and personal safeguarding all form part of this work. We are aspirational, supportive and challenging in our work to enable the young person to:

- feel comfortable with themselves
- make and sustain personal relationships
- reach their potential
- find a place in society which is as satisfying as possible.
- Keep themselves and others safe

**Our goal is to be proactive in our practice, seek to understand the behaviours we experience and respond in a consistent and professional manner that is open and transparent.**

BELONG LEARNING staff will consistently demonstrate appropriate professional behaviour in their interactions with others.

#### **BELONG LEARNING staff will be:**

- Approachable professionals that build trusting relationships with children in the work context, with a clear understanding of personal and professional boundaries.
- Able to plan for clear learning outcomes with children and evaluate progress with them, accrediting their learning where and whenever possible.
- Able to retain a professional detachment and objectivity.
- Listeners, who support children to appropriately express their views and opinions
- Able to challenge constructively in areas of awareness, prejudice, responsibility, and consequences.
- Able to advocate appropriately to support the child's interests and to represent their issues in a professional context when they cannot be present (however, recognising this is complimentary to children representing themselves).

- Accepting and understanding of children and their circumstances, able to separate behaviour from underlying causes or reasons and support an understanding of those behaviours through restorative practice.
- Facilitators for children in their learning and development by helping them explore and express their own feelings, circumstances, and options in a secure manner.
- Encouraging children to gain the confidence, skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed for decision making, self-reliance and inter-dependence.
- A source of information on a wide range of issues including health, education, training and employment to children, children and their families, with connections to other services and signposting or referring as appropriate
- Efficient organisers that keep commitments to children.

#### **4. Duty of Care**

BELONG LEARNING staff must recognise that, as adults, they have a responsibility towards the safety of the children with whom they are working. All children can be at risk of physical harm, verbal abuse, sexual abuse, emotional harm and personal harm.

It is the responsibility of BELONG LEARNING staff to be alert to the child's exposure to the risk of harm and to follow safeguarding procedures that are in place to protect children.

#### **5. Safeguarding and Child Protection**

Safeguarding and child protection is the responsibility of all BELONG LEARNING Staff and must be an integral part of our daily practice. BELONG LEARNING encourages all staff to be mindful of the young person they work with, be curious about areas of concerns, and be proactive in their approach to reporting.

Child protection/ safeguarding procedures are detailed in the BELONG LEARNING Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures (updated September 2021).

Staff members should be familiar with these procedures and refer to them when any child protection/ safeguarding issue/ allegation come to light. Any child protection/ safeguarding issue needs to be reported using the BELONG LEARNING reporting system at the earliest opportunity and should also be immediately shared with your line manager.

All BELONG LEARNING staff that work with children are required to complete annual safeguarding training.

## **6. Professional judgement**

This document provides guidance on a range of key areas and clearly outlines expectations in terms of what is and what is not acceptable with respect to the behaviour of staff. It cannot provide a complete checklist of what is, or is not, appropriate behaviour for staff. In following these guidelines staff should always maintain a sense of proportion, apply common sense to situations and promote the child's safety and welfare as a priority.

There will be occasions and circumstances in which staff have to make decisions or take action in the best interest of children.

In such circumstances staff must:

- Discuss the circumstances that informed their action, or their proposed action, with their line manager at the earliest opportunity.
- Always record discussions and actions taken and the reasons for actions taken.
- Always discuss any misunderstanding, accidents or threats with a manager, and report as soon as possible using the BELONG LEARNING reportingsystem.
- Always consider whether their actions are warranted, proportionate, safe and applied equitably.

## **7. Keeping Children Safe**

BELONG LEARNING's proactive approach to safeguarding of Children may result in one colleague recognising where another is not working in accordance with these standards. Our whistle blowing policy provides staff with a process of keeping children safe that enables them to act without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination, or disadvantage.

BELONG LEARNING staff have an incredible opportunity and privilege to enable significant change in the lives of the children we work with by meeting their unmet needs. To achieve this goal our approach must be coherent, consistent, and professional at all times.