Staff Code of Conduct Policy

See also: Staff Handbook

Approved by	Richard McCabe
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Related policies

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
Grievance Policy
Online Safety Policy

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1. Aims, scope and principles

This policy aims to set and maintain standards of conduct that we expect all staff to follow.

This code puts Redbourn Park's values of Safety, Empathy and Ambition into practice so that pupils aged 7–16 at Grovehill and Gaddesden are safe, respected and supported to learn, thrive and achieve.

Many of the principles in this code of conduct are based on the Teachers' Standards.

School staff have an influential position in the school and will act as role models for pupils by consistently demonstrating high standards of behaviour.

We expect that all teachers will act in accordance with the personal and professional behaviours set out in the Teachers' Standards.

We expect all support staff, governance members and volunteers to also act with personal and professional integrity, respecting the safety and wellbeing of others.

Failure to follow the code of conduct may result in disciplinary action being taken, as set out in the Disciplinary Policy in the Staff Handbook.

Please note that this code of conduct is not exhaustive. If situations arise that are not covered by this code, staff will use their professional judgement and act in the best interests of the school and its pupils.

2. Legislation and guidance

In line with the statutory safeguarding guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education, we should have a staff code of conduct, which should (among other things) cover low-level concerns, allegations against staff and whistle-blowing, as well as acceptable use of technologies (including the use of mobile devices), staff/pupil relationships and communications, including the use of social media.

This policy has been prepared in accordance with the Independent School Standards and the school's proprietor and governance arrangements.

3. General obligations

Staff set an example to pupils. They will:

- Maintain high standards in their attendance and punctuality
- Never use inappropriate or offensive language in school
- Treat pupils and others with dignity and respect
- Show tolerance and respect for the rights of others
- Not undermine fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs
- Not express personal beliefs in a way that exploits pupils' vulnerability or might lead them to break the law
- Understand the statutory frameworks they must act within
- Adhere to the Teachers' Standards

4. Safeguarding

Staff have a personal duty to act on and report any concern about a pupil or an adult working with children. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) leads safeguarding across the school. The Headteacher, site leads and senior teachers are deputy DSLs (DDSLs).

Staff will familiarise themselves with our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and procedures, and the Prevent duty, and ensure they are aware of the processes to follow if they have concerns about a child.

Our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and procedures are available in the school office, at both school sites and on the Drive. New staff will also be given copies on arrival.

4.1 Allegations that may meet the harm threshold

This section applies to all cases in which it is alleged that anyone working in the school, including a supply teacher, volunteer or contractor, has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child, and/or
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, and/or
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children, and/or
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children – this includes behaviour taking place inside or outside of school

Any concern that may meet the harm threshold must be reported immediately to the Headteacher. A concern about the Headteacher must be reported to the proprietor/chair. A concern about the proprietor/chair must be reported directly to the LADO; children's social care or the police must be contacted immediately where required. Staff must not investigate, confront the adult or repeatedly question the pupil before the safeguarding route is agreed.

The Headteacher is normally the case manager and will consult the LADO without delay. The proprietor/chair is case manager where the Headteacher is the subject of the allegation. Where the proprietor/chair is the subject, the school will follow LADO advice and appoint an independent case manager; the proprietor/chair will not manage or determine the matter.

4.2 Low-level concerns about members of staff

A low-level concern is behaviour towards a child by a member of staff that does not meet the harm threshold, but is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, and may be as simple as causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt'. For example, this may include:

- Being over-friendly with children
- Having favourites
- Taking photographs of children on a personal device
- Engaging in 1-to-1 activities where they can't easily be seen
- Humiliating pupils

Low-level concerns can include inappropriate conduct inside and outside of work.

All staff must report a low-level concern, including a self-referral, promptly to the Headteacher. A concern about the Headteacher must go to the proprietor/chair. A concern about the proprietor/chair must be referred for independent handling and LADO advice. If unsure whether the harm threshold is met, staff must report and allow the responsible person to seek advice.

Low-level concerns will be recorded securely, reviewed for patterns and considered against the harm threshold. The DSL will advise where safeguarding is involved, but the case-management route above remains accountable.

Unprofessional behaviour will be addressed, and the staff member supported to correct it, at an early stage.

This creates and embeds a culture of openness, trust and transparency in which our school values and expected behaviour are constantly lived, monitored and reinforced by all staff, while minimising the risk of abuse.

The Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy contains the full low-level-concern procedure, including confidentiality, record retention, pattern review, references and referral to the LADO where the threshold may be met.

Our procedures for dealing with allegations will be applied with common sense and judgement.

4.3 Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing is the reporting of wrongdoing that is "in the public interest". Examples linked to safeguarding include:

- Pupils' or staff members' health and safety being put in danger
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation or statutory requirement
- Attempts to cover up the above, or any other wrongdoing in the public interest

Staff are encouraged to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible. Their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated, and their confidentiality will be respected. The school aims to encourage openness and will support whistleblowers who raise genuine concerns under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

Staff should consider the examples above when deciding whether their concern is of a whistleblowing nature. Consider whether the incident(s) was illegal, breached statutory or school procedures, put people in danger or was an attempt to cover any such activity up.

Staff should normally report a whistleblowing concern to the Headteacher. If the concern involves the Headteacher, it must be reported to the proprietor/chair. If it involves the proprietor/chair, or an internal route is unsafe or ineffective, staff may contact an appropriate prescribed or safeguarding body directly, including the LADO, children's social care, police, Ofsted or the NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line.

Concerns should be recorded as accurately as possible, but an oral or incomplete disclosure will still be acted on. No person who raises a genuine concern, makes a protected disclosure or supports an investigation will be subjected to retaliation or victimisation. Confidentiality will be protected as far as lawful and practicable, and the identity of a whistleblower will be shared only where necessary.

This section, together with the Raising Concerns section of the Staff Handbook, is the school's whistleblowing procedure.

5. Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is any unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature that has a purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. It also includes treating someone less favourably because they've submitted or refused to submit to unwanted conduct of a sexual nature in the past, or harassment related to sex or gender reassignment. When this behaviour is unwanted, it includes (but isn't limited to):

- Unwanted physical conduct or 'horseplay' including touching, pinching, pushing and grabbing
- Continued suggestions for sexual activity after it has been made clear that such suggestions are unwelcome
- Sending or displaying material that is pornographic, or that some people might find offensive
- Unwelcome sexual advances or suggestive behaviour (which the harasser may perceive as harmless)
- Offensive emails, text messages or social media content
- Comments and jokes of a sexual nature
- Sexually suggestive looks and staring
- Sexual propositions and advances
- Promising things in return for sexual favours
- Physical contact such as massaging, hugging or kissing
- Sexual contact on social media

The school will take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of staff, including harassment by third parties. Staff will help create a positive environment that works to prevent sexual harassment. This includes

calling out sexual harassment that they witness. All witnesses will be provided with appropriate support and will be protected from victimisation.

A concern about sexual harassment must be reported to the Headteacher. A concern involving the Headteacher must go to the proprietor/chair; a concern involving the proprietor/chair must use an independent external route. The school will respond promptly, protect reporters and witnesses from victimisation and recognise that a report may also be a protected disclosure.

All staff will receive training on recognising and responding to incidents of sexual harassment. The school will monitor the treatment and outcomes of any complaints of sexual harassment or victimisation received to make sure that they are properly investigated and resolved, those who report or act as witnesses are not victimised, repeat offenders are dealt with appropriately, cultural clashes are identified and resolved and workforce training is targeted where needed.

6. Staff-pupil relationships

Staff will observe proper boundaries with pupils that are appropriate to their professional position. They will act in a fair and transparent way that would not lead anyone to reasonably assume they are not doing so.

Planned 1-to-1 teaching, therapy, personal care, medical support or regulation work must follow the pupil's plan and a proportionate risk assessment. Staff will make sure that:

- the location is appropriate to the activity and preserves both safety and dignity
- the interaction is observable or interruptible where this is compatible with privacy, clinical need and the pupil's plan
- a colleague or the Headteacher knows the arrangement, including any necessary exception to ordinary visibility

Contact with pupils outside school hours, including during school-arranged transport, visits or residential activity, must be authorised, necessary for the role and conducted through approved school arrangements and communication channels.

Personal contact details should not be exchanged between staff and pupils. This includes social media profiles.

Gifts must follow the school's approved arrangements and must never create favouritism, secrecy or obligation. Any individual gift to a pupil requires prior approval from the Headteacher and a recorded educational or welfare rationale.

Touch, safe physical support, personal care, medical assistance and restrictive intervention must be necessary, proportionate, consistent with the pupil's plan and recorded where the applicable policy requires. Staff must preserve privacy, use accessible communication and seek consent or assent wherever possible; emergency action must not be delayed. Any interaction that may have crossed a boundary or be misinterpreted must be self-referred promptly under the low-level-concern procedure.

7. Communication and social media

Staff must maintain privacy and professional boundaries on personal social media and must not connect with, follow or privately message current pupils through personal accounts. Privacy settings do not make otherwise inappropriate contact acceptable.

Staff should not attempt to contact pupils or their parents/carers via social media, or any other means outside school, in order to develop any sort of relationship. They will not make any efforts to find pupils' or parents/carers' social media profiles.

Staff must never capture, store, transmit or publish pupil images, audio or video using a personal device, account or cloud service. School-approved devices and systems may be used only for an authorised purpose and where the school has verified current permission or another lawful basis.

Staff should be aware of the school's Online Safety Policy.

8. Acceptable use of technology

Staff will not use technology in school or belonging to the school to view material that is illegal, inappropriate or likely to be deemed offensive. This includes, but is not limited to, sending obscene emails, gambling and viewing pornography or other inappropriate content.

Personal devices must not be used to photograph, record, message or store information about pupils. Any limited personal use during breaks must be away from pupils, must not interfere with duties and must comply with the Online Safety Policy, acceptable-use rules and confidentiality obligations.

Staff must use approved accounts, devices and services; protect passwords and MFA; report suspected compromise, harmful content and filtering or monitoring failures; and never disable or bypass security controls. IT contractors provide technical filtering and monitoring, the Headteacher owns internal operation, the DSL oversees safeguarding effectiveness, and the proprietor/chair provides proprietor assurance. Unapproved AI tools must not receive personal, safeguarding, confidential or copyrighted school information; AI output must be checked by a competent human and must not make unsupervised decisions about pupils.

9. Confidentiality

In the course of their role, members of staff are often privy to sensitive and confidential information about the school, staff, pupils and their parents/carers.

This information should never be:

- Disclosed except on a lawful, necessary and need-to-know basis, including safeguarding referrals, legal duties and protected disclosures
- Used to humiliate, embarrass or blackmail others
- Used for a purpose other than what it was collected and intended for

Confidentiality does not prevent safeguarding reports, reports to the LADO or emergency services, cooperation with lawful investigations, or a protected disclosure. Staff must use the correct secure channel and share only what is necessary.

10. Honesty and integrity

Staff should maintain high standards of honesty and integrity in their role. This includes when dealing with pupils, handling money, claiming expenses and using school property and facilities.

Staff will not accept bribes. Gifts and hospitality must be declared and recorded at the threshold set by the Head of Operations. Any gift that could reasonably be perceived as influencing a decision must be declared regardless of value.

Staff will ensure that all information given to the school is correct. This should include:

- Background information (including any past or current investigations/cautions related to conduct outside of school)
- Qualifications
- Professional experience

Where information previously provided to the school changes, the member of staff will notify the school as soon as reasonably practicable. Consideration will then be given to the nature and circumstances of the matter and whether this may have an impact on the member of staff's employment.

11. Dress code

Staff will dress in a professional, appropriate manner.

Clothing and appearance must be suitable for the role, health and safety, and safeguarding. Tattoos or clothing displaying offensive, discriminatory, sexual or otherwise inappropriate material must be covered; reasonable adjustments and individual circumstances will be considered.

Clothes will not display any offensive or political slogans.

12. Conduct outside of work

Staff will not act in a way that would bring the school or the teaching profession into disrepute. This includes relevant criminal offences, violence, sexual misconduct or other conduct incompatible with their role. This does not restrict protected disclosures, lawful trade-union activity, concerns raised through approved routes or lawful personal expression. Misconduct may lead to disciplinary action.

13. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually and sooner where safeguarding learning, guidance or the school's circumstances require change. It is approved by the proprietor/chair.

The proprietor/chair will assure effective implementation and timely action. The Headteacher is accountable for day-to-day implementation at Grovehill and Gaddesden.