



## Safeguarding Children Code of Behaviour (Conduct) for Interacting with Children/Young People

The purpose of a code of behaviour is to establish acceptable boundaries of behaviour and to clarify how to communicate/interact with children and young people in a way which respects their right to be listened to, valued, respected as individuals and treated fairly. While recognising that the primary responsibility for children rests with parents, guardians or supervising adults (e.g. teachers), the RDS is committed to safeguarding children and young people who participate in or visit projects and events organised by the Society. This Code of Behaviour is for all RDS Staff, temporary staff, students on work placements and individuals on Schemes within the Society. It is also for Trustees of Council, RDS Voluntary Officers, RDS Volunteers and RDS Board Members. Breaches of the code of behaviour will be treated seriously. This code of behaviour will be displayed on the RDS website.

For the protection of all concerned, when interacting with children/young people, please be mindful of the following guidelines (this list is by no means exhaustive):

- prioritise the safety and wellbeing of the child at all times;
- always act within professional boundaries - ensure all verbal/physical contact with children is essential to the programme / project / activity you are working on. Anyone acting on behalf of the Society should always use RDS owned equipment when interacting with children, the use of personal phones, personal cameras or any personal technical device is not permitted;
- do not take or use photographs of children without prior written consent from a parent/guardian;
- never lose sight of the fact that you are with children - behave appropriately and use appropriate language at all times;
- do not be under the influence of alcohol, drugs or other illegal substances when children are present. Anyone acting on behalf of the RDS who appears under such influence will be requested to leave the premises and informed that there is a question over their fitness to work/represent the RDS. Breaches of this kind will be treated seriously;
- do not verbally interact with a child in an aggressive manner, avoid shouting or using a harsh tone of voice;
- while physical contact is a valid way of comforting, reassuring and showing concern for children, it should only take place when it is acceptable to all persons concerned (generally, the consent of the child should be sought in relation to physical contact). It should only be in response to the needs of the child and should be appropriate to the age and the level of development of the child. There may be times in an emergency or a dangerous situation where there is unavoidable physical contact e.g. to prevent physical injury of the child/other children/visitors or staff/yourself or to prevent damage to valuable property;
- no child should ever be physically punished. The RDS will not tolerate the physical chastisement of children by a parent or accompanying adult;
- do not single out a particular child for unfair criticism, favouritism or ridicule;
- treat children and young persons with dignity, sensitivity and respect;
- remember they are children first, and contributors or participants second.

If you are acting on behalf of the RDS, it is recommended that you:

- do not travel alone with children or young people (two adults, one of which should be female must accompany a child). If a child is lost or left unattended, you should approach the child, explain calmly to them who you are. The child should be accompanied by the two adults to the designated lost children's area or to An Garda Síochána if they are on the premises. If there is no designated lost children's area or An Garda Síochána, the child should be accompanied to the organisers office or customer service area. Contact with the parent/supervising adult/designated liaison person should be attempted if the child knows the telephone number;
- do not attend to any intimate care of children, such as toileting. This is the responsibility of the accompanying parent, caregiver or supervisor (e.g. teacher);
- do not spend time with a child on his/her own. If you find yourself in a situation where you are alone with a child, ensure that you can be clearly observed or seen by others.

Ultimately, if you have any concerns about the welfare of a child or feel someone is behaving inappropriately around children, you have a duty to report your concern to the RDS Designated Liaison Person (DLP) – Jill McMorro. Contact at [safeguarding@rds.ie](mailto:safeguarding@rds.ie) or on 087 2034 590. Deputy DLP – Joanna Quinn on 087 2070192. All reported concerns will be treated in confidence.