



## Staff Code of Conduct and Safe Working Practice Policy

The 'School' refers to all staff and pupils in Abbot's Hill School, which includes the Early Years/Foundation Stage (EYFS), the Pre-Prep, Prep and Senior School.

### MONITORING

Person Responsible	Head / Bursar
Reviewed with	HR Manager
Final Signatory	Head
Frequency of Review	Annual
Date of Last Review	September 2023
Date of Next Review	September 2024

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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.

By creating this policy, we aim to ensure our school is an environment where everyone is safe, happy and treated with respect. The school has a clear set of Values (Appendix 1) which set out guiding principles for conduct.

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, governors 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 our staff disciplinary procedures.

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 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.

## 3. General obligations

Staff set an example to pupils. They will:

- Maintain high standards in their appearance, 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 including but not limited to ISI and OFSTED.
- Adhere to the Teachers' Standards

## 4. Safeguarding

Staff have a duty to safeguard pupils from harm, and to report any concerns they have. This includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse, and neglect.

Staff will familiarise themselves with our Child Protection and Safeguarding policy and procedures, and the Prevent initiative, 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 on the staff intranet as well as in the policies section of our school website. New staff will also be given copies on arrival.

All staff receive regular Safeguarding updates and training and a Safeguarding induction. Abbot's Hill School appoints designated safeguarding leads. The Child Protection and Safeguarding policy sets out their names, contact details and duties.

Members of staff need to take particular care when dealing with a pupil who:

- a) appears to be emotionally distressed, or generally vulnerable and/or who is seeking expressions of affection from a member of staff;
- b) appears to hold a grudge against a member of staff;
- c) acts in a sexually provocative way, or who is inclined to make exaggerated claims about themselves and others, or to fantasise, or one whose manner with adults is over-familiar.

Some of these behaviours may be indications that a child has been, or is currently being, abused and should therefore be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Leads.

### 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:

- o Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child, and/or
- o Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, and/or
- o Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children, and/or
- o 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

We will deal with any such allegation quickly and in a fair and consistent way that provides effective child protection while also supporting the individual who is the subject of the allegation. An appropriate person will be appointed to lead any investigation. This will be the Head, or the Chair of Governors where the Head is the subject of the allegation.

### 4.2. 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 harm 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:

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

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

All staff should share any low-level concerns they have using the reporting procedures set out in our child protection and safeguarding policy. 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 staff to report it.

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.

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

### **4.3. Whistle-blowing**

Whistle-blowing reports wrongdoing that it is "in the public interest" to report. Examples linked to safeguarding include:

- o Pupils' or staff members' health and safety being put in danger
- o Failure to comply with a legal obligation or statutory requirement
- o 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.

Staff should consider the examples above when deciding whether their concern is of a whistle-blowing 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 report their concern to the Head. If the concern is about the Head, or it is believed they may be involved in the wrongdoing in some way, the staff member should report their concern to the Chair of Governors via the Clerk to the Governing Body.

Concerns should be made in writing wherever possible. They should include names of those committing wrongdoing, dates, places and as much evidence and context as possible. Staff raising a concern should also include details of any personal interest in the matter.

For our school's detailed whistle-blowing process, please refer to our Whistleblowing Policy.

#### **4.4. 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.

If staff members and pupils must spend time on a one-to-one basis, staff will ensure that:

- o This takes place in a public place that others can access
- o Others can see into the room
- o A colleague or line manager knows this is taking place

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

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. If a pupil or parent 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 as grooming.

This also applies to social contacts made through outside interests or the staff member's own family.

Staff should:

- a) advise the Senior Leadership Team of any social contact they have with a pupil which may give rise to concern
- b) report and record any situation, which they feel, might compromise the school or their own professional standing
- c) refrain from sending personal communication to pupils e.g. letters and cards unless agreed with a senior member of staff.

It is inadvisable to ask pupils to baby-sit for you. This could be construed as favouritism or open you to the potential allegation of abuse.

Staff should avoid unnecessary contact with pupils outside school:

- a) they should not give pupils their home address, home 'phone number, mobile 'phone number or e-mail address;
- b) they should not send personal communications to pupils unless agreed by a senior member of staff;
- c) they should not make arrangements to meet pupils, individually or in groups, outside school other than on school trips authorised by a senior member of staff;
- d) they should avoid contacting pupils at home unless this is strictly necessary; and they should keep a record of any such occasion;
- e) they should not give a pupil a lift in their own vehicle other than on school business and with permission from a senior member of staff;
- f) they should avoid inviting pupils (groups or individuals) to their home unless there is a good reason and it has been approved by a senior member of staff. This prohibition also applies where staff have on site accommodation;

- g) they should ensure that pupils do not see anything in their home that may cause embarrassment or that might become the subject of inappropriate gossip or rumour

Staff should be aware that where they meet children or parents socially, their contact could be misinterpreted as grooming. Any social contact that could give rise to concern should be reported to a senior member of staff.

Members of staff who are friends with parents of pupils or who, for example, are voluntary workers in youth organisations attended by pupils, will of course have contact with those pupils outside school. However, they should still respect the above advice wherever possible and should keep a senior member of staff informed of such relationships.

Members of staff who are also parents of pupils at Abbot's Hill will inevitably have social contact with other parents and should exercise caution and discretion on such occasions, remembering their confidentiality duties. Advice can be sought from a senior member of staff if required.

Where staff are arranging planned social contact with parents or pupils, such as part of a reward scheme or pastoral care programme, they should still seek the approval of a senior member of staff.

While we are aware many pupils and their parents may wish to give gifts to staff, for example, at the end of the school year, gifts from staff to individual pupils are not acceptable. Similarly, it is inadvisable to give personal gifts to pupils. This could be misinterpreted as a gesture either to bribe, or single out the young person. It might be perceived that a 'favour' of some kind is expected in return.

Gifts given to pupils should only be provided as part of an agreed rewards system, be of limited value and distributed equally or by a selection process that is fair and where possible has been agreed by more than one member of staff

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 pupils are excluded from an activity. Methods of selection and exclusion should always be subject to clear, agreed criteria.

If a staff member is concerned at any point that an interaction between themselves and a pupil may be misinterpreted, or if a staff member is concerned at any point about a fellow staff member and a pupil, this should be reported in line with the procedures set out in our child protection and safeguarding policy.

Staff need to be aware that it is not uncommon for pupils to be strongly attracted to a member of staff and/or develop a heterosexual or homosexual infatuation. All situations should be responded to sensitively to maintain the dignity of all concerned. Staff should also be aware that such circumstances always carry a high risk of words or actions being misinterpreted and for allegations to be made against staff.

A member of staff who becomes aware that a pupil may be infatuated with themselves or a colleague, should discuss this at the earliest opportunity with a senior colleague so that appropriate action can be taken and concerns documented. In this way, steps can be taken to avoid hurt and distress for all concerned.

## **5. Communication and social media**

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.

Staff should not attempt to contact pupils or their parents 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' social media profiles.

Staff will ensure that they do not post any images online that identify children who are pupils at the school without their consent.

Staff should be aware of the school's Online Safety policy and ICT Acceptable Use Agreements.

## **6. 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.

Staff will not use personal mobile phones and laptops, or school equipment for personal use, in school hours or in front of pupils. They will also not use personal mobile phones or cameras to take pictures of pupils.

We have the right to monitor emails and internet use on the school IT system.

Staff should be aware of the school's Online Safety policy and ICT Acceptable Use Agreements.

## **7. 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. Staff should respect the privacy of pupils, parents and colleagues and in accordance with the GDPR should not pass on information, for example addresses or telephone numbers to others without first checking with the person concerned. Staff should refer to the Safeguarding and Child Protection policy for further guidance.

This information should never be:

- Disclosed to anyone unless required by law or with consent from the relevant party or parties
- Used to humiliate, embarrass or blackmail others
- Used for a purpose other than what it was collected and intended for

This does not overrule the duty to report child protection concerns to the appropriate channel where staff believe a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm, as detailed further in our Safeguarding and Child Protection policy.

## **8. Propriety and behaviour**



Staff should at all times conduct themselves in a professional manner and provide a good role model for pupils, both in and out of school.

Staff should exercise their duty of care towards pupils and take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety of pupils and other staff by following the [Health and Safety Policy](#) and the [Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy](#). All staff are expected to re-read these two policies at least annually to ensure that they are up to date with their requirements.

Staff should not abuse privileges or opportunities provided by the school. (School property and materials must not be appropriated for personal use and events and trips organised for pupils must not involve any personal gain to the organiser). Discriminatory behaviour by staff towards adults or children is likely to lead to disciplinary procedures.

Staff should observe the school's policy on smoking and must not be under the influence of drugs or alcohol whilst working with children.

Staff should ensure that they use appropriate language at all times:

- a) avoid words or expressions that have any unnecessary sexual content or innuendo when speaking to or about a pupil
- b) never discuss their own sexual relationships with or in the presence of pupils
- c) never discuss a pupil's sexual relationships in inappropriate settings or contexts
- d) avoid inappropriate displays of affection either personally or in writing (e.g. messages in birthday cards, text messages, emails etc.);
- e) avoid any form of aggressive contact such as holding, pushing, pulling or hitting, which could amount to a criminal assault, or threatening words;
- f) avoid any words or actions that are over-familiar;
- g) do not make (or encourage others to make) unprofessional personal comments which scapegoat, demean or humiliate, or might be interpreted as such
- h) do not swear, blaspheme or use any sort of offensive language in front of pupils;
- i) avoid the use of sarcasm or derogatory words (and unprofessional personal comments about anyone) when disciplining pupils.

## 9. Honesty and integrity

Staff should not behave in any manner which would lead any reasonable person to question their suitability to work with or be a role model for children and young people.

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 should not accept gifts or gifts in kind other than in accordance with the school's Anti-bribery and Anti-corruption Policy.

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

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

Where there are any updates to the information provided to the school, the member of staff will advise the school as such 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.

A member of staff accused of a criminal offence is required to inform the school at the earliest opportunity. Failure to do so may be a disciplinary offence. Consideration will be given to disciplinary procedures in relation to the accusation, taking all the circumstances into account.

## **10. Dress code**

Staff will dress in a professional, appropriate manner. This means that staff should wear clothing which:

- a) promotes a positive and professional image
- b) is appropriate to their role
- c) is not likely to be viewed as offensive, revealing, or sexually provocative
- d) does not distract, cause embarrassment or give rise to misunderstanding
- e) is absent of any political or otherwise contentious slogans

Staff should be aware of the Abbot's Hill Staff Dress Code (v.2023).

## **11. Transporting pupils in staff cars**

The guiding principle should be that transporting pupils in staff cars should be the exception to the rule rather than the norm. Any journeys with pupils in staff cars should be planned, and only carried out if absolutely necessary. These journeys should never be undertaken on an ad hoc basis, must involve a minimum of two pupils, and must on each occasion have been authorised in advance by a member of the Senior Leadership Group. If a member of SLG has given approval then permission from the parent(s) must then be sought.

Circumstances where a member of SLG may authorise the transporting of a pupil in a staff car are rare and would only involve a situation where this was in the best interests of the pupil and where a full risk assessment has been prepared by the member of staff requesting permission and signed off in advance by the member of SLG. Travelling to fixtures or school trips would not normally be seen as falling within these circumstances.

## **12. Pupils changing**

Pupils are entitled to privacy when changing clothes. However, in PE lessons or on school trips, there needs to be an appropriate level of supervision, according to the needs and age of the children or young people concerned.

Staff are advised:

- a) male staff must not enter an area where girls are changing unless it is an emergency (such as fire, to prevent injury, etc) and only if there is no one else to intervene
- b) avoid any physical contact when children are in a state of undress
- c) avoid any visually intrusive behaviour
- d) where there are changing rooms announce their intention of entering

- e) avoid remaining in the room unless pupil needs require it
- f) a member of staff must never change in the same place as children

### **13. Conduct outside of work**

Staff will not act in a way that would bring the school, or the teaching profession, into disrepute. This covers conduct including but not limited to relevant criminal offences, such as violence or sexual misconduct, as well as negative comments about the school on social media.

### **14. Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed annually but can be revised as needed. It will be approved by the Chair of Governors.

Our Governing Board will ensure this code of conduct is implemented effectively, and will ensure appropriate action is taken in a timely manner to safeguard children and deal with any concerns.

### **15. Links with other policies**

This policy links with our policies on:

- o Staff disciplinary procedures, which will be used if staff breach this code of conduct. The Disciplinary policy also sets out examples of what we will deem as misconduct and gross misconduct
- o Staff grievance
- o Safeguarding and Child Protection
- o Safer Recruitment and Selection
- o Anti-bribery and Anti-corruption
- o Online Safety
- o Whistle-blowing
- o ICT Acceptable Use
- o Image Authorisation
- o Staff Dress Code

Issue Date: September 2023

Review Date: September 2024 or earlier if major change requires



Mrs Kathryn Gorman  
Head



# CODE OF CONDUCT

There is one rule for all of us at Abbot's Hill: adults and pupils act with courtesy and consideration for others.

We support our school values in the following ways:-



**Be kind**



**Be authentic**



**Be involved**



**Be curious**



**Be challengers**



## Code of Conduct

There is one rule for all of us at Abbot's Hill: adults and pupils act with courtesy and consideration for others.

We support our school values in the following ways:-

### Be kind

- We are respectful and inclusive to all and celebrate the diversity of our community
- We show humility at all times
- We empower others: always trying our best to encourage and enable one another to succeed
- We care about each other and are considerate of other people's feelings
- We respect ourselves, others and our environment

### Be authentic

- We are unique. Proud of ourselves and our individuality.
- We are sincere in the way we interact with others and show integrity in the way we behave in all aspects of life
- We are true to our feelings and beliefs in the way we reflect on our actions and learn from them
- We take pride in our responsibilities

### Be involved

- We work hard as part of the school and contribute to the community beyond Abbot's Hill
- We are proud of the school, its history and tradition
- We always give our best and embrace opportunities
- We celebrate other people's successes and achievements
- We are positive role models

### Be curious

- We love to learn, create and use our imagination
- We are inquisitive: we explore new opportunities
- We ask questions about the world around us
- We embrace calculated risk and seek adventure

### Be challengers

- We persevere in the face of challenge: we are resilient
- We are self-motivated, ambitious and determined to develop and improve through work and play now and into the future
- We prioritise our physical and mental wellbeing
- We have the freedom to speak out and to voice our own ideas
- We have the courage to test our ideas, to fail and to adapt as we prepare for life beyond school
- We have fun