

Including our Early Years Foundation Stage provision

## Staff Code of Conduct and Guidance on Interaction with Pupils

Authorised By	Resolution of the Board of Governors
Revised	Autumn 2010 Autumn 2011 Autumn 2012 Autumn 2013 Autumn 2014 Autumn 2015 Autumn 2016 Autumn 2017 (1-0-0) Autumn 2019 (1-1-0) Autumn 2021 (1-1-1) Autumn 2022 (1-2-0) Autumn 2023 (1-2-1) January 2024 (1-2-2)

This guidance is offered to assist staff, both paid and voluntary, in ensuring that their interaction with pupils is appropriate and professional.

This policy applies to all Staff and volunteers in the School regardless of their position, role or responsibility. It sets out clear guidance on the standards of behaviour expected from all Staff (as defined below) at the School.

References to “**Staff**” throughout this policy relate to all of the following groups:

- all members of staff including teaching and support staff;
- governors;
- volunteers;
- casual workers;
- temporary and supply staff, either from agencies or engaged directly; and
- student placements, including those undertaking initial teacher training and apprentices.

All staff are expected to exercise caution in all their dealings with pupils to avoid any behaviour which could be misunderstood or misconstrued. This guidance has regard to Keeping Children Safe in Education (Sept

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2023); Working Together to Safeguard Children (Dec 2023) and takes account of the DCSF (as it then was) Guidance - *Guidance for safer working practice for adults who work with children and young people in education settings*.

Teaching staff are reminded of the government document "Teachers' Standards" as updated December 2021, in particular Part 2 which refers to personal and professional conduct, including having regard for the need to safeguard pupils' wellbeing, not undermining Fundamental British Values, and expressing personal beliefs (including political views) correctly.

This Staff Code of Conduct and Guidance on Interaction with Pupils, forms part of our Safeguarding Guidance and should be read in conjunction with the Child Protection (Safeguarding) Policy & Safeguarding Guidance (including Low Level Concerns policy); Behaviour Policy; Anti-Bullying Policy; E-Safety Policy, ICT Acceptable Use Policies for Pupils and Workers; First Aid Policy; Whistleblowing Policy and Risk Assessment Policy.

The School requires that all Staff have read and agree to comply with this policy. Breach or failure to observe this policy may result in action being taken under the School disciplinary procedures including, but not limited to, dismissal. Staff also have an individual responsibility to maintain their reputation and the reputation of the School, both inside and outside working hours and whether they are inside or outside the work setting. This policy therefore applies equally when staff are conducting lessons online or when it is necessary for them to work from home.

Pupils will be treated with respect and dignity and no punishment, detention, sanctions or rewards are allowed outside of those detailed in the school's Behaviour Policy. Whilst it would be unrealistic and undesirable to preclude all physical contact between adults and pupils, staff are expected to avoid placing themselves in a position where their actions might be open to criticism or misinterpretation.

### **Equal treatment**

We are committed to equal treatment for all pupils regardless of sex, sexuality, race, caste, disability, religion or belief and other protected characteristics. We keep a record of discriminatory incidents.

We aim to create a friendly, caring and perceptive environment in which every individual is valued. We endeavour to contribute positively towards the growing autonomy, self-esteem and safety of each pupil.

### **One-to-one tuition or meetings**

For their own safety and protection, staff should exercise caution in situations where they are alone with pupils, ensuring, wherever practicable, that another member of staff is within earshot. If such a meeting or teaching session has been planned, whether face to face, or on Zoom or MS Teams staff should take particular care in the following ways:

- when working alone with a pupil is an integral part of your role for example in specialist settings such as peripatetic music lessons, sport, creative or performing arts, conduct and agree full risk assessments with a senior colleague
- use a room that has sufficient windows onto a corridor so the occupants can be seen, or keep the door open, or inform a colleague that the lesson/meeting is taking place

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- arrange the meeting during normal school hours when there are plenty of other people about. If a meeting out of school hours is required, a member of the Senior or Junior School Management Team should be informed
- do not continue the meeting for any longer than is necessary to achieve its purposes
- avoid sitting or standing in close proximity to the pupil, except as necessary to check work
- avoid using "engaged" or equivalent signs on doors or windows
- avoid idle discussion
- avoid all unnecessary physical contact and apologise straight away if there is accidental physical contact
- avoid any conduct that could be taken as a sexual advance
- report any incident that causes you concern to the Designated Person under the School's child protection procedures, and make a written record (signed and dated)
- report any situation where a pupil becomes distressed or angry to a senior colleague.
- Wherever possible record a one to one online lesson or meeting with a pupil

### **Physical contact**

There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for staff to have physical contact with pupils, but it is crucial that they only do so in ways appropriate to their professional role. Staff should therefore, use their professional judgement at all times. Staff should not have unnecessary physical contact with pupils and should be alert to the fact that minor forms of friendly physical contact can be misconstrued by pupils or onlookers. Any physical contact should be the minimum required for care, instruction or restraint.

A member of staff can never take the place of a parent in providing physical comfort and should be cautious of any demonstration of affection.

Physical contact should never be secretive, or of the gratification of the adult, or represent a misuse of authority. If a member of staff believes that an action could be misinterpreted, the incident and circumstances should be recorded as soon as possible, the DSL informed and, if appropriate, a copy placed on the pupil's file.

### **Physical Restraint**

Any physical restraint is only permissible when a child is in imminent danger of inflicting an injury on themselves or on another person, and then only as a last resort when all efforts to diffuse the situation have failed. Another member of staff should, if possible, be present to act as a witness. All incidents of the use of physical restraint should be recorded in writing and reported immediately to the DSL/Principal who will decide what to do next. Where this relates to a Nursery pupil, parents will be informed of any physical restraint used on their child the same day or as soon as is reasonably practicable. Any physical restraint used

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will comply with the DCSF guidance *The use of force to control or restrain pupils: Guidance for Schools in England* and any subsequent guidance.

### **Physical education and other activities requiring physical contact**

Where exercises or procedures need to be demonstrated, extreme caution should be used if the demonstration involves contact with pupils and, wherever possible, contact should be avoided. It is acknowledged that some staff, for example, those who teach PE and games, or who offer music tuition, will, on occasions, have to initiate physical contact with pupils in order to support a pupil so they can perform a task safely, to demonstrate the use of a particular piece of equipment/instrument or assist them with an exercise. This should be done with the pupil's agreement.

Contact under these circumstances should be for the minimum time necessary to complete the activity and take place in an open environment. Staff should remain sensitive to any discomfort expressed verbally or non-verbally by the child.

### **Transporting pupils**

Staff should not take one pupil only in a car, save in exceptional circumstances and with the prior knowledge and approval of the Executive. Where staff are required to transport pupils, staff should take particular care in the following ways:

- wherever practicable, avoid using private vehicles and have one adult additional to the driver to act as an escort.
- ensure that you are fit to drive and free from any substances that may impair your judgement or ability to drive
- be aware that until the pupil is passed over to a parent/carer, you have responsibility for that pupil's wellbeing, health and safety
- record the details of the journey
- record and be able to justify impromptu or emergency lifts
- ensure that there are proper arrangements in place to ensure vehicle, passenger and driver safety, including appropriate insurance, seat belts, adherence to maximum capacity guidelines etc

### **Gifts, Rewards and Favours**

Staff should take care to ensure that they do not appear to accept a gift that may be construed as a bribe or lead the giver to expect preferential treatment. Staff are required to familiarise themselves with the content of the School's Anti-Corruption and Bribery Policy.

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Staff should exercise care when selecting pupils for school teams, productions, trips and/or specific work tasks in order to avoid perceptions of favouritism or injustice. Similar care should be exercised when excluding a child from an activity without prior consultation with the Head or the Deputy Head.

Staff should not give presents/rewards to an individual outside of the School reward system.

### **Home visits**

Home visits to pupils or private tuition of pupils should take place only with the knowledge and approval of the Executive and should, wherever practicable, take place in circumstances where another adult is within earshot.

Visits/telephone calls by pupils to the homes of staff members should occur only in exceptional circumstances and with the prior knowledge and approval of the parents and the Executive.

Any unplanned contact of this nature must be reported to the Executive.

### **Communication with Pupils including the use of social media and electronic communication.**

Staff should not give their personal mobile phone numbers or email addresses to pupils, nor should they communicate with them by text message, personal email, or personal social media account. Interacting with current pupils via social networking websites is prohibited. The Principal engages with parents and Alumnae using social networking sites such as LinkedIn and Twitter and the Head of Sixth Form engages with Alumnae using social networking sites such as Facebook. Staff who engage with alumnae, parents and former colleagues using social networks should be mindful of the need for professional standards at all times and use appropriate privacy settings. Staff must not disclose their home email addresses to pupils or parents but should always use their school email addresses. If they need to speak to a pupil by telephone, they should use one of the school's telephones. . Any communication on video call platforms, such as Microsoft Teams or Zoom must be for professional reasons only and should accord with the rules of this policy at all times.

Staff should comply with the guidelines contained in the ICT Acceptable Use for Workers.

### **Use of Mobile Phones and Cameras**

Photographs will only be taken of children as per with our Taking, Storing and Using Images of Pupils policy which details how these photographs can be taken and used for the purposes of the school. Staff should use a school device to take these pictures and the images should be stored on school systems.

Neither staff nor children may use their own mobile phones to take photographs within our EYFS setting; including nursery and Reception year in our school. Staff in the EYFS are required to store their mobile phones within the Nursery Manager's office during the working day.

### **Contact outside school on trips and visits.**

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The Group Leader on all trips and visits should take a school mobile phone with them and may ask the pupils for their mobile numbers. The school mobile should be used for any contact with pupils that may be necessary. The Group Leader will delete any record of pupils' mobile phone numbers at the end of the trip or visit.

## **Confidentiality**

Staff members should never give absolute guarantees of confidentiality to pupils or adults wishing to tell them about something serious. They should guarantee only that they will pass on information to the minimum number of people who must be told in order to ensure that the proper action is taken to sort out the problem and that they will not tell anyone who does not have a clear need to know. They will also take whatever steps they can to protect the informing pupil or adult from any retaliation or unnecessary stress that might be feared after a disclosure has been made.

## **Prevent Duty**

All Staff should understand that the School has a legal duty under section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 ((updated April 2021), and as detailed in the Prevent Duty Guidance (updated Dec 2023)) to have 'due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism'. This is known as the Prevent duty. Schools are required to assess the risk of children being drawn into terrorism, including support for extremist ideas that are part of terrorist ideology. Consequently, Staff should be aware of:

- what extremism and radicalisation means and why people - including pupils and fellow Staff members - may be vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism as a consequence of it;
- what measures are available to prevent people from becoming drawn into terrorism and how to challenge the extremist ideology that can be associated with it; and
- how to obtain support for people who may be being exploited by radicalising influences.

## **Complaints**

Copies of the school's complaints procedure can be sent to any parent on request. Any complaint arising from the implementation of this policy will be considered under the school's complaints procedure.

## **Bullying**

Bullying, harassment and victimisation and discrimination will not be tolerated. We treat all our pupils, staff, and their parents fairly and with consideration and we expect them to reciprocate towards each other, the staff and the school. Any kind of bullying including cyber bullying is unacceptable and the school keeps a record of any incidents. Please see our school policy on anti-bullying for further details.

## **Whistleblowing and Low Level Concerns**

The School wishes to foster a culture of openness and safety and the school's Whistleblowing Policy, which is available on the school website, reflects this. Should any member of staff have any concerns about the behaviour of another member of staff towards a pupil, they should report it at once to the Principal (or to the Chairman of Governors where the concern relates to the Principal or a governor). Any concern will be

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thoroughly investigated under the school's whistle-blowing procedures. Such reporting will be without prejudice to the member of staff's position in the school. Where there are allegations of criminal activity, safeguarding procedures as detailed in the School's Child Protection (Safeguarding) Policy & Safeguarding Guidance will be followed. The appropriate authorities will always be informed, and advice taken, before the school undertakes any investigation of its own. Wherever possible, and subject to the rights of the pupil, the member of staff will be informed of the outcome of the investigation. No one who reports a genuine concern in good faith needs to fear retribution. A member of staff may be entitled to raise a concern directly with an external body where the circumstances justify it.

Any suspected infatuations or 'crushes' must be reported to the Executive. Suggestions that a pupil has developed a crush should be recorded. Staff should avoid being alone with pupils who have developed a crush on them and if the pupil sends personal communications to the member of Staff, this should be reported to a senior colleague and recorded. Staff are reminded that it is a criminal offence for a person aged 18 or over to have a sexual relationship with a child under 18 where that person is in a position of trust in respect of that child, even if the relationship is consensual.

As part of our whole school approach to safeguarding, we promote an open and transparent culture in which all concerns about adults working in or on behalf of the School are dealt with promptly and appropriately. This includes any concern – no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt' - that an adult working in or on behalf of the School may have acted in a way that:

- is inconsistent with this Staff Code of Conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work; and
- does not meet the harm threshold set out in Part 4 of the statutory guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), or is otherwise not serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO.

Such allegations or concerns are referred to as "low-level concerns" within KCSIE. The term "low-level" does not mean that it is insignificant. Such behaviour can exist on a wide spectrum, from the inadvertent or thoughtless, or behaviour that may look to be inappropriate, but might not be in specific circumstances, through to that which is ultimately intended to enable abuse.

In order to create and embed a culture of openness, trust and transparency in which the School's values and expected behaviour set out in this Staff Behaviour Policy are lived, monitored and reinforced constantly by all staff, it is vital that any such low-level concerns are shared in accordance with the School's Low-Level Concerns Policy which can be within the School's Child Protection ( Safeguarding ) Policy.

Any questions regarding low-level concerns and/or the procedure for reporting them should be raised with the DSL..

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Date	Version	Change History
Autumn 2017	1-0-0	Legislation References updated
Autumn 2019	1-1-0	Reference to KCSIE Sept 2019  Other Policy names updated  Reference to Teaching Standards added
Autumn 2021	1-1-1	Reference to KCSIE 2021  Section on Bullying added.  Section on Use of Mobile Phones and Cameras now references Taking, Storing and Using Images policy
Autumn 2022	1-2-0	Reference to KCSIE 2022  Low Level Concerns added  Sandleford changed to Nursery
Autumn 2023	1-2-1	Reference to KCSIE 2023  Reference to zoom/teams video calls  E-Safety policy added
January 2024	1-2-2	Prevent Duty Guidance updated  Working Together as of December 2023 updated