



Professional Standards of Conduct & Code of Conduct for Staff

Professional Standards of Conduct are integral to our Safeguarding of Pupils and staff should be familiar with our expectations which are outlined in our Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct for Staff. Staff are asked to be mindful of the School's expectations in relation to professional conduct at all times. Relationships amongst staff and pupils at Kirkstone House are friendly and mutually respectful. Both Senior and Lower School seek to provide a safe and supportive environment that ensures the well-being and best outcomes for all pupils and which supports our aims and values.

Introduction

Guidance for staff on matters relating to professional conduct is included in all of our Safeguarding Policies. However, this code of conduct serves to bring this advice and guidance together and to confirm professional good practice.

The code also serves to help staff reduce risk of any vulnerability to false or malicious allegations of misconduct or abuse towards pupils with whom they work.

Its purpose is not to take away professional judgement, nor to suggest that we do not have important personal principles of care and trust. However, this advice is important both in promoting highest standards of care for pupils and to protect staff from the potentially devastating consequences of false allegations.

The Staff Code of Conduct has been formulated in order to:

- clarify the professional responsibility of all staff, teaching and non-teaching;
- give clear advice about what constitutes illegal behaviour and what might be considered as misconduct, and
- establish expectations of standards that all staff must maintain when carrying out School business or representing the school in any circumstance.

The School recognises that it has a duty of care towards its employees to provide a safe working environment for staff. It is intended that this guidance will help ensure that staff maintain the safest possible working practice and thereby safeguard all pupils in their care as well as safeguard themselves against allegations of improper or unprofessional conduct.

Specifically staff should be aware that:

- allegations of unprofessional conduct or improper contact can arise at any time;
- professionalism and vigilance are required in order to ensure the safety of children in our care and to reduce the risk of allegation of impropriety against a member of staff;
- forming inappropriate relationships with children or young people at another school may also be regarded as gross misconduct.

General

Staff should take care that their relationships with pupils reflect the age, gender and maturity of the pupils. It is particularly important that all aspects of demeanour, language and attitudes, however conveyed, do not give rise to misunderstandings. Ambiguous or ambivalent comment and conduct in particular should be avoided.



Pupils:

Physical Contact

Physical contact with pupils is acceptable in certain circumstances, but this may also be misconstrued. Touching pupils, including well intentioned informal and informal gestures such as putting a hand on the shoulder or arm, can, if repeated regularly, lead to questions being raised. Staff must not make gratuitous physical contact with pupils and should avoid attributing 'touching' to their teaching style as a way of relating to pupils.

Times when physical contact is acceptable are:

- When it is necessary to physically intervene with a pupil in order to stop them injuring themselves or others. This is outlined in our **Physical Restraints and Physical Contact Policy**. Staff should be fully aware of the reasons when the use of reasonable force can be used in an incident. Note: Any form of physical punishment is prohibited and actionable by law.
- Comforting a pupil in distress. There is no easy definition of what is acceptable since much will depend on the circumstances, the age of the pupil, the extent and cause of the distress and the alternative means of providing comfort. Staff need therefore to use their professional judgement and discretion in relation to these factors. Particular care however should be taken if this involves the same pupil over a long period of time.
- Unavoidable contact sometimes takes place in school particular in practical lessons such as in PE and Drama. Staff should be aware of how contact may be interpreted and be mindful of alternative ways of teaching. For example, involving the teacher or a particularly able pupil to demonstrate a technique rather than modifying a pupil's technique by physical contact.
- Pupils who have a physical disability may need to be helped negotiate the school premises and in these circumstances physical contact will fall under our reasonable adjustment made in accordance with our inclusion practices. However, pupils who have a physical disability will always be allocated a key support person.

One to One Situations

Staff working in one to one situations with pupils are more vulnerable to allegations. This possibility should be recognised and staff should plan and conduct these meetings accordingly. Staff should:

- avoid meetings with pupils in remote or secluded areas of the school
- ensure that there is visual access or an open door;
- inform other staff of the meeting beforehand, assessing the need to have them present or close by; and
- always report any concerns to the Headmistress.

Under no circumstances should meetings with individual pupils be arranged off the school premises without the prior permission of the Headmistress. This includes the transportation of individuals in private cars.



Staff are reminded that it is a criminal offence for a person aged 18 or over to have a sexual relationship with a young person under the age of 18 where that person is in a position of trust in respect of that person, even if the relationship is consensual.

Comments & Discussions with Pupils

Staff must avoid comments to or about pupils which could be taken to have sexual overtones. It is helpful to highlight in schemes of work which might be areas that might be of particular risk and sensitivity.

Notwithstanding this advice, it is recognized that in order to discharge particular pastoral responsibilities, staff may from time to time need to engage in conversations with pupils which cover sensitive matters. Staff should therefore use their professional judgement to ensure that they are not drawn into areas inappropriate to their duties or their relationship with the pupil concerned. Staff should also use their discretion to ensure that, for example, any probing for details cannot be construed as unjustified intrusion.

Intimate Care

All pupils have a right to safety, privacy and dignity when contact of an intimate nature is required (for example assisting with toileting or removing wet/soiled clothing). A care plan must be drawn up with parents for any pupils requiring intimate care on a regular basis.

Pupils should be encouraged to act as independently as possible and to undertake as much of their own personal care as is practicable.

(See Intimate Care Policy)

Supervision of Changing Rooms

Pupils have the right to privacy during changing for practical lessons such as PE. However, staff also need to ensure that pupils are safe. Professional judgement and consideration of issues relating to Health and Safety should therefore be considered. Pupils with disabilities/complex SEN may require a member of staff with them in order for them to change safely.

Communication with Pupils Including the Use of Social Media

Staff should not give their personal mobile phone numbers or e-mail addresses to pupils nor should they communicate with them by text message or personal e-mail. If they need to speak to a pupil by telephone, they should use one of the School's telephones and e-mails. The group leader on all trips and visits involving remote supervision may ask pupils for their mobile phone numbers but these should be deleted after the trip. Staff should use the School's mobile phones rather than personal contacts.

Staff should not have any contact with pupils on social media. This includes Facebook.

It will rarely be appropriate for staff to write personal notes or letters or to send an e-mail to individual pupils. If a member of staff believes this to be necessary, it should first be discussed with the Headmistress.

This advice is not intended to curtail the use of e-mail where it has been decided that this medium can be used for the submission of work, but the more informal style of e-mail should not become a conversation that is private to two individuals.



Pass words should be kept secure.

Use of Mobile Phones and Cameras

Photographs will only be taken of pupils with their parents' permission (provided in writing on a consent form). Where photographs are taken to show pupil progress, school phones should be used. Staff should ensure that they are fully cognisant of the School's mobile phone policy in relation to phone use by pupils.

Teaching Materials

The use of books, DVDs, web sites of an explicit or sensitive nature, particularly in relation to language or sexual behaviour must be given careful consideration to ensure that its selection isn't subsequently misinterpreted. There should always be a clear link with teaching objectives identified in schemes of work.

Transporting Pupils

It is inadvisable for a member of staff to give a lift in a car to a pupil alone. Wherever possible and practicable it is advisable that transport is undertaken other than in private vehicles, with at least one adult additional to the driver acting as an escort. However, if staff do provide transport, the pupil must be seated in the back of the car and parental permission and that of the Headmistress must be obtained.

Educational Visits

Educational Visits play an important part in pupils' education and staff are encouraged to enhance teaching and learning through visits and residential visits. Staff are reminded of our inclusive ethos and of the need to ensure that all pupils can access enrichment. Staff should consult the separate Educational Visits Policy in respect of risk assessment and expectations related to supervising and caring for pupils outside school.

Wider Context:

Harassment and Bullying

To secure an environment in which pupils and staff are able to flourish and to achieve their full potential, the School is committed to ensuring that everyone is able to work and participate in the life of the School without fear of harassment, bullying or intimidation. Everyone in School has a part to play by ensuring that their own behaviour, whether intentional or unintentional does not constitute harassment. The School will take action against inappropriate behaviour which shows lack of respect for others or which leads people to feel threatened.

Health and Safety

The School places a high priority on providing a safe working and learning environment and will act positively to minimise the incidence of all workplace risks as required by the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and other associated legislation. All activities should be carried out with the highest regard for the health and safety of pupils, staff, parents and visitors and the public. To this end we make use of risk assessments which are reviewed regularly. It is the responsibility of all staff to remind pupils on a regular basis of all matters relating to Health and Safety both generally and in specialist teaching spaces such as the Labs and high risk areas. All staff must ensure that they are fully aware of the School's Risk Assessment Policy; area risk assessments and Health and Safety Policy.



Security

Staff have a responsibility to ensure that property belonging to the School is appropriately stored and that filing cabinets and cupboards are locked. Staff should also remind pupils about the safe storage of personal property and school equipment.

Visitors to School must be signed in the Visitor's Book and should be escorted on and off the site.

The doors in Lower School should always be locked and access is by the key code.

Conflicts of Interest

The highest standards of behaviour are expected in all areas of school life, especially where individuals are in positions to make decisions which may have a significant impact on others. In all such cases it is important that decisions are taken in a fair and balanced way that can withstand external scrutiny. Conflicts of interest should be identified so that individuals are not involved in decisions where their actions could be seen as biased.

Access to Confidential Information

Although the School strives to conduct its business in an open fashion, there may be times when individuals, through their positions as recruiters/line managers for example, become aware of confidential information either about other individuals or in connection with the School's financial/academic activities. Individuals should be aware of the need to keep such matters confidential and to respect the proper channels of communication for such information.

Giving and Receiving of Gifts

Staff should not purchase individual gifts for specific/individual pupils. A class box of sweets for Christmas for example is acceptable but personal gifts should not be given. Likewise, pupils may, for example, give a member of staff a small gift on special occasions like at Christmas and at the end of the academic year as a 'thank you' but staff should not accept gifts of particular value/financial worth. Staff should not accept more than a small token and then only on special occasions.

If a member of staff is concerned about being given a gift, advice should be taken from the Headmistress.

Use of Equipment for Non Work Purposes

The School will allow reasonable use of School equipment and facilities provided that authorisation has been gained from the Headmistress and that use does not interfere with the work of the School. Employees should aim to refrain from making personal phone calls on School telephones unless there is a personal emergency. Users of the School's IT and internet facilities must behave reasonably towards other users. Users must not use the School's facilities to create, download, circulate or transmit obscene or pornographic material in any form or medium.

Employees should also keep the use of School internet facilities for personal matters to a minimum and only during lunch breaks and non-contracted hours.



Use of Language

Staff must ensure that they use appropriate language at all times. Staff must:

- avoid words or expressions that have any unnecessary sexual content or innuendo;
- not use language that could be considered racist, sexist or homophobic;
- not use language that promotes extreme political ideas or that promotes any form of radicalisation;
- avoid any words or actions that are over-familiar
- not swear, blaspheme or use any sort of offensive language in front of pupils;
- understand that the use of sarcasm or derogatory words must be avoided when speaking with pupils;
- understand that derogatory comments about anyone must be avoided;
- take care not to engage in 'banter' with pupils or staff however well intended.

Smoking

The School is a non-smoking site and staff must observe the School's policy on smoking.

Misuse of Drugs and Alcohol

Staff should not drink alcohol during the normal working day. Alcohol is permitted on the School site for functions and staff may drink when not in charge of children and when attending School outside the normal working day. It is a disciplinary offence for any member of staff to be on the school premises when under the influence of non-medically prescribed drugs. Misuse of alcohol or drugs in school is classed as gross misconduct and may result in dismissal.

Gambling

Gambling activities must not be conducted on school premises; discretion may be used in relation to small sweep stakes for example for charity.

Dress Code

The School does not operate a formal dress code for its employees, other than provision of protective clothing. However, staff must ensure that their dress is appropriate for the context in which they are working and that they present a professional image and one that reflects sensitivity to customer perceptions. Staff should not wear jeans unless it is a non-uniform day and flip flops or loose sandals should be avoided on grounds of health and safety. There is an expectation that all staff working within a classroom setting wear smart, business like dress.

Conduct Outside Work

The School does not seek to dictate how employees conduct themselves in their personal lives outside work. However, unlawful, anti-social or other conduct by employees which may jeopardise the School's reputation will be dealt with through the disciplinary procedure. In particular, a member of staff accused of a criminal offence is expected to inform the School at the earliest opportunity. Failure to do so may be a disciplinary offence.

Self Employment: Any member of staff who wishes to take on additional work beyond the contracted hours of the school should gain permission from the Headmistress.



Whistle Blowing

Members of staff are required to let the DSL know if they feel that another member of staff is behaving in an inappropriate way towards a pupil. This applies to all sections of the School including EYFS.

Also see:

Safeguarding Policy
Whistle Blowing Policy

Authorised by

Mrs Corinne Jones
Headmistress
On behalf of the Proprietors

Dated 1st October 2017

Date of next review 1st October 2018