

Path Hill Outdoors

Staff Behaviour Policy

Status:	Updated Policy Date:	Scheduled Review:
Voluntary National Standard	September 2025	September 2026

Role	Name	Contact
Designated Safeguarding Leads	Julia Warwick Louise Sullivan Leanne Hogburn	julia@pathhill.com 07794 087720 louise@pathhill.com 07940 306355 leanne@pathhill.com 07300 298913
LADO (OCC)	Jo Lloyd	lado.safeguardingchildren@oxfordshire.gov.uk 01865 810603
Multi Agency Safeguarding Hubs MASH	Oxfordshire	https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/business/information-providers/multi-agency-safeguarding-hub 0345 050 7666 (this is for level 4 emergencies only) For young people who are not in immediate danger fill in the MASH form on the website.
	West Berkshire / Wokingham / Reading / Bracknell	www.berkshirerwestsafeguardingchildrenpartnership.org.uk Emergency Number (out of hours) 01344 35199 West Berkshire (working hours) 01635 503090 Wokingham (working hours) 0118 908 8002 Reading (working hours) 0118 937 3641 Bracknell (working hours) 01344 352005
	Buckinghamshire	01296 383962 (working hours) 0800 999 7677 (out of hours)

Introduction

Path Hill Outdoors is committed to providing positive social, emotional and mental health outcomes for our students, underpinned by a strong safeguarding ethos. We are equally committed to the welfare of our staff, who are expected to adhere to the highest standards

of professional behaviour to maintain confidence and respect of the general public and colleagues.

This policy reflects national and local requirements to protect and support the students we work with.

We will fulfil our local and national responsibilities as laid out in the following key documents:

- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (Sept 2025)

This policy:

- Takes account of the Guidance for Safer Working Practice for those working with children and young people in education settings (2020).
- Aims to provide a guide for adults about acceptable and desirable conduct to ensure that staff maintain safe working practice and so safeguard children and vulnerable adults.
- Does not provide a complete checklist of appropriate behaviour for staff in every circumstance. Staff must make judgements about their behaviour to secure the best interests and welfare of the students in their charge and, in so doing, will be seen to be acting reasonably.

In *very exceptional* circumstances where a member of staff believes it is the best interest of a student or member of the wider community, to breach these guidelines, that person **must** tell a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) of the justification for any proposed, or action already taken, at the earliest opportunity. The DSL will make a written record of that discussion including any areas of disagreement and actions taken.

Scope

This policy is consistent with all other Path Hill Outdoors policies and should be read alongside the **Safeguarding policy** as well as the following documents relevant to the safety and welfare of our learners:

- Prosocial Behaviour Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Allegations and Concerns about Adults Flowchart
- Data Protection & Confidentiality Policy
- Safer Recruitment Policy

This policy applies to all staff and volunteers working at Path Hill Outdoors.

For the purposes of this policy:

- **Staff** refers to all those working for or on behalf of the organisation full time or part time, in a paid or regular voluntary capacity.

- **A volunteer** is a person who performs an activity that involves spending time, unpaid with our organisation (except for approved expenses).
- A '**position of trust**' is one in which one party is in a position of power or influence over another, due to their work or the nature of their activity.
- **Child** refers to all children attending our provision and any child under the age of 18 who encounters our organisation. This includes unborn babies.
- **It does not apply to** employees of external contractors and providers of services (eg contract cleaners). Such staff are covered by the relevant Code of Conduct of their employing body.

Expectations

All staff:

- are familiar with this policy and have an opportunity to contribute to its review.
- understand their responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults.
- are aware that failure to meet the standards of behaviour and conduct in this policy may result in disciplinary action. This includes dismissal, criminal action and/or other proceedings including barring by the Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) from working in regulated activity (see Disciplinary Procedures).

Mandatory Procedures

Confidentiality

The sorting and processing of personal information is governed by GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations 2018) - see Data Protection Policy.

Student records are shared with those who have a professional need to see them. When staff have access to confidential information about colleagues, children or their parents/carers, the staff must treat such information in a sensitive and confidential way, sharing it only in the interests of a student and when legally permitted to do so.

Staff will not use their position to gain access to information for their own advantage and/or a student's or family's detriment.

If a member of staff is concerned that a learner is being abused, is at risk of being abused or may have been abused in the past, they will follow the agreed procedure set out in our Safeguarding policy.

If a member of staff is ever in any doubt about whether to share information or not, they should get advice from a DSL.

Staff relationships with students and parents

All staff know that:

- They are in positions of trust in relation to all children and students over the age of 18 on roll. They ensure that the power imbalance is never used for personal advantage or gratification. They avoid behaviour which might be interpreted by others as an abuse of the position of trust, and report any incident with this potential to the manager. This includes sharing personal contact details with students or families.
- They have a legal duty to protect the interests of children and vulnerable adults and accept the obligations inherent in that responsibility.
- They must not establish or seek to establish social contact with students to secure a friendship or to pursue or strengthen a relationship.
- They must inform a DSL of any pre-existing (prior to the member of staff or student starting at the setting) or new relationship with a student or close family member, which they feel, might compromise the organisation or their own professional standing.
- They should disclose any relationship or association (in the real world or online) that may impact on the organisation's ability to safeguard children and vulnerable adults.
- It is an offence (Sexual Offences Act 2003) for a member of staff in a position of trust to engage in **any** form of sexual activity with a child under the age of 18.

Certain behaviours are at odds with a position of trust. These include, but are not limited to:

- Harassment or discrimination based on any characteristic protected by the Equality Act 2010
- Loss of personal civility including, personal attacks or insults, displays of temper (such as throwing objects), unwanted physical contact (pushing, shoving, hitting) or the threat of the same.
- Staff must not swear, blaspheme or use offensive language in front of students, nor use language which is discriminatory and demeaning in any way.

Such behaviours are disciplinary offences and may be referred to Local Authority and/or the police (see Disciplinary Procedures).

Communication with students and parents, including social contact outside of the workplace

Staff must use their professional judgement when requesting or accepting any social contact (including through social media). This means that they must:

- Not accept any request from students for contact via any social media platform.
- Make a judgement about whether to maintain the connection in any cases where contacts were made before the student started at Path Hill Outdoors (eg staff member being friend with a parent). Staff must discuss any decision to maintain such contact with a DSL.

We acknowledge that staff may have friendships and social contact with parents of students outside of the organisation. Staff will not engage in conduct outside work that could damage their professional reputation or the reputation of the organisation.

Any contact between staff and students and/or parents that is deemed to bring the organisation into disrepute or that might lead a reasonable person to question the staff member's motivation or intentions will always be investigated and could lead to disciplinary action (see Disciplinary Procedures).

Staff must not make sexual innuendos or any comments of a sexual nature to any student (other than in the context of sex and relationship education in the PSHE curriculum), nor make any comments trivialising alcohol or drug abuse.

Occasionally, students may develop an infatuation for a member of staff. In such situations, the advice of a DSL must be sought. Staff should deal with these situations sensitively and appropriately to maintain the dignity and safety of all concerned. They should remain aware, however, that such infatuations carry a high risk of words or actions being misinterpreted and should therefore make every effort to ensure that their own behaviour is beyond reproach.

Staff must inform a DSL of any proposed or pre-existing arrangements between them and the families of students on roll that take place outside work eg baby-sitting, sports coaching, music tuition.

Staff are advised to wait until after an ex-student's 18th birthday before accepting any request on social media. In the case of ex-students who were adults while at the Path Hill Outdoors, staff should discuss the request with a DSL before making a decision.

Gifts, rewards and favouritism

Staff must:

- Declare any gift they receive from a parent or student. This does not include small tokens of appreciation such as at Christmas or the end of the year.
- Not give gifts to individual students. Any rewards or treats will be given only as part of the organisation's agreed Prosocial Behaviour policy.
- Advise a DSL about the offer of any gift or hospitality, from outside or inside the organisation, which might be interpreted as an attempt to influence staff conduct towards students, parents or other employees.

Physical contact including intimate/personal care and behaviour management

It is not possible to be specific about the appropriateness of each physical contact, since an action that is appropriate with one student, in one set of circumstances, may be inappropriate in another, or with a different child or vulnerable adult. Any physical contact will be in response to the student's needs, of limited duration and appropriate to their age, stage of development, gender, background and any agreed support or care plan.

The use of physical intervention including the use of reasonable force will always be in line with the following policies Prosocial Behaviour Policy and Use of Physical Intervention Policy.

Staff understand that:

- On a daily basis, it may be entirely appropriate and proper for staff to have physical contact with students and that they do so in ways appropriate to their professional role and in relation to the student's individual needs.
- Some students are more comfortable with touch than others and/or may be more comfortable with touch from some adults than others. Whenever possible, adults seek the student's permission before initiating contact and are sensitive to any signs that the student may be uncomfortable or embarrassed.
- They have a responsibility to ensure the way they offer comfort to a distressed student is age appropriate.
- They must never touch a student in a way which may represent a misuse of authority or considered indecent.
- Physical contact must never be secretive, or for the gratification of the member of staff.
- They should be aware of cultural or religious views about touching and be sensitive to the issues of gender.

If a member of staff believes that an action by them or a colleague could be misinterpreted, or if an action is observed which is possibly abusive, the incident and circumstances will be immediately reported to a DSL and recorded in writing. If appropriate, the DSL will consult with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or adult MASH.

Staff understand that a student who has suffered previous abuse or neglect may associate physical contact with such experiences. They recognise that such a child or vulnerable adult may seek out inappropriate physical contact and know to deter the student sensitively to help them to understand the importance of personal boundaries. Staff know that they must never indulge in play that involves rough-and-tumble or fun fights.

Students with disabilities may require more physical contact to assist their everyday learning. The arrangements are understood and agreed by all concerned, justified in terms of the student's needs, consistently applied and open to scrutiny. Staff always allow/encourage students, where able, to undertake self-care tasks independently.

If a student's behaviour presents a serious risk to themselves or others, a robust risk assessment and, where relevant, a physical intervention plan is always put in place and reviewed regularly. In all cases where physical intervention takes place, staff record the incident on CPOMS and subsequent actions and report these in line with Path Hill Outdoors behaviour and safeguarding policies.

First aid

Staff adhere to the PHO Health and Safety Policy, First Aid Policy, Long Term Medical Conditions Policy and Medication Policy.

Working 1 to 1 with students, Offsite Visits, Homes Visits and Transporting Students

Our alternative provision programme consists of instructors working 1 to 1 with students. Staff adhere to our Lone Working with Students Policy and the Transporting Students Policy.

Staff remain in a position of trust during activities that take place offsite or out of Path Hill Outdoors operating hours and so, they will ensure that their behaviour cannot be interpreted as seeking to establish an inappropriate relationship or friendship.

Staff adhere to Risk Assessments and Health & Safety guidelines. Staff will not smoke or consume alcohol on any Path Hill Outdoors Visit.

Health and Safety arrangements require members of staff to keep colleagues aware of their whereabouts, during an offsite activity. Instructors will complete the 'Offsite board' in the courtyard to note where they are going, what time and using what vehicle.

Staff appearance

Staff must dress in clothing and shoes appropriate for working outside. Instructors should refrain from wearing blue denim jeans/shorts. Instructors should not wear open toe shoes or vest tops.

Staff must dress in clothes that are not likely to be viewed as offensive, revealing or sexually provocative. It should not distract, cause embarrassment or give rise to misunderstanding. Political slogans must be avoided.

Any staff with tattoos that might be viewed as offensive, provocative or likely to give rise to misunderstanding must ensure those tattoos always remain covered when that adult is working for the organisation.

The acceptable use of technologies

Staff must not engage in inappropriate use of social network sites which may bring themselves, the setting, Path Hill community or employer into disrepute. Staff should ensure that they adopt suitably high security settings on any personal profiles they may have.

Staff must be circumspect in their use of **all** social media or any other web-based presence that they may have, including written content, videos or photographs, and views expressed directly or by association with websites/pages or posts established by others (eg 'liking', reposting or forwarding). This includes the use of dating websites where staff could encounter parents or students either with their own profile or acting covertly.

They must consider the long-term implications of any content published by them online, specifically how it might ever have an adverse effect:

- on their reputation as an individual working in an education setting
- their ability to maintain good professional boundaries with parents and with students
- on the reputation of the organisation.

Staff must not access any content from the internet on personal device during operating hours, onsite, or on a school computer or device at any time that could bring the school into disrepute or that might lead a reasonable person to question the staff member's motivation or intentions. Please refer to our Online Safety, including use of mobile devices, Policy.

All staff are aware of their part in ensuring the DFE Filtering and monitoring standards and cyber security standards are upheld. If staff become aware of misuse by another member of staff (in or out of the setting), they must report those concerns using the concerns and allegations against staff (including volunteers and contractors) procedures.

Exceptional operating circumstances

If the organisation is required to change the way we offer our provision to children and vulnerable adults due to unforeseen circumstances e.g. during a pandemic lockdown, staff safeguarding responsibilities to children and vulnerable adults will continue to apply in line with the safeguarding policy.

DSLs will ensure staff, students, and families are provided with written:

- temporary changes to procedures for working with students
- timescales for such changes so that all students, families and staff understand when such arrangements will end, and arrangements revert to those in place prior to the events leading to the need for the temporary changes.

Photography and recording

Staff use mobile phones to photograph students for educational purposes only and with parental permission. Staff adhere to our Mobile Phone Policy.

Staff will not:

- take images of a student's injury, bruising or similar (e.g. following a disclosure of abuse)
- make audio recordings of a student's disclosure.

Whistleblowing

All staff and volunteers should feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and potential failures in the organisation's safeguarding regime (or whistleblowing). All staff who wish to raise an issue relating to the organisation with someone in confidence can use the following whistleblowing procedures:

In the first instance, concerns about poor or unsafe practice within must be raised with one of our DSLs Julia Warwick (Director), Louise Sullivan (1 to 1 Instructor), Leanne Hogburn (1 to 1 Instructor).

Where a staff member feels unable to raise an issue with any of the above staff members or feels that their genuine concerns are not being addressed, other whistleblowing channels may be open to them:

- The [NSPCC whistleblowing helpline](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/whistleblowing) is available for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally. Staff can call: 0800 028 0285 or email: help@nspcc.org.uk if:
 - they think the concern will not be dealt with properly or
 - may be covered up or
 - if they raised a concern but it has not been acted upon or if they are worried they are being treated unfairly.

Allegations against staff

If a member of staff is concerned about the behaviour of a person working or volunteering for the organisation, they will follow the agreed procedure set out in the flowchart 'Allegations and concerns against adults', displayed in the Office. See Safeguarding Policy.

Induction

The welfare of all our students is of paramount importance. All staff including volunteers are informed of this policy at induction and given the chance to question and discuss the expectations set out.

Staff support

Working with children and vulnerable adults is both rewarding and demanding. We support staff by prioritising time to discuss the challenges of their role linked to any aspect of this Staff Behaviour Policy during daily debriefs, with SMT and seek further support as appropriate.

Reviewed by

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Julia Warwick".

Julia Warwick- Director September 2025