



**Woodlane High School**

achieving success in a nurturing environment

# Staff Code of Conduct

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## **1. Overview**

Relationships amongst staff and with pupils at Woodlane High School should be friendly and mutually respectful. The School seeks to provide a safe and supportive environment that ensures the well-being and best outcomes for all pupils and supports our ethos, values and aims.

The Staff Code of Conduct has been formulated in order to maintain this balance by:

- clarifying the professional responsibility of all staff, teaching and non-teaching;
- giving clear advice about what constitutes illegal behaviour and what might be considered as misconduct; and
- establishing 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 accusations of improper or unprofessional conduct.

Specifically, staff should be aware that:

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

For the purposes of this policy, the terms 'pupil' or 'child' refers to current or ex pupils.

## **2. Standards of personal behaviour**

### **2.1 Equality of opportunity**

The School seeks to promote inclusivity and values diversity. It also seeks to ensure that the work environment for its employees is supportive, and one where individual respect is shown to all. All members of staff and pupils, regardless of their gender, race, ethnic background, culture, (dis)ability, sexual orientation, age, religion, socio-economic status or any other factor will be supported and encouraged to perform to their potential.

### **2.2 Harassment and bullying**

To secure an environment in which pupils and members of staff are able to flourish and to achieve their full potential, the School is committed to ensuring that everyone is able to work and to participate in the life of the School without fear of harassment, bullying or intimidation. Everyone in the 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.

### **2.3 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 employees, pupils, visitors and the public. Our aim is excellence in health and safety, by means of continuous improvement of standards, and the comprehensive use of risk assessments so as to systematically remove the causes of accidents/incidents and ill-health. This, together with more specific aims and objectives, reflects the School's commitment to promote employee wellbeing. See the Health and Policy for further information.

### **2.4 Security**

In the interests of security, employees must carry their master key and key card while in School. All classrooms/therapy rooms should be locked when an adult leaves the room, pupils should never be left unattended. At the end of the day windows should be closed by the last adult to leave the room and then checked by the Site Manager.

### **2.5 Relationships with other members of staff and other clients and customers of the School**

The School does not concern itself with the private lives of its staff unless they affect its effective operation or its reputation.

Members of staff who are relatives or who have a close personal relationship should not normally have a supervisory, assessing or authorising relationship with each other.

Employees must inform their line manager or the Headteacher if they have a close personal relationship with another employee or a client or customer of the School which could be considered by colleagues, pupils or others, as impacting on the way they conduct themselves at work.

### **2.6 Performance**

The School expects individuals to follow all reasonable rules and instructions given by those supervising or managing their activities and/or work areas.

## **2.7 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; and
- understand that the use of sarcasm or derogatory words should be avoided when punishing or disciplining pupils, it should also be avoided with pupils who may take it literally e.g. pupils with ASD;
- unprofessional comments about anyone must also be avoided;
- take care if engaging in banter with pupils or staff, however well intended.

## **2.8 Smoking**

The School is a non-smoking site and staff must observe the School's policy on smoking. This also includes e-cigarettes. Staff should not smoke in front of the school premises.

## **2.9 Misuse of drugs and alcohol**

Staff must not drink alcohol during the normal school working day nor should they drink alcohol with pupils outside of the normal school working day.

It is a disciplinary offence to be on school premises and/or carrying out official duties when under the influence of non-medically prescribed drugs.

## **2.10 Gambling**

Gambling activities must not be conducted on school premises; discretion may be used in relation to small raffles for charitable purposes, national lottery syndicates, occasional sweepstakes etc.

## **2.11 Conduct outside work**

Staff are expected to behave in a manner both within and outside working hours which should not lead any reasonable person to question their suitability to work with children or act as a role model. All adults working with children have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of pupils.

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 or position 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 and failure to do so may be a disciplinary offence.

Staff are also required to inform the School if their own children or children in their care become subject to a child protection plan. They should do this at the earliest opportunity and failure to do so may be a disciplinary offence.

### **2.12 Dress code**

The School does not operate a formal dress code for its employees, other than for those who are provided with a uniform and/or protective clothing. However, employees must ensure that their dress is appropriate for the situation in which they are working and that they **present a professional image** and one that reflects sensitivity to customer perceptions. This may reflect their ethnicity and lifestyle, but should not be provocative or cause offence to those with whom they have contact.

Following staff consultation, the additional expectations have been added to the dress code:

- Staff ID badges should be worn at all times.
- Staff should ensure they wear closed toe shoes (e.g. not flip flops or sandals).
- Staff should not wear jogging bottoms or hooded sweatshirts, unless in the PE department.

### **2.13 Use of Mobile Phones and Cameras**

Photographs will only be taken of children with their parents' permission (provided in writing via consent form). Where photographs are taken by staff to give evidence of children's progress, photos can only be taken on school cameras/iPads. Images of children should not be taken by staff on personal phones or mobile devices.

Images should be downloaded onto school computers, where they will be monitored. Photos cannot be used or passed on outside the School unless permission is gained from parents via a consent form.

Images should not be posted on the school website without parental consent.

How staff present themselves sets an example to pupils, therefore staff should not use their mobile phones in front of pupils (unless in an emergency, which should be shared with a senior leader).

### **2.14 Attendance and Punctuality**

Staff are required to work the hours stated in their contracts of employment, or as required in the school teacher's pay and conditions document in respect to directed time.

Staff are required to:

- be at work with plenty of time to ensure your contracted start time and activities.
- be on time for all school activity (e.g. duties, classes etc.) as per the staff handbook.
- agree in advance with the headteacher any planned absence or lateness.
- if you are absent due to sickness you are required to follow the school's sickness absence reporting procedure.

Failure to follow these procedures may result in disciplinary action.

### **3. Guidelines on the prevention of allegations of abuse**

Staff are in a position of trust and as such professional boundaries should be maintained at all times and power and trust should not be misused. The aim is for staff to offer friendly care, while ensuring they do not imply a special friendship with any pupil.

#### **3.1 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. Staff should, therefore, use their professional judgement at all times. Staff should not have unnecessary physical contact with pupils and should be alert to the fact that minor forms of friendly physical contact can be misconstrued by pupils or onlookers.

A member of staff can never take the place of a parent in providing physical comfort and should be cautious of any demonstration of affection.

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, the Designated Safeguarding Lead informed and, if appropriate, a copy placed on the staff/pupil's file.

#### **3.2 Physical Restraint**

Any physical restraint is 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 defuse the situation have failed. Another member of staff should, if possible, be present to act as a witness. All incidents of the use of physical restraint should be recorded in writing and reported immediately to the headteacher or deputy in her absence who will decide what to do next. Parents will be informed of any physical restraint used on their child the same day or as soon as reasonably practicable.

Where a need for physical intervention can be anticipated a Physical Intervention Plan will be created and agreed by the parents. When such a plan exists, trained staff will carry out the physical intervention, as per the pupil's Physical Intervention Plan. If a plan is required for a long period of time, the senior managers will explore and question the suitability of the child's place at Woodlane in discussion with the LA.

### **3.3 Physical education and other activities requiring physical contact**

Where exercises or procedures need to be demonstrated, extreme caution should be used if the demonstration involves contact with pupils and, wherever possible, contact should be avoided. It is acknowledged that some staff, for example, those who teach PE and games or performing arts, or who offer music tuition, will, on occasions, have to initiate physical contact with pupils in order to support a pupil so they can perform a task safely, to demonstrate the use of a particular piece of equipment/instrument or 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 and never on a one to one basis. Staff should remain sensitive to any discomfort expressed verbally or non-verbally by the child.

### **3.4 One to one situations**

Staff working in one to one situations with children and young people are more vulnerable to allegations. Teachers and support staff should recognise this possibility and 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.

Pre-arranged meetings with pupils away from the school premises are not permitted unless approval is obtained from their parent and the headteacher or another senior leaders with delegated authority. Meetings may include home tuition/visits for pupils with medical or mental health needs or travel training. In these circumstances an individual risk assessment will be carried out in advance by the relevant member of staff e.g. the Lead Practitioner or Travel Trainer, using Evolve. Risk Assessments will need to be approved in advance by the EVC and headteacher and will include guidance such as ensuing tuition is carried out in common areas etc.

Staff should:

- avoid meetings with pupils in remote or secluded areas;
- ensure 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 a senior manager.

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

### **3.5 Intimate care**

All children 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 should be drawn up and agreed with parents for all children who require intimate care on a regular basis.

Children should be encouraged to act as independently as possible and to undertake as much of their own personal care as is practicable. When assistance is required, staff should ensure that another appropriate adult is in the vicinity and is aware of the task to be undertaken.

Please see our medical, personal and intimate needs policy for full details.

### **3.6 First aid**

First aid should only be administered by trained members of staff.

### **3.7 Transporting Pupils**

It is inadvisable for a member of staff to give a lift in a car to a pupil. 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. If there are exceptional circumstances that make unaccompanied transportation of pupils unavoidable, the journey should be made known to a senior leader e.g. taking pupils to hospital. In these exceptional circumstances consent, whenever possible should be gained by the parent/carer.

### **3.8 Staff homes**

Pupils should not visit staff at home.

### **3.9 Communication with pupils including the use of social media, Microsoft Teams and Google Classroom**

Staff should not give their personal mobile phone numbers or email addresses to pupils, nor should they communicate with them by text message, personal email or via personal social media. If they need to speak to a pupil by telephone, they should use one of the School's telephones and email using the school system.

#### **Remote contact guidelines:**

The approved school platforms for remote communication with pupils are:

- Microsoft Teams.
- Google Classroom.



Teams and Google Classroom are classified as learning platforms and have been selected as they do not allow for unsupervised child-initiated peer to peer contact. Only these platforms should be used. Staff should only use Teams/Google Classroom when they have been trained.

Communication on these platforms should only occur at a planned time and must be agreed with SLT. This will consist of:

- live learning opportunities through Microsoft Teams, parents should be aware in advance of planned communication;
- live learning invites should be sent to parent/carers emails only; and
- learning/homework set on Google Classroom.

Prior to communication, staff will consider:

- their location, including the room they are in, objects present in the room etc. If in doubt staff should use an appropriate 'background' from the selections available;
- other people which may enter the room, sessions should take place in a quiet room which will remain undisturbed, data protection requirements must be adhered to;
- if taking place in school and in live classroom situations, consideration will need to be given to the pupils in the classroom; and
- anything that may be on their computer if they are sharing their screen – e.g. background, web pages they may have open etc.

Staff must ensure the following:

- no recordings are made of live learning;
- a second member of staff will always be present during live learning to support with teaching and learning, as a safeguarding measure and in case of a loss of connection;
- in a variety of circumstances 1:1 remote tuition will take place, in these situations, they are planned and a member of SLT must be well informed;
- pupil technology is a barrier, so support should be available prior to the live learning to help pupils get set up if required; and
- staff should arrive early to live learning to greet pupils and help pupils and parents test their technology.

Staff should:

- not use School facilities to create, display, produce, store, circulate or transmit obscene or pornographic material in any form or medium;
- not identify other employees or children without consent;
- not disclose data or information about the School, employees or children that could breach the Data Protection Act 1998, for example posting photographs or images of children or young people;
- not make defamatory remarks about the School, its employees, pupils, parents or community members;

- ensure personal social networking sites are set to private and pupils are never listed as approved contacts;
- not seek or establish e-relationships with pupils or parents through social networking sites;
- never access the social networking sites of pupils;
- staff should not use social media to communicate directly with pupils or parents;
- always maintain professional boundaries, even after pupils have left the School.

### **3.10 Safeguarding and child protection**

Staff are required to follow the guidance outlined in the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. They are also expected to have read and understand the DfE 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' document. Staff should seek advice from the designated safeguarding and child protection lead if in any doubt about any aspect of the guidance.

## **4. Financial probity**

### **4.1 Self-employment, other employment or consultancy work**

The School understands that these types of opportunities can bring benefits to the School as well as to individual members of staff. All staff proposing to undertake a self-employment, other employment or consultancy work must secure the approval from the Senior Business Manager (SBM) and ensure that the proposed work is not in conflict or detrimental to the School's aims and objectives. The SBM may need to consult with the headteacher.

### **4.2 Intellectual property**

'Intellectual Property' is a generic legal term, which refers to the rights and obligations in relation to: inventions, patents, creative writings and drawings (including policy, training and technical documents and materials).

You are required to inform the School immediately of any invention, improvement, discovery, process, design or copyright which you create or obtain whilst in the School's employ or as a consequence of it. This will become the absolute property of the School except as otherwise stated by statute. You irrevocably waive all moral rights under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 in any existing or future works created by you.

### **4.3 Financial regulations**

The School's financial regulations create a framework of financial controls within which the staff of the School must operate. These regulations are designed to protect the School and individual members of staff. Failure to comply with these regulations may lead to the loss of assets, significant delays in payments to employees and suppliers, and additional work for colleagues.

Employees must not accept gifts or hospitality that could give rise to a suspicion that they have a conflict of interest or have been influenced in a decision. Breaches of the regulations will normally be a serious disciplinary offence.

#### **4.4 Conflicts of interest**

The highest standards of behaviour are also expected in all areas of school life, especially where individuals are in positions to make decisions which may have 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.

#### **4.5 Access to confidential information**

Although the School strives to conduct its business in an open fashion there will be times when individuals, through their positions as members of committees, selectors/recruiters, line managers etc, become aware of confidential information, either about other individuals or in connection with the School's commercial/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.

Staff members should never give absolute guarantees of confidentiality to pupils or adults wishing to tell them about something serious. They should guarantee only that they will pass on information to the minimum number of people who must be told in order to ensure that the proper action is taken to explore the problem and that they will not tell anyone who does not have a clear need to know. They will also take whatever steps they can to protect the informing pupil or adult from any retaliation or unnecessary stress that might be feared after a disclosure has been made.

For specific guidance on the disclosure of any child protection related issues, please see the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

#### **4.6 Use of equipment for non-work purposes**

The School will allow employees reasonable use of School equipment and facilities, provided that authorisation has been obtained from the SBM or headteacher, that the use does not interfere or conflict with the work of the School, and that any costs are met by the individual.

#### **4.7 Private telephone calls**

Employees may use School telephone facilities to make occasional private calls for essential or emergency matters. Private international calls are not permitted without prior authorisation by the SBM or headteacher.

#### **4.8 Use of IT equipment, internet and social media**

Users of the School's IT and the internet facilities must behave reasonably towards other users and the facilities and in public areas they must behave appropriately. Users who do not behave reasonably and appropriately may be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with relevant procedures.

Employees must keep the use of School internet facilities for personal matters to a minimum.

## **5. Procedures**

### **5.1 Raising matters of concern**

Employees have a right and a duty to raise concerns which they may have about breaches of the law or propriety by the School. This should normally be through their line manager but in circumstances where this is not appropriate they may approach the headteacher. No individual who expresses their views in good faith and in line with this guidance will be penalised for doing so. See the Whistleblowing policy.

### **5.2 Breaches of this code**

This Code of Conduct has been drawn up to provide a source of guidance to the School's employees. It is not a contractual document and can be amended at any time by the School. All staff must comply with both the provisions of this Code and the School's policies and procedures, breaches of which will be taken seriously and may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Staff are also reminded that this code is not exhaustive. The School's primary duty is towards the welfare of pupils and staff are encouraged to take a common-sense approach towards their conduct. Any staff member who has a concern or is unsure about an event that has arisen should discuss the matter with a senior manager as soon as possible.