

Policy: Staff Code of Conduct

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| Date Policy reviewed | September 2023 |
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| Reviewed by | SJG and FG |

Introduction

Abbey School will foster a culture of the highest professional standards. This Code of Conduct sets out the standards expected and applies to all school and nursery staff (employed and self-employed) and volunteers, from now on referred to as School Staff. This duty is, in part, exercised through the development of respectful, caring and professional relationships between adults and pupils and behaviour by adults that demonstrate integrity, maturity and good judgment. This guidance is in addition to Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019 and guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who work with Children and Young People in Education 2019.

Principles of Professional Practice

School Staff as appropriate to the role and/or job description of the individual, must:

- place the well-being and learning of pupils at the centre of their professional practice.
- have high expectations for all pupils, be committed to addressing underachievement, and work to help pupils progress regardless of their background and personal circumstances.
- treat pupils fairly and with respect, take their knowledge, views, opinions and feelings seriously, and value diversity and individuality.
- model the characteristics they are trying to inspire in pupils, including enthusiasm for learning, a spirit of enquiry, honesty, tolerance, social responsibility, patience, and a genuine concern for other people.
- respond sensitively to the differences in the home backgrounds and circumstances of pupils, recognising the key role that parents and carers play in pupils' education.
- seek to work in partnership with parents and carers, respecting their views and promoting understanding and co-operation to support the young person's learning and well-being in and out of school.
- reflect on their own practice, develop their skills, knowledge and expertise, and adapt appropriately to learn with and from colleagues.

Confidentiality

School Staff may have access to confidential information about pupils in order to undertake their responsibilities. Further information and guidance can be found in the confidentiality policy.

Propriety, Behaviour, Reputation and Appearance

School staff have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of pupils. They should adopt high standards of personal conduct in order to maintain the confidence and respect of their peers, pupils and the public in general. An individual's behaviour, either in or out of the workplace, should not compromise her/his position within the work setting or bring the school into disrepute.

School staff must ensure they are dressed decently, professionally, safely and appropriately for the tasks they undertake. Jeans, leggings, t-shirts and open-toe shoes must not be worn. **Those who dress or appear in a manner which could be considered as inappropriate could render themselves vulnerable to criticism or allegations of misconduct.**

E-Safety and Social contact

School staff's social media profiles should not be available to pupils. If they have a personal profile on social media sites, they should not use their full name, as pupils may be able to find them. Staff should consider using a first and middle name instead, and set public profiles to private.

School staff must not establish or seek to establish social contact with pupils or parents for the purpose of securing a friendship or to pursue or strengthen a relationship. This includes social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook and blogging. Even if a pupil seeks to establish social contact, or if this occurs coincidentally, the member of staff should exercise her/his professional judgment in making a response and be aware that such social contact in person, by phone or on the internet could be misconstrued and may place the member of staff in a very vulnerable position.

School staff must not post material which damages the reputation of the school or which causes concern about their suitability to work with children and young people. Those who post material which could be considered as inappropriate could render themselves vulnerable to criticism or allegations of misconduct.

Refer to E-Safety policy for further information.

Low-level concerns about members of staff

A low-level concern is a behaviour towards a child by a member of staff that does not meet the harms threshold, 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 one-to-one activities where they can't easily be seen
- Using inappropriate language

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

Reporting a Low Level Concern

Where a low-level concern has been identified, this will be reported as soon as possible to the headmistress. However, it is never too late to share a low-level concern if this has not already happened.

Where the headmistress is not available, the information will be reported to the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy), i.e. the most senior member of SLT acting in this role.

Low-level concerns about the Designated Safeguarding Lead will be reported to the headmistress and those about the headmistress will be reported to the DSL. Where the low-level concern has been reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, they will inform the headmistress of the details as soon as possible.

We also encourage staff to self-refer if they find themselves in a situation that could be misinterpreted. If staff are not sure whether behaviour would be deemed a low-level concern, we encourage open and honest reporting of all incidents.

All reports will be handled in a responsive, sensitive and proportionate way.

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 values and expected behaviour are constantly lived, monitored and reinforced by all staff, while minimising the risk of abuse.

Reporting and responding to low-level concerns is covered in more detail in our safeguarding policy and low level concern policy. This is available in the staff room and from the school office, as well as in the policies section of our school website.

Physical contact

There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for school staff to have physical contact with pupils, such as when a distressed pupil needs comfort and reassurance or as an integral part of some lessons (see also behaviour management policy). If appropriate, try to ensure that there are several witnesses to any physical contact – such as in the playground with other school staff and children present.

Innocent actions and appropriate physical contact may be misconstrued and it is therefore crucial that school staff only initiate physical contact for the minimum time necessary and in ways appropriate to their own role and the needs of the child.

School staff should use their professional judgement at all times. Where feasible, school staff should seek the child's permission before initiating contact. Where a member of staff thinks that an incident could have been misinterpreted it should be reported to the Headteacher (refer to Whistleblowing policy available in the school office).

Pupils are entitled to respect and privacy when changing clothes. However, there needs to be an appropriate level of supervision in order to safeguard pupils, satisfy health and safety considerations and ensure that bullying or teasing does not occur. This supervision should be appropriate to the needs and age of the pupils concerned and sensitive to their needs.

Educational Visits and School Clubs

School staff should take particular care when supervising pupils in the less formal atmosphere of an educational visit, particularly in a residential setting, or after-school activity. School staff remain in a position of trust and the same standards of conduct apply. The school has a policy on educational visits which forms part of this Code of Conduct.

Curriculum

Many areas of the curriculum can include / raise subject matter of a sensitive nature. Care should be taken to ensure that resource materials cannot be misinterpreted and clearly relate to the learning outcomes identified by the lesson plan. This plan should highlight particular areas of risk and sensitivity. Responding to pupils' questions can require careful judgement and school staff must take guidance in these circumstances from a senior member of staff.

Acceptable use of mobile phones

- The School allows staff to bring in to school personal mobile telephones and devices for their own use. Under no circumstances does the school allow a member of staff to contact a current pupil or parent/carer using their personal device.
- School staff bringing personal devices into school must ensure there is no inappropriate or illegal content on the device.

Abbey School & EYFS – Staff Code of Conduct

- School staff must ensure that their mobile telephones/devices are left inside their bag throughout contact time with children. Staff bags should be placed out of reach of children
- If school staff have a personal emergency they are free to use the school phone or make a personal call from their mobile in the designated staff area of the setting; office and staff room.
- If a member of school staff has a family emergency or similar and requires to keep their mobile phone to hand, prior permission must be sought from the SLT.
- It is the responsibility of all school staff to be vigilant and report any concerns to the SLT.

Acceptable use of Cameras

Photographs taken for the purpose of recording a child or group of children participating in activities or celebrating their achievements is an effective form of recording progression. However, it is essential that photographs are taken and stored appropriately to safeguard the children in our care.

- Only designated school cameras are to be used by school staff to take any photo within the school, or on outings.
- In the event of a designated camera not being available a member of staff may use their own device with images to be transferred immediately to the school server, with deletion from any personal device.

Sharing Concerns and Recording Incidents

All school staff must be vigilant and share concerns and report incidents. Whistleblowing is the mechanism by which staff can voice their concerns (refer to Whistleblowing policy)

Safeguarding and Welfare of pupils

School staff have a duty to safeguard pupils from:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect

Refer to child protection policy and procedures for further information.

Training

School staff must attend relevant training courses in order to continue their professional development.

Risk Assessment

School staff must risk assess daily in order to keep children and themselves safe. Any potential risks must be reported to the DSL or DDSL.

Staff Supervision

Termly supervision meetings will be conducted by the Headteacher or Foundation Lead for every member of staff employed by Schools in Limited. This is an opportunity to discuss your professional development. Members of staff employed by Schools in Limited are entitled to request additional meetings as required.

School staff must refer to The School Handbook.