



Staff Code of Conduct

For Staff members and Homestays

Statement

The following code of conduct gives clear guidance on behaviour that Study Links expects from all those working within and for the organisation. The guidelines confirm and reinforce responsibilities regarding the safeguarding of children, establishing safe practices and reducing the risk of improper conduct.

Code of Conduct

Power and positions of trust

As a Study Links member of staff or homestay, you are in a position of power and therefore in a position of trust regarding the children under our care. It is imperative that this power is not abused in any way. You should operate in an open and transparent way, treating students respectfully and fairly, irrespective of culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and sexual orientation.

Duty of care to children and young people

All staff and homestays have a duty of care to children and young people. As such they must adhere to Study Links policies, including the safeguarding and child protection policies that outline how we safeguard students in our care.

Exercising Professional Judgement

Study Links expects all Staff and Homestays to exercise their professional judgement in any given situation with a student, in line with all safeguarding policies. If there is time to do so, please consult your manager or ring Study Links immediately (on the emergency number if out of office hours) if you are unsure of how to act.

Communication with Students

Communication with students should only be in a professional capacity, using appropriate language and tone.

Use of appropriate language

As a representative of Study Links, we expect you to be polite and courteous whilst carrying out your duties. It is inappropriate to swear or use abusive language.

Social contact with Students

It is inappropriate for staff or homestays mix with students socially as a friend at other times when you are not visiting them, or they are not staying with you as part of your family.

Social contact with Parents / Agents / staff at partner schools

It is inappropriate for staff or homestays to mix socially or befriend parents, agents or school staff on social media (unless they were previously friends). Study Links expects any contact that staff or homestays have with parents, agents and staff at partner schools to be courteous and polite.

Physical contact including restraint

Staff or homestays are advised to avoid physical contact with students as even when well-intentioned, it may be misconstrued by the student, an observer or any person to whom this action is described. There may also be cultural, gender sensitive or religious reasons about touching which you may not be aware of. You must be aware that any physical contact with a student may need to be explained and would be open to scrutiny.

Physical restraint should only be used if the student is placing themselves or others at risk. Any restraint must be reported immediately and recorded in writing. Parents will be made aware and Study Links will investigate fully.

Sexual contact with young people

Any sexual behaviour, by a member of staff or homestay with or towards a student is unacceptable and is a matter for criminal and/or disciplinary proceedings.

An outright ban on any corporal punishment

It is illegal to use corporal (physical) punishment. Any reported incidences of corporal punishment will be reported by Study Links to the police.

Care of distressed Students

In most cases, it is not advisable to offer comfort with physical contact. Where a student is upset or distressed (for example due to homesickness) sympathy and help can be given verbally. Sitting and listening to them until they feel better can be of great comfort. Staff, volunteers and homestays should use their professional judgement at all times and in cases where it may be unavoidable (for example a young child who has fallen over, the child makes physical contact with the primary carer first or is crying with homesickness), it is recommended to ask the child if physical comfort is wanted before giving it.

One-to-one meetings

When meeting on a one-to-one basis, staff should arrange to meet students in a public space as far as possible, such as a reception area, meeting room or common room. If meeting in a classroom or other room, they should leave the door open so they are visible. Meetings outside school should take place in a public area such as a coffee shop. In the homestay environment, homestays and their families should avoid going into the student's bedroom or inviting them into their own bedrooms.

Students' entitlement to privacy

Staff and homestays must respect students' right to privacy. That means not entering their bedrooms (unless the homestay is required to clean the room, and this should only be undertaken with prior warning and when the student is not in the room), ensuring that bathrooms have suitable

locks and respecting the student's right to retreat to their rooms or a quiet area in the home if they feel the need. When students wish to email or call home, they should be allowed to do so in privacy.

Transporting Students

Staff may at times be expected to transport students, for example to the airport, homestay, school or other out of school activities. A log of these journeys will be recorded. Any cars used must meet all legal requirements (e.g. MOT and insurance). Students should travel in the back of the vehicle and must wear seatbelts. Booster seats should be used where required. Homestays should transport students in line with the guidance included in the Homestay Handbook.

Gifts and rewards

Staff, volunteers and homestays should not give gifts to students on a regular basis and should not give gifts of any significant value. Similarly, such gifts should not be regularly given to the families of students as this could be interpreted as a gesture to groom or bribe a student. Where a reward is given to a student, this should be in accordance with agreed practice, consistent with other Study Links policies, and not based on favouritism.

There may be occasions where students or their families may want to present you with a gift, for example as a thank you. You can accept gifts and hospitality, which are small gestures and are of low value. Any gift or hospitality which is more than just a token, defined as a having a large value should be politely refused or returned. For more details, please refer to our anti-bribery policy.

Use of photographs and videos

Staff and homestays should ensure that only photography, videos or images are taken with the student's and their parent's consent and that these are only used in any publicity material where such consent has been obtained. Images should be securely stored and used only by those authorised to do so. Under no circumstances should staff take images of students without consent or without the students knowing that the images are being taken. Staff should be able to justify images of students in their possession.

Searching Students and their belongings

It may be necessary in certain circumstances to search students and belongings. This may be due to suspected possession of a prohibited item. This may include: knives or weapons, alcohol, illegal drugs, stolen items, tobacco and cigarette papers, fireworks, pornographic images, any article that a member of staff or homestay reasonably suspects has been, or is likely to be, used to commit an offence or injure a person or damage property.

Consent should be sought by the student, although a search may still be conducted if consent is not received. It is important that such a search is handled sensitively. Homestays should contact Study Links emergency number immediately for guidance, unless it is felt that a delay may put individuals at risk. A full incident report must be completed and parents informed.

Whistleblowing

The Study Links Whistle Blowing Policy (www.studylinks.com/wp) provides guidance to staff, volunteers and homestays on how to deal with malpractice in the workplace where there is concern for the safety of children.

An outright ban on any physical punishment

Under no circumstances is any form of physical punishment acceptable. This includes but is not limited to hitting, smacking, or any physical discipline. All interactions should be based on respect, positive reinforcement, and safeguarding the well-being of individuals.

Low Level Concerns

A low-level concern is any behaviour that falls short of serious misconduct but may be inappropriate or inconsistent with safeguarding standards. This includes overly familiar behaviour, inappropriate language, or blurred professional boundaries. Report any low-level concerns about conduct, behaviour, or safeguarding issues promptly to Study Links' DSL.

Allegations Against Adults

Any allegations of misconduct against homestays or staff must be reported immediately and handled according to Study Links International policies.