



**THE CEDARS  
SCHOOL**

## **Staff Code of Conduct**

### **Safe Working Practices for the Protection of Children and Staff**

#### **Underpinning Principles**

The welfare of the child is paramount. This code of conduct is based on various guidance documents provided by the Department for Education and other bodies. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Staff Code of Conduct.

- Staff are responsible for their own actions and behaviour and should avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions.
- Staff should work, and be seen to work, in an open and transparent way.
- Staff should discuss and/or take advice promptly from their line manager or another senior member of staff over any incident which may give rise to concern.
- Records should be made of any such incident and of decisions made/further actions agreed, in accordance with school policy for keeping and maintaining records.
- Staff should apply the same professional standards regardless of gender and sexuality.
- All staff should know the name of the designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy Safeguarding Lead, be familiar with both the school's and the local child protection arrangements and understand their responsibilities to safeguard and protect children and young people.
- Staff should be aware that breaches of the law and other professional guidelines could result in criminal or disciplinary action being taken against them.

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## **Behaviour Management**

All pupils have a right to be treated with respect and dignity. Corporal punishment is unlawful in all schools. Equally, staff should not use any form of degrading treatment to punish a pupil. The use of humour can help to defuse a situation. The use of sarcasm, demeaning or insensitive comments towards pupils is not acceptable in any situation.

## **Bullying and Peer Abuse**

Our policy on the prevention of bullying is set out in a separate policy document, which acknowledges that to allow or condone bullying may lead to consideration under Child Protection procedures.

Some children are thought to be particularly vulnerable to physical, sexual and emotional abuse by their peers. Such abuse is taken as seriously as abuse perpetrated by an adult.

## **Preventing Extremism and Radicalisation**

Our policy on preventing Extremism and Radicalisation is set out in a separate policy document. Protecting children from the risk of radicalisation is part of our wider safeguarding duties, and is similar in nature to the protection of children from other forms of abuse. All adults working at The Cedars School are required to report instances where they believe a child may be at risk of harm or neglect to a DSL immediately.

## **Confidentiality**

Members of staff may have access to confidential information about pupils in order to undertake their everyday responsibilities. In some circumstances staff may be given additional highly sensitive or private information.

- They should never use confidential or personal information about a pupil or her/his family for their own, or others', advantage (including partners, friends, relatives or other organisations).
- Information must never be used to intimidate, humiliate, or embarrass the pupil.
- Confidential information about a child or young person should never be used casually in conversation or shared with any person other than on a need to know basis. In circumstances where the child's identity does not need to be disclosed the information should be used anonymously.
- There are some circumstances in which a member of staff may be expected to share information about a child, for example when abuse is alleged or suspected. In such cases, individuals have a duty to pass on information without delay, but only to those with designated child protection responsibilities.
- If a member of staff is in any doubt about whether to share information or keep it confidential he or she should seek guidance from a senior member of staff.
- Any media or legal enquiries should be passed to the Senior Leadership Team.

## **Dress and Appearance**

We expect pupils to present themselves well and so it is essential that we model high standards for them in this regard. In summary:

- Male staff should wear a shirt, tie and jacket, with top button fastened;
- Female staff should wear a jacket;
- PE staff should wear the official school staff kit, and a shirt, tie and jacket for parents' evenings;
- All staff should project a professional image.

A smart and tidy appearance is expected by all members of staff on all occasions.

## **Duty of Care**

Teachers and other education staff are accountable for the way in which they exercise authority, manage risk, use resources and protect pupils from discrimination and avoidable harm.

All staff, whether paid or voluntary, have a duty to keep young people safe and to protect them from physical and emotional harm. This duty is in part exercised through the development of respectful, caring and professional relationships between staff and pupils and also through the behaviour demonstrated by staff which reflects integrity, maturity and good judgement.

Local Authorities (LAs), schools and parents have legitimate expectations about the nature of professional involvement in the lives of pupils. When individuals accept a role that involves working with children and young people, they must understand and acknowledge the responsibilities and trust inherent in that role.

## **Educational Visits and After-School Clubs**

Staff should take particular care when supervising pupils in the less formal atmosphere of a residential setting or after-school activity.

During school activities that take place off the school site or out of school hours, a more relaxed discipline or informal dress and language may be acceptable.

However, staff remain in a position of trust and need to ensure that their behaviour cannot be interpreted as seeking to establish an inappropriate relationship or friendship.

Where out of school activities include overnight stays, careful consideration needs to be given to sleeping arrangements. Pupils, staff and parents should be informed of these prior to the start of the trip.

Health and Safety arrangements require members of staff to keep colleagues/employers aware of their whereabouts, especially when involved in an out of school activity.

## **Exercise of Professional Judgement**

This guidance cannot provide a complete checklist of what is, or is not, appropriate behaviour for staff. However, it does highlight behaviour that is illegal, inappropriate or inadvisable. There will be occasions and circumstances in which staff have to make decisions or take action in the best interests of the child or young person which could contravene this guidance or where no guidance exists. Individuals are expected to make judgements about their behaviour in order

to secure the best interests and welfare of the children in their charge and, in so doing, will be seen to be acting reasonably. Ideally individuals should:

- Discuss any proposed action with a senior colleague whenever possible.
- Record the events and any discussions/actions taken with reasons.

### **Internet Use (Inc. Social Media)**

The School has a clear policy for access and use of the Internet. Further information is also provided to staff in our Handbook and Acceptable Use Guidelines.

Under no circumstances should adults in school access inappropriate images. Accessing child pornography or indecent images of children on the internet, and making, storing or disseminating such material, is illegal and, if proven, will invariably lead to the individual being barred from working with children and young people.

Using school equipment to access inappropriate or indecent material, including adult pornography, is a breach of the school's ICT usage policy and is likely to result in disciplinary action being taken.

Staff using social media may not become 'friends' with pupils online. Staff should not upload content or photographs, or make comments that would bring themselves, the school or the teaching profession into disrepute (whether inside or outside of school).

### **Mobile Phones**

Staff mobile phones or other personal devices must not be used for taking photographs of pupils. The school camera or a school mobile phone or tablet may be used but such devices should remain on the school site unless they are being used for an approved school activity off-site. They should not be taken to a member of staff's home.

### **One-to-One Situations**

Staff working in one to one situations with children and young people may be more vulnerable to allegations. Teachers and others must recognise this possibility and should plan and conduct such meetings accordingly. Every attempt should be made to ensure the safety and security needs of both staff and pupils are met.

- Ensure all meetings whenever possible take place in an open area and not in remote or secluded locations around the school.
- Ensure there is visual access and/or an open door in one-to-one situations.
- If providing transport, always carry a minimum of 2 pupils in the vehicle.
- Always report to a senior colleague any situation where a pupil becomes distressed or angry.
- Pre-arranged meetings with pupils away from the School premises should not be permitted unless approval is obtained from their parent and the Headmaster or other senior colleague with delegated authority.

### **Physical Contact with Pupils**

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.

It is unrealistic to suggest that teachers should never touch pupils, and they have the right to restrain and control pupils in certain circumstances.

If it is necessary to restrain or control a pupil, the amount of force used must be no more than is needed for the individual to regain control of themselves. 'Physical intervention' may be used to restrain a child if they are trying to prevent injury to another child, if a child is in danger of hurting themselves, where action is necessary in self-defence or because there is an imminent risk of injury or significant damage to property. Any incident of physical intervention must be recorded in the incident log book in the Main office (which is kept in a secure cabinet). A copy of the DfE information booklet on 'Use of force to control or restrain pupils' is available from Sam Williams on request.

All staff must clearly understand the need to maintain a professional relationship with pupils at all times. Teachers must make sure that appropriate boundaries are maintained during their dealings with pupils. This includes the type of language they employ and also their conduct, which should not be such that it gives rise to comment or speculation.

A "no touch" approach is impractical for most staff and may in some circumstances be inappropriate. When physical contact is made with pupils this should be in response to their needs at the time, limited in duration and appropriate given their age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity and background. Appropriate physical contact in schools may occur most often with younger pupils.

It is not possible to be specific about the appropriateness of each individual occurrence of physical contact, since an action that is appropriate with one child in one set of circumstances may be inappropriate in another, or with a different child. Staff should, therefore, use their professional judgement at all times.

Physical contact should never be secretive, or for 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 and copies given to the DSL.

The administration of corporal punishment to a pupil is prohibited during any activity, whether or not within the school premises, and this applies to all members of staff (including volunteers).

Activities which may require physical contact:

Some staff, for example, those who teach PE and games, or those who offer music tuition, will on occasions have to initiate physical contact with pupils in order to support a child so they can perform a task safely, to demonstrate the use of a particular piece of equipment/instrument or to 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.

### **Power and Position of Trust**

As a result of their knowledge, position and/or the authority invested in their role, all adults working with children and young people in educational settings are in positions of trust in relation to the young people in their care. **A relationship between a member of staff and a pupil cannot be a relationship between equals.** There is potential for exploitation and harm of vulnerable young people and staff have a responsibility to ensure that an

unequal balance of power is not used for personal advantage or gratification. Staff should therefore ensure that their behaviour and actions do not place pupils or themselves at risk of harm or of allegations of harm to a pupil (for example, in one-to-one tuition or tutorials, conveying a single pupil by car, engaging in inappropriate electronic communication with a pupil, showing excessive one-to-one attention beyond the requirements of their usual role and responsibilities etc).

- Wherever possible, staff should avoid behaviour which might be misinterpreted by others, and report and record any incident with this potential.
- Where a person aged 18 or over is in a position of trust with a child under 18, it is an offence for that person to engage in sexual activity with or in the presence of that child, or to cause or incite that child to engage in or watch sexual activity.

### **Propriety and Behaviour**

All staff have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of children and young people. 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. The General Teaching Council for England's Code of Professional Values and Practice, which is now embodied within the standards for Qualified Teacher status, makes explicit that "teachers recognise the value and place of the school in the community and the importance of their own professional status. They understand that this requires judgement about appropriate standards of personal behaviour" (March 2009).

Staff should never:

- Make sexual remarks to a student (including in email, text messaging, chat room, phone or letter communication).
- Discuss their own sexual relationships with, or in the presence of, students.
- Humiliate or demean a student or encourage others to do so.

### **Pupils in Distress**

There may be occasions when a distressed pupil needs comfort and reassurance. This may include age-appropriate physical contact. Staff should remain self-aware at all times in order that their contact is not threatening, intrusive or subject to misinterpretation. Where a member of staff has a particular concern about the need to provide this type of care and reassurance she/he should seek further advice from a senior manager.

### **Sexual Contact with Young People**

Any sexual behaviour by a member of staff with or towards a child or young person is both inappropriate and illegal. Children and young people are protected by the same laws as adults in relation to non-consensual sexual behaviour. They are additionally protected by specific legal provisions regardless of whether the child or young person consents or not.

There are occasions when adults embark on a course of behaviour known as 'grooming' where the sole purpose is to gain the trust of a child, and to manipulate that relationship so sexual abuse can take place. Staff should be aware that conferring special attention and favour upon a child might be construed as being part of a 'grooming' process, which is an offence.

### **Sharing Concerns and Recording Incidents**

All staff should be aware of the School's Child Protection procedures, including procedures for dealing with allegations against staff.

Staff who are the subject of allegations are advised to contact their professional association.

In the event of an incident occurring, which may result in an action being misinterpreted and/or an allegation being made against a member of staff, the relevant information should be clearly and promptly recorded and reported to senior staff. Any notes are kept in the Incidents File in the Head's office. Early discussion with a parent or carer could avoid any misunderstanding.

Members of staff should feel able to discuss with their line manager any difficulties or problems that may affect their relationship with pupils so that appropriate support can be provided or action can be taken.

It is a requirement to report to the Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS), within one month of leaving the School, any person (employed, contracted, a volunteer or pupil) whose services are no longer used because he or she is considered unsuitable to work with children. In this context, ceasing to use a person's services includes: dismissal, non-renewal of a contract, no longer using a teacher from a supply agency, terminating a student's placement, no longer using staff employed by contractors, no longer using volunteers, resignation or voluntary withdrawal from any of the above.

It may be necessary to suspend a member of staff from duty while an investigation is carried out.

### **Showers and Changing**

Young people are entitled to respect and privacy when changing clothes or taking a shower. However, there needs to be an appropriate level of supervision in order to safeguard young people, satisfy health and safety considerations and also to ensure that bullying or teasing does not occur. This supervision should be appropriate to the needs and age of the young people concerned and sensitive to the potential for embarrassment.

Staff would therefore need to be vigilant about their own behaviour, ensure they follow agreed guidelines and be mindful of the needs of the pupils.

### **Social Contact**

Staff should not establish or seek to establish social contact with pupils for the purpose of securing a friendship or to pursue or strengthen a relationship. Even if a young person seeks to establish social contact, or if this occurs coincidentally, the member of staff should exercise her/his professional judgement in making a response and be aware that such social contact could be misconstrued.

Staff should not give their personal details such as home phone number or home e-mail address to pupils unless the need to do so is agreed with the Senior Management Team. Internal e-mail systems should only be used in accordance with school policy.

## **Whistle-blowing**

Whistle-blowing is when someone reports suspected wrongdoing at work, also referred to as 'making a disclosure which is in the public interest'. This may be if they feel something is not right, or illegal, or if someone is neglecting their duties, including:

- someone's health, safety or welfare is in danger
- damage to the environment
- a criminal offence
- the company isn't obeying the law (for example not having the right insurance in place)
- covering up wrongdoing

Whistle-blowing is the mechanism by which staff can voice their concerns, made in good faith, without fear or repercussion.

Staff should acknowledge their individual responsibilities to bring matters of concern to the attention of the Senior Management Team and/or relevant external agencies. This is particularly important where the welfare of children may be at risk.

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