Positive Workplace Policy

Redbourn Park School

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Related policies

Staff Code of Conduct
Grievance Policy
Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
Staff Handbook (issued to staff)

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1. Aims

Redbourn Park School is a demanding place to work. Our pupils are autistic or have complex needs, and many have spent long periods out of school. This policy sets out how we create and keep a positive workplace where staff are supported, expectations are clear and everyone can do their best work for pupils.

Guided by our values of Safety, Empathy and Ambition, this policy aims to:

- Set out the culture we expect and how leaders and staff build it together
- Make expectations on teamwork, conduct, punctuality and absence clear and consistent
- Describe the support available to staff, especially when work is challenging
- Explain how staff can raise concerns and how performance and conduct concerns are handled fairly

This policy should be read with the Staff Handbook, which sets out the full procedures referred to here.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy takes account of:

- The Employment Rights Act 1996
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998
- The Acas Code of Practice on disciplinary and grievance procedures
- The Education staff wellbeing charter

This policy is prepared in accordance with the Independent School Standards and Redbourn Park's governance arrangements. The proprietor/chair provides strategic assurance; the Headteacher is responsible for putting this policy into practice at Grovehill and Gaddesden.

3. Our culture

Staff are the most important part of any school. We acknowledge that working in a small special school brings challenges that cannot be avoided, and we build a positive culture through three principles:

- We have high expectations of ourselves and others
- We work as a team
- We always act in the best interests of our pupils

We aim for a supportive, friendly workplace that is also professional and hardworking. Professionalism always comes first, and we are proud that our staff regularly go above and beyond for pupils and the school. Everyone at Redbourn Park shares responsibility for this culture.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 The proprietor/chair

The proprietor/chair approves this policy, sets pay and conditions, and makes sure leaders have the time and resources to support staff wellbeing.

4.2 The Headteacher

The Headteacher leads the culture described in this policy, makes sure it is applied consistently on both sites, and is the usual point of escalation for staff concerns about practice or decisions.

4.3 Leaders and line managers

Leaders and line managers set clear expectations, follow them up consistently, provide supervision and support, and deal with concerns early and fairly.

4.4 All staff

All staff follow this policy, the Staff Code of Conduct and the Staff Handbook, support their colleagues and raise concerns appropriately.

5. Leadership

Leaders shape the culture and the experience of work. They lead by example and uphold the high expectations set out in our vision, values, policies and procedures. Leaders will:

- Uphold the school's vision, values, policies and procedures, first by setting a good example and then by holding staff to the same standard
- Act with honesty and integrity at all times
- Keep an open door, so that all staff know they can raise concerns, talk through difficulties or ask for support without judgement or reprisal
- Make sure staff feel heard. Leaders make decisions in the best interests of pupils and the school, and will consider all input fairly, even where not everyone agrees with the final decision
- Recognise staff achievements appropriately and sincerely
- Arrange team events through the year to build relationships and thank staff for their work

6. Recruitment and induction

We follow safer recruitment guidance. At interview, leaders explain our culture and expectations so that candidates understand them, and appoint people they are confident will add to the team through their teaching, teamwork and professionalism.

New staff complete an induction and a probation period, normally 20 weeks, with targets set in their first week and reviewed during probation. Full details are in the Staff Handbook.

7. Teamwork

Most teaching at Redbourn Park is one-to-one or in small groups, but positive working relationships remain key to success and enjoyment at work. All staff are expected to:

- Be professional and act in line with the school's values, policies and procedures
- Support one another and ask for support when they need it
- Communicate positively and appropriately
- Be flexible, and offer support to colleagues where they are well placed to do so
- Set a good example for newer or less experienced colleagues
- Share concerns appropriately and professionally with the team and/or leaders
- Act with honesty and integrity
- Adapt positively to changes during the day, week or term in the best interests of pupils and the team

8. Conduct and the school day

8.1 Conduct

A positive workplace depends on clear, agreed expectations. Our aim is always a supportive working environment, underpinned by clear expectations and boundaries. This section should be read with the Staff Code of Conduct and the Staff Handbook, which give the full picture of what is expected of staff.

8.2 Punctuality and absence

The working day begins at 8am. Staff must phone their line manager if they are running late. Any absence must be reported to the line manager as early as possible and no later than 7.30am on the day of the absence. An absence of more than five working days needs a medical certificate.

8.3 The school day

Staff should arrive in good time to prepare for pupils. Our pupils are very aware of the moods of the adults around them, so staff should do their best to leave personal worries at the door.

The morning briefing is where information is shared for the day, so it must be calm and not rushed. Planning is done in advance so that pupils and staff know what to expect, while accepting that unplanned changes will happen and need flexibility.

There is a debrief at the end of each day where staff reflect on the day, pupil progress, safeguarding concerns and incidents, start any follow-up and plan for the next day. A formal staff meeting is held every other week.

Leaders are available throughout the school day to coordinate it and delegate tasks. If plans change, staff will be told. Every decision is made in the best interests of pupils; staff who believe a decision is not in pupils' best interests should raise it with the Headteacher.

8.4 Requests for leave

Requests for leave during term time must be made in advance using the online form. Apart from legal entitlements, staff should not expect term-time leave to be approved. The Headteacher may approve a request in special circumstances, which may be unpaid; examples are given in the Staff Handbook. Staff also receive two wellbeing days a year, on the conditions set out in the Staff Handbook.

9. Supporting wellbeing

Looking after the people who care for our pupils is a priority. The main support for staff comes from everyone taking responsibility for a culture that is friendly, caring and supportive. Leaders set this example and make sure our formal support is in place, including:

- Supportive, understanding and open leaders
- Supervision and reflective practice
- Training well beyond what is typical
- Mental health support, including additional supervision and private therapy sessions
- Two wellbeing days a year
- Team evenings and events
- Wellbeing Wednesdays, when staff aim to leave by 4pm

10. When work is challenging

Because of the needs of our pupils, some behaviour can be very hard to manage. It can test our patience, make us feel uncomfortable and sometimes make us feel we are not doing a good job. At these times we try to stay as calm as possible and remember that the behaviour is not personal, however much it may feel that way.

Even when staff feel overwhelmed and need immediate support, pupils stay at the centre of our practice and staff remain responsible for keeping the environment safe. Staff should ask for help early.

It is healthy to admit that challenging behaviour affects how we feel. Sharing these feelings with colleagues, sensitively and away from pupils, can help. We expect staff to reflect on their practice and check that their actions, language and decisions are always based on what is best for pupils. Colleagues and leaders are there to help with this.

11. Raising concerns and whistleblowing

We want an open culture where staff share professional disagreements and concerns directly and appropriately with colleagues and leaders, with a view to improving practice.

Concerns follow the route that matches them:

- Safeguarding concerns, including low-level concerns about adults, follow the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and must never wait for any other process
- Personal employment concerns follow the Grievance Policy
- Suspected wrongdoing in the public interest follows the whistleblowing procedure in section 4.3 of the Staff Code of Conduct and the Raising Concerns section of the Staff Handbook

If a concern about practice or decisions is not resolved, it can be escalated to the Headteacher. A concern about the Headteacher goes to the proprietor/chair. A concern involving the proprietor/chair uses the independent route set out in the relevant procedure. In relatively minor matters the line manager is usually the right person to tell first. No member of staff who raises a genuine concern will suffer detriment for doing so.

12. Performance, development and pay

High standards are discussed openly and positively as part of everyday practice. Leaders carry out regular informal drop-ins, and teachers have a formal observation each year, during which support staff are also observed.

Each member of staff has an annual appraisal with a mid-year review, as well as regular supervision with their line manager. Targets are agreed together, are SMART, and some link to the school's Self-Evaluation and School Development Plan (SEDP).

Appraisal outcomes are considered when pay is reviewed. Pay and any pay increase are decided by the proprietor/chair, taking account of the recommendation of the Headteacher. Full details of salary administration and professional development are in the Staff Handbook.

13. Concerns about conduct or performance

Where conduct, performance or attendance falls below the expected standard, our first aim is to help the member of staff improve. Many concerns can be resolved informally, through a conversation, extra support and monitoring, without using the formal procedure.

No formal action will be taken until the matter has been investigated and the facts established. Investigations are carried out professionally and with consideration for everyone involved. Where formal action is needed, the Disciplinary Policy in the Staff Handbook applies. In summary, the possible outcomes are:

- An informal or verbal warning
- A first written warning, normally active for 24 months
- A final written warning, normally active for 24 months
- Dismissal, including for gross misconduct

Staff have the right to be accompanied at formal hearings and to appeal any disciplinary sanction in writing within 10 working days. The Headteacher will agree clear timescales and support for improvement with the member of staff.

14. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher, taking account of staff feedback. The proprietor/chair will approve each review.

15. Links to other policies

This policy links to the following policies and documents:

Staff Code of Conduct; Grievance Policy; Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy; Health and Safety Policy; Equality Policy; Data Protection Policy; and the Staff Handbook (including the Disciplinary Policy).