



# First Names Policy

Adopted by the Governing Body on:	10 July 2024
Next Review Date:	December 2024

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Aims

At Southill Primary, we're proud of our inclusive culture and welcoming environment. We aim to nurture happy, confident children by encouraging positive relationships between adults and children; relationships which depend on trust and mutual respect.

We know that positive relationships have a noticeable impact on children's learning and development and, to encourage and develop these, we have chosen to adopt a first names policy whereby children and staff refer to each other using their first names.

We believe that the use of first names is beneficial to the children and staff for the following reasons:

- it breaks down unproductive barriers between adults and pupils and engenders mutual respect
- it creates a more inclusive classroom environment, where anxious pupils or those with SEND feel more involved and comfortable
- it supports a more effective emotional adult/child relationship, which can enhance the wellbeing and motivation of both
- it promotes a closer sense of belonging and community among the pupils and the staff and the parents
- it can help build friendlier and more collaborative relationships between the teacher and the pupil as well as teachers and parents
- it removes gender specific titles and the need for outdated modes of addressing female members of staff according to their marital status.

The leaders of the school believe that a first names policy reflects and benefits the inclusive culture and forward-thinking ethos of Southill Primary.

## 1.2 Consultation

This policy was written in consultation with:

- teachers and leaders of schools who use a first name policy
- the Education Challenge Leads from Dorset Council
- the Safeguarding Standards Advisors from Dorset Council
- a representative group of our children
- a small group of parents
- our staff
- our governors

## 1.3 Legislation and guidance

There is no statutory or non-statutory guidance for a policy such as this.

In developing the policy, research and websites were referred to which discussed ways in which relationships can be developed, school communities can be built and a closer sense of belonging fostered.

# 2. Procedures and practice

As a result of this policy, children have been invited to use the first names of the staff of the school. It is accepted that not all children will be comfortable with this, at least initially, and will need time to adopt the policy fully.

The policy is under frequent review and, as part of the adoption process, staff have been given the choice over how they wish to be addressed at school. This demonstrates a commitment to being an inclusive and respectful workplace. Some staff have asked to wait to see how relationships are affected. It is expected that they will see many positive results where relationships have not been harmed, but enhanced.

### **3. Mental Health and Wellbeing**

Since the pandemic the school has seen a much greater number of children who feel anxious about coming to school or who experience mental health challenges on a daily basis. To counteract this, the school has introduced many initiatives to support good mental health, reduce anxiety and improve relationships for all. The first-name policy should be seen as being one of these initiatives. Additionally, more and more of our pupils have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and, again, it is intended that first name terms will help create a more inclusive environment to the benefit of these pupils.

### **4. Monitoring and review**

It is understood that not everyone will be initially comfortable with the idea of using first names. A review point has therefore been built in at the end of the Autumn Term, where the leadership of the school can canvas opinions and observations about the effectiveness of the policy. This feedback will guide planning for the development of the next stage of the policy – which is currently intended to be the full adoption of first names for all staff and children across the school.

### **5. Safeguarding**

The school is very aware of its responsibilities to keep children safe. As part of the consultation process, it was considered whether children are more likely to be vulnerable to safeguarding issues as a result of the policy. Issues around the possible risks of increased familiarity have been discussed by the leadership of the school following consultation with the Dorset Safeguarding Standards Advisors and are considered to fall within the scope of the school's already robust safeguarding measures and practices. In particular, staff know what to do if they have concerns about a child or a member of staff. Staff know how to keep themselves safe by working in a manner that is open and transparent.

### **5. Links to other school policies**

Behaviour (Relationships) Policy (2023)

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy (2023)

SEND and Inclusion Policy (2022)

DfE: Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023

DfE: Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)

### 3.3 Appendix A

## Sources

Hard data and easily accessible studies are hard to find on this subject. A lot of our research involved talking to headteachers at schools where first names are used to discuss benefits and problems. Some of the academic research we carried out is as follows:

1. At Southill, we believe that using first names in a primary school setting will help lessen the traditional hierarchical barriers between pupils and teachers, enhancing pupil engagement and learning. A study by Finn and Zimmer (2012) found that students in less hierarchical environments were more likely to participate actively in classroom discussions, leading to improved learning outcomes.

Finn, J. D., & Zimmer, K. S. (2012)

*Student Engagement: What Is It? Why Does It Matter?* Teachers College Press.

2. Using first names can significantly improve the relational dynamics between teachers and students. Research suggests that a more personal mode of address can help break down hierarchical barriers and foster a sense of mutual respect and trust. Dr. Richard Leblanc, a scholar in educational practices, notes that “addressing teachers by their first names can make them more approachable and can enhance the student teacher relationship, making students feel more comfortable and engaged”. This closer relationship can be particularly beneficial in primary education, where emotional security is crucial for young children’s learning and development .

Leblanc, R. (2019).

*Teaching and Learning: Creating a Positive Classroom Climate*. Boston: Pearson.

3. First-name usage can enhance dialogue between teachers and pupils. A study by the British Educational Research Association found that classrooms where teachers and pupils use first names encourages a collaborative learning environment where students feel comfortable discussing ideas, asking questions, and engaging in discussions without any intimidation that may be associated with formal titles. British Educational Research Association. (2020).

*The Impact of Addressing Teachers by First Names on Classroom Dynamics*

4. Addressing pupils and teachers by their first names can strengthen the relationship between them, which is crucial for effective teaching and learning. Hamre and Pianta (2006) highlight that positive teacher-pupil relationships significantly contribute to pupils’ social and academic development. First-name usage can contribute to building these positive relationships by making interactions feel more personal. Hamre, B. K., & Pianta, R. C. (2006)

*Student-teacher relationships*. Child Development

5. The emotional well-being of students can also be positively impacted by using first names. A less formal approach can reduce anxiety and stress associated with hierarchical structures and create a more relaxed learning atmosphere. Educational psychologist Dr. Laura Biggart says, “addressing teachers by their first names can help demystify authority figures, making them seem more approachable and less intimidating, which can be particularly reassuring for young children”

Biggart, L. (2017).

*Educational Psychology for Primary Teachers*. London: Routledge.

6. In many modern workplaces and social settings, first-name usage is now normal, reflecting a shift towards greater equality. We believe that, as part of our commitment to prepare children for the future, using first names means that we can better prepare our pupils for these types of workplace, where informal address is increasingly common and seen as a sign of modern, democratic engagement (Brown, 2021). Brown, J. (2021)

*Educational Psychology: Theory and Practice*. Pearson

### Further reading

Johnson, B., & Stevens, J. J. (2020). *Modern Educational Theories and Practices*. Routledge.

Jones, P., & Brown, L. (2019). *Effective Communication Strategies in Primary Education*.

Brown, J. (2021). *Educational Psychology: Theory and Practice*. Pearson.

Roffey, S. (2017). *Promoting Inclusion in Education*.

Roffey, S. (2020). *Creating a Democratic Classroom Environment*

Williams, T., & Smith, R. (2021). *Fostering Positive Teacher-Student Relationships*.