



## Code of Conduct for Staff

### Purpose Scope and Principles

This Code of Conduct is designed to give clear guidance on the standards of behaviour all school staff are expected to observe, and as such the Schools will notify staff of this code and the expectations therein and of any updating which take place at annual review. It is designed to help pupils and staff work together in an environment that is safe and mutually supportive, and to enable staff to fulfil their responsibilities of duty and care towards their pupils.

This Code is also designed to minimise the risk of any vulnerability to false or malicious allegations of staff misconduct or abuse towards pupils or students with whom they work. All staff working with young people will understand and appreciate that a Code of Conduct and Guidance cannot cover all eventualities and will not totally remove the risk of false or malicious allegations.

This code applies to all individuals working for the Schools at all levels (permanent, fixed term or temporary), and includes Directors, volunteers, agents or any other person associated with us (collectively referred to as staff in this Code). All staff are responsible for ensuring that they are behaving appropriately.

**This Code of Conduct does not replace or take priority over the Schools' Safeguarding Procedures.** All staff must be aware of the action that must be taken by staff when child abuse is suspected whether inside the schools, at home or elsewhere, or following any disclosure of alleged abuse. A copy of the Schools' Safeguarding Procedures is available in the Staff Handbook, on the Schools Website and Staff Intranet or from either Designated Safeguarding Lead at Highfield or Brookham.

### Professional Conduct

Staff are expected to promote fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance for those with different faiths and beliefs.

In addition, specifically for teaching staff, the Schools have the expectation that teachers will put the well-being and education of their pupils first and will meet the DfE Teachers' Standards, the headline principles of which are that teachers must:

1. Set high expectations which inspire, motivate and challenge pupils;
2. Promote good progress and outcomes by pupils;
3. Demonstrate good subject and curriculum knowledge;
4. Plan and teach well-structured lessons;
5. Adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all pupils;
6. Make accurate and productive use of assessment;

7. Manage behaviour effectively to ensure a good and safe learning environment;
8. Fulfil wider professional responsibilities;
9. Uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour within and outside schools;
10. Have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the Schools;
11. Have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks, which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

For further details visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachers-standards>

## **Keeping Children Safe in Education**

*The safety and well-being of every pupil at Highfield and Brookham is of paramount importance. Every child has the right to grow up and to live in a safe environment. All staff have a duty to protect pupils from abuse and bullying and to promote their well-being.*

The Schools have a Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures and a Whistleblowing Policy. All Staff must familiarise themselves with and abide by these policies.

All members of staff have a duty to report Child Protection concerns about a pupil to the Schools' Designated Safeguarding Leads (Highfield – Andy Baker, Brookham – Georgie Hunter).

In addition, all staff must attend training sessions, as required by the Schools. The Schools continue to carry out appropriate employment checks for all staff to ensure their eligibility and suitability to work at Highfield and Brookham.

## **Honesty and Integrity**

Staff must maintain high standards of honesty and integrity at work. Staff must comply with Schools' policies and procedures in relation to expenses and purchasing, the handling and claiming of money and the use of Schools' property and facilities.

## **Confidentiality**

Staff must maintain the confidentiality of all confidential matters and information relating to current pupils (and/or their parents/carers), colleagues or the management of the Schools, the unauthorised disclosure of which might embarrass, harm or prejudice the individual or the Schools. However, staff have an obligation to share with the Schools' DSLs any information, which gives rise to concern about the safety or welfare of a pupil. Staff must never promise a pupil that they will not act on information that they disclose.

## **Conduct away from Work**

Staff must not engage in behaviour outside of work that could seriously damage the reputation and standing of the Schools or the employee's own reputation or the reputation of other members of the school community. In particular, offences that involve violence or the possession/use of illegal drugs or sexual misconduct are likely to be regarded as unacceptable and lead to the Schools responding appropriately.

Staff must exercise caution when using Information Technology, in both a professional and personal capacity, and be aware of the risk to themselves and others. They should use social networking sites wisely and cautiously so that they do not jeopardise themselves, others or their place of work. They must:

- set their profile as private;
- not allow access to pupils or parents/carers;
- avoid publishing or allowing to be published any material/comments/images that could damage their professional reputation or bring the Schools into disrepute.
- outside school hours, they should not make contact with pupils or parents/carers via telephone, text message, email or on social networking sites;
- staff should not give their personal details such as mobile and home telephone numbers, home or email address.

Staff may, **with the agreement of the Head**, undertake work outside schools, either paid or voluntary, providing that it does not conflict with the interests of the Schools nor be to a level that may contravene the working time regulations or affect an individual's work performance.

### Relationship with other individuals

Staff should treat others with respect and must not treat anyone less/more favourably than another because of his or her sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, disability, age, ethnic background, religion or belief, political or immigration status.

Bullying/Harassment will not be tolerated. All members of staff are expected to be vigilant in ensuring that instances of such are dealt with appropriately as soon as they are witnessed or reported.

### 'Rape Culture'

By the term 'rape culture', Highfield and Brookham School understand a culture in which sexual violence is condoned and normalised through attitudes, actions and structures. Attitudes and actions can include 'lad culture', jokes trivialising sexual violence, victim blaming, 'slut shaming' and objectification of women. Structures can include a failure to recognise the importance of sexual violence between peers within a school's safeguarding systems, a failure to respond appropriately to disclosures when received, or a lack of focus on the issue at a management or Directorship level.

The sexual abuse of children by other children is a specific safeguarding issue in education and all staff must ensure that they are aware of this, are neither implicitly nor explicitly condoning such attitudes and behaviours, and are actively promoting a culture of tolerance and respect between genders, in both pupils and fellow colleagues. All staff should operate on the basis that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable and will not be tolerated. Especially important is not to pass off any sexualised behaviour or language, sexual violence or sexual harassment as 'banter', 'part of growing up' or 'having a laugh'. All staff must have a zero tolerance attitude to such behaviour and will challenge it.

All staff should understand, that even if there are no reports in our schools it does not mean it is not happening, it may be the case that it is just not being reported. As such it is important if staff have any concerns regarding peer on peer abuse they should speak to their designated safeguarding lead (or Deputy DSL).

### General Guidance on Interaction with Pupils

All Staff should take care that their relationships with pupils reflect the age, gender and maturity of the pupils. It will be particularly important to ensure that all aspects of demeanour, language and attitudes, however conveyed

do not give rise to misunderstandings, especially when dealing with adolescent boys and girls. Ambiguous or ambivalent comment and conduct, in particular, should be avoided.

All Staff need to ensure that their behaviour does not inadvertently lay them open to allegations of abuse. They need to treat all pupils with respect and try, as far as possible, not to be alone with a child or young person. Where this is not possible, for example, in an instrumental music lesson, or sports coaching lesson, it is good practice to ensure that others are within earshot. Where possible, a gap or barrier should be maintained between teacher and child at all times. Any physical contact should be the minimum required for care, instruction or restraint; however, it is recognised that staff working with younger children (at the Pre-Prep and particularly in the EYFS) will need to use the appropriate physical contact in order to support children with their learning and day to day activities. Staff should avoid taking one pupil on his/her own in a car.

## Role of Medical Staff

Health professionals in a school operate within their own professional guidelines, which include an obligation to refer cases of abuse to the DSL relevant to each school. The School Nurse holds a copy of the Department of Health's child protection guidelines for senior nurses.

## Physical Contact

It is unrealistic and undesirable to suggest that staff should never touch the children in their care. Touching is a legitimate way of offering reassurance and comfort. However, it is a very sensitive issue, and can be misconstrued, feel invasive, provide opportunities for malicious allegation, or provide an environment in which abuse can take place unnoticed. The central issue is one of INTENTION, rather than the PRECISE point of bodily contact i.e. what was your intention in touching a child? Does your explanation stand the test of 'reasonable compassion, allied to common sense and decency?' The Children's Act attempts to overcome an offence, which usually takes place in private. This makes offences difficult to establish and prove. The Act makes the welfare of the child of paramount importance. Where independent evidence is available, allegations can be investigated and cleared up quickly. It is for this reason that staff should ensure, where possible, that there is an independent witness i.e. in the administration of medicines, general discipline, changing room supervision, extra tuition etc. **Peer scrutiny should be accepted as a mechanism for creating abuser free schools.**

## Appropriate bodily contact

It is prudent not to instigate physical contact.

Staff should limit physical contact with children to the non-bathing suit area. Staff must not play fight with children. At the very least, this runs the risk of causing accidental injury, and a claim of negligence.

Occasions when physical contact is acceptable fall into one of the categories below:

- i) **Action to prevent harm or injury to the pupil or to others.**  
If it is necessary to prevent a pupil causing injury to him/herself or to others, the use of minimum force and contact necessary to prevent harm or injury is acceptable and defensible. Such incidents must always be reported (see 'Physical Restraint' and 'Reporting Incidents' below).
- ii) **Comforting a pupil in distress.**  
An arm around the shoulders of a pupil who is very distressed is acceptable. However, staff should consider how others might perceive the action, and ensure that it does not develop into unnecessary contact or

contact which could be misinterpreted. **It is unacceptable to physically comfort the same pupil on repeated occasions: alternative means of dealing with the problem should be used.**

**iii) Unavoidable contact:**

This is a particularly sensitive issue in subjects such as Physical Education and Music and Drama and in some forms of skills coaching. This might also apply when our youngest children require assistance with toileting and hygiene issues. All staff must be alert to the possibilities of the misinterpretation of any contact.

To avoid such misunderstanding, contact should be planned and explained to pupils and must be demonstrably unavoidable. When possible, demonstrations of particular techniques should be done using competent pupils rather than the teacher modifying a pupil's technique by physical contact. In cases of doubt or uncertainty staff should seek advice before proceeding or ensure another member of staff is present.

**iv) First Aid**

The existence of any life threatening or serious condition will determine the suitability and necessity of physical contact. In the absence of such justification staff who administer first aid should ensure that, wherever possible, other children or another adult can be present if there is the possibility of any physical contact being misconstrued.

Staff should, in all aspects of their conduct, recognise the possibility of misinterpretation. Individual professional judgements will be required from time to time about the level of physical contact with individual children. Staff should take account of a pupil's age and understanding, personality and cultural and social background.

## **Physical Restraint**

Physical restraint is defined to be the positive application of force in order to protect/prevent a pupil from causing injury to himself or others or seriously damaging school property, or from causing disorder. Any physical restraint is therefore only permissible when a child is in imminent danger of inflicting an injury on himself/herself or on another, and then only as a last resort, when all efforts to diffuse the situation have failed. In the event of physical restraint, it is important that only the minimum amount is used in order to prevent the pupil from causing injury to themselves, others or property. Another member of staff should, if possible, be present to act as a witness. It must be shown that on any occasion where physical restraint is used there were strong indicators that if immediate action had not been taken, injury or the committing of a criminal act would have followed. The decision on whether or not to physically intervene is down to the professional judgement of the staff member concerned and should always depend on the individual circumstances. All incidents of the use of physical restraint should be recorded in writing, and reported immediately to the DSL who will decide what to do next.

## **Corporal Punishment**

Physical contact for the purpose of punishing a pupil is unlawful if it amounts to "battery". Interference with a pupil's body or clothes may constitute battery and acts such as catching a pupil by their clothing whilst disciplining him/her are unacceptable. Any form of physical punishment is prohibited under disciplinary procedures and potentially actionable in law.

This also applies to any form of physical response to misbehaviour, with the exception noted in above regarding action to prevent harm or injury.

## Private Meetings

Private meetings provide opportunities for misinterpretation and should be avoided. It is advisable to avoid remote areas of the School and to ensure that the door is left open and/or visual contact with others is maintained. Steps to prevent others entering a room by the use of 'Meeting in Progress' are not appropriate.

Under no circumstances should meetings with individual pupils be arranged off the school premises or on the school premises when the schools are not in session without the prior approval of the Head or any senior colleague with delegated authority to approve such meetings. This includes the transporting of individual children in private cars.

## Communication with Pupils

Staff should not give their personal home phone number or mobile phone numbers or personal email addresses to pupils, nor should they communicate with them by text message, personal email or social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram etc.). Staff may communicate with pupils using their school email address and the pupils' school email addresses on work related issues only. Should staff need to contact a pupil for any other reason they should contact the pupil's parents.

In some circumstances, former students may make contact with a member of staff. This may occur even when they have grown to adults, for example, situations where staff remain in contact with former students who have moved on to senior schools or university. In these situations, members of staff must take account of the fact that they are Highfield and Brookham employees and therefore have a continued responsibility as a member of staff and that young people may struggle to differentiate between the roles of staff member and friend.

## One to One Situations

Where teachers perform a pastoral, disciplinary, or tutorial task, or give individual tuition (e.g. a music lesson), this may involve them being in one-to-one situations. If this is the case, it is safer if these meetings take place within school time and in the vicinity of other teachers and/or pupils, although away from immediate earshot. If possible, doors should remain open (or have glass panels) and there should be an equivalent of a desk or small table width between pupil and teacher.

## Inappropriate Images

No member of staff should download inappropriate images to a school computer. This is a criminal offence and gross professional misconduct and will be subject to the School Disciplinary Procedure. No member of staff should forward any inappropriate images which are received to any other member of staff or to any other person outside the Schools (even the Designated Senior Lead). Computers should be immediately closed down and the matter reported. Forwarding inappropriate material is a criminal offence and could lead to a charge of distributing inappropriate materials.

## Staff Access to Boarding Accommodation

Only resident or non-resident members of the Boarding Staff or Maintenance and Cleaning Teams may have unaccompanied access to the Boarding Houses. In the event that other staff require access to the Boarding Houses

they must seek permission of the Head, Deputy Head Management and Operations, or Director of Boarding at Highfield.

## Dress

Staff should project a professional image to pupils, parents and other stakeholders, and staff dress should reflect our high expectations in terms of teaching and learning, behaviour and student uniform. The DfE's guidance states that *'a person's dress and appearance are matters of personal choice and self-expression and some individuals will wish to exercise their own cultural customs. However, staff should select a manner of dress and appearance appropriate to their professional role and which may be necessarily different to that adopted in their personal life. Staff should ensure they are dressed decently, safely and appropriately for the tasks they undertake. Those who dress or appear in a manner which could be viewed as offensive or inappropriate will render themselves vulnerable to criticism or allegation.'*

This means that adults should wear clothing which:

- is appropriate to their role
- is not likely to be viewed as offensive, revealing, or sexually provocative
- does not distract, cause embarrassment or give rise to misunderstanding
- is absent of any political or otherwise contentious slogans
- is not considered to be discriminatory and is culturally sensitive.

## Pupils with Special Needs

If pupils require assistance with toileting staff should consider whether it would be possible to arrange for the presence of another adult in the vicinity. Where this is not possible staff should discuss with the Head what arrangements will be reasonable in all the circumstances.

## Comments and Discussions with Pupils

Staff must avoid comments to or about pupils, which could be taken to have sexual overtones. It is equally unacceptable for staff to encourage debate and discussion between groups of students that could be interpreted as having sexual overtones that are not justified in the context of the teaching programme. It will be especially helpful if Schemes of Work highlight particular areas of risk and sensitivity. Newly qualified teachers or other staff who are new to this area of work should seek guidance.

Notwithstanding the advice given above it is recognised that, in order to discharge particular pastoral responsibilities, staff may from time to time need to engage in conversation with pupils which cover sensitive matters. Staff should consider carefully whether to offer advice, sympathy or counselling if a discussion enters a sensitive area or, alternatively, refer the pupil to a colleague or agency better placed to offer appropriate advice. The use of sarcastic, demeaning or insensitive comments towards pupils is abusive and therefore unacceptable.

## Infatuations and Crushes

Infatuations and crushes can involve pupils and staff of both sexes on both a heterosexual and homosexual basis. In such situations the advice of a senior colleague must be sought without delay. The situation should be taken seriously and the member of staff should be careful to ensure that no encouragement of any kind is given to the pupil. It should also be recognised that careless and insensitive reactions may provoke false accusations. Whilst the risk of infatuation is not limited to younger members of staff, newly qualified teachers must recognise their particular vulnerability to adolescent infatuation.



## Out of School and After-School Activities

Staff should take particular care when supervising pupils, especially older pupils, in the less formal atmosphere of a residential setting, school holiday or out of school activity. The more relaxed relationships that may promote successful activities can be misinterpreted by young people. The standards of professional conduct and behaviour expected of staff are no different to those which apply when the Schools are in session.

## Teaching materials

The use of books, videos and films of an explicit or sensitive nature, particularly in relation to language or sexual behaviour must be given careful consideration to ensure that its selection is not subsequently misinterpreted. There should always, therefore, be a clear link with the targets of the teacher's programme.

## Professional standards online

Staff should be aware of the potential audience of any social media services that they use in their professional or private capacity, and maintain standards of professionalism in keeping with their position in the Schools. They should be especially mindful of those services that allow content to be broadcast without discrimination, and of the potential impact on themselves and the Schools.

## Other expectations of Staff

Staff should:

- Avoid putting themselves at risk of allegations of abusive or unprofessional behaviour;
- Avoid situations of actual or perceived conflict of interest;
- Ensure all activity for which they are responsible is undertaken with due regard to relevant legislation/regulations/policies;
- Promote a safe working environment in compliance with the requirements of the schools' Health and Safety Policies and to be aware of any appropriate legislation/regulations;
- Treat with respect and not undermine pupils, their parents or carers, or colleagues;
- When representing the Schools (with parents/colleagues/suppliers/other third parties) act in a manner that promotes the aims and ethos of Highfield and Brookham School;
- Optimise the use of resources for which they are responsible and over which they have influence;
- Comply with all school policies and procedures;
- Demonstrate behaviour that sets a good example to all pupils within the Schools;
- Not respond to any enquiries from the press. Instead, these, along with any form of media enquiry, should be referred to their Head;
- Not enter private business arrangements with pupils or parents, without the prior approval of their Head, secured in writing;
- Not use school property for private business purposes, without the prior agreement of the Head or the Bursar, secured in writing;
- Not take any items of school equipment for personal use/gain that may have, or appear to have been discarded, without the prior agreement of their Head, the Bursar or Estates Manager, secured in writing.



## Whistleblowing and Confidentiality

If a member of staff has concerns about the behaviour of another member of staff towards a pupil, he or she should report it at once to their Head. Staff should also report Low Level concerns using the Neutral Notification Form on the school portal. If a member of staff has concerns about the behaviour of the Head towards a pupil, he or she should report it at once to the Schools' Director. Any concern will be thoroughly investigated under the schools' whistleblowing procedures. If there is evidence of criminal activity, the Police will always be informed. 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 who uses the whistle-blowing procedure is entitled to have his/her name protected from being disclosed by the DSL to the alleged perpetrator, without his/her prior approval. However, it has to be recognised that his/her evidence may be required by the Police to be used in any criminal proceedings.

## Referrals of Concern

If a member of staff has concerns about any pupil or incident that touches upon safeguarding or child protection issues, he or she should report them as soon as possible to the DSL or Deputy DSLs of either school. In the event that a member of staff feels that the DSLs or Deputy DSLs have failed to take appropriate action to a referred concern, they have the right to make a referral to Social Care themselves and challenge inaction.

## Reporting Incidents

Staff should report, to the appropriate member of staff, any concerns they may have following any incident where they feel that their actions may have been misinterpreted, or where a pupil, parent or third party has complained to them either about their own actions or the actions of another member of staff.

## Disciplinary action

All staff must recognise that failure to meet these standards of behaviour and practice may result in disciplinary action, which might include dismissal.

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**Reviewed September 2017: PGSE/SEWB/CS/SF/KW**

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