Shefford Lower School Code of Conduct for Employees

Written by	Reviewed and Ratified by Governors	Shared with Staff	Last Updated	Review Cycle	Next Review due
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FINAL

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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.

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, including trainee teachers, will act in accordance with the personal and professional behaviours set out in the Teachers' Standards. We expect all support staff, governors, volunteers, self-employed staff working at the school and third parties including contractors to also act with personal and professional integrity, respecting the safety and wellbeing of others.

Our school is a community based school where staff are expected to model ethical, kind behaviours towards all members of the school community. The school has a distinct set of values which staff model and a code of ethics.

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, the school expects all staff will use their professional judgement and act in the best interests of the school and its pupils at all times.

2. Legislation and guidance

We are required to establish procedures for the regulation of staff conduct under regulation 7 of The School Staffing (England) Regulations 2009. In line with the Department for Education's statutory safeguarding guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) we should have a staff code of conduct, which should (among other things) 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 must set a positive example to all current and new pupils. They will:

Maintain high standards in their 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
Take a zero-tolerance approach to any form of sexism, racism, misogyny/misandry, homophobia, transphobia, biphobia, sexual violence, sexual harassment, and derogatory behaviour
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
Adhere to the Teachers' Standards

4. Safeguarding

Staff have a duty in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) to safeguard pupils from harm, and to report any concerns they have. This includes:

Physical, emotional and sexual abuse
Bullying, cyberbullying or discriminatory bullying
Sexual violence or sexual harassment
Online harm
Neglect
Domestic abuse affecting the child
Mental health concerns that may also be safeguarding concerns
Female genital mutilation (FGM) concerns, and
All forms of exploitation and modern slavery

Staff must read our child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures, and the Prevent duty, and ensure they are aware of the processes to follow if they have any concerns about a child.

Our child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures are available within the school's website New staff will also be given copies on arrival.

All staff will read at least part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) in full and make sure they understand their roles and responsibilities as set out in the guidance. If any staff have any concerns or questions about the contents of part 1 of KCSIE, these must be raised as soon as possible to the DSL.

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, trainee teacher, volunteer, self-employed staff member working at the school and third parties including contractors, has:

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

All staff should report any allegations using the reporting procedures set out in our child protection and safeguarding policy. 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. A 'case manager' will lead any investigation. This will be the headteacher, or the chair of governors where the headteacher is the subject of the allegation.

4.2 Low-level concerns about members of staff

A low-level concern is behaviour towards a child by a member of staff that does not meet the harm threshold or is otherwise not serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO, but 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:

Being overfriendly with children
Having favourites
Taking photographs of children on a personal device, contrary to school policy
Engaging in 1-to-1 activities where they can't easily be seen
Humiliating pupils

(Please note that the above list is non-exhaustive)

Low-level concerns can include inappropriate conduct during contracted hours and outside of contracted working hours.

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. Low Level concerns are reported via CPOMs and only the headteacher can see the low level concern.

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. We will refer to our disciplinary procedures where appropriate. This creates and embeds a culture of openness, trust and transparency in which our school

values and expected behaviour are constantly lived, monitored and reinforced by all staff, while minimising the risk of abuse.

Reporting and responding to low-level concerns is covered in more detail in our child protection and safeguarding policy and our Low Level Concerns Policy. This is available on the school's website.

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

4.3 Whistle-blowing

Whistle-blowing reports wrongdoing that affects others, or is "in the public interest". Examples linked to safeguarding include:

- Pupils' or staff members' health and safety being put in danger
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation or statutory requirement
- 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. However, anonymity is not automatically guaranteed. The school aims to encourage openness and will support whistle-blowers who raise genuine concerns under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.
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 headteacher. If the concern is about the headteacher, 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, Jo Elliot.

Concerns should be made in writing wherever possible. They should include names of those alleged to be 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. The school will investigate any complaints in a timely, respectful and confidential manner.

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

5. Sexual harassment amongst staff

Sexual harassment is any unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature that has a purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. It also includes treating someone less favourably because they've submitted or refused to submit to unwanted conduct of a sexual nature in the past, or harassment related to sex or gender reassignment. When this behaviour is unwanted, it includes (but isn't limited to):

- Unwanted physical conduct or 'horseplay' including touching, pinching, pushing and grabbing
- Continued suggestions for sexual activity after it has been made clear that such suggestions are unwelcome
- Sending or displaying material that is pornographic, or that some people might find offensive

Unwelcome sexual advances or suggestive behaviour (which the harasser may perceive as harmless)
Offensive emails, text messages or social media content
Comments and jokes of a sexual nature
Sexually suggestive looks and staring
Sexual propositions and advances
Promising things in return for sexual favours
Physical contact such as massaging, hugging or kissing
Sexual contact on social media

Staff will help create a positive environment that works to prevent sexual harassment. This includes calling out sexual harassment that they witness.

All witnesses will be provided with appropriate support and will be protected from victimisation.

If a staff member is concerned at any point about incidents of sexual harassment (either directed at them or someone else), they should report their concern to the Headteacher. If the concern is about the headteacher, 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. The school will investigate any complaints in a timely, respectful and confidential manner.

All staff will receive training on recognising and responding to incidents of sexual harassment. The school will monitor by the best of their ability the treatment and outcomes of any complaints of sexual harassment or victimisation received to make sure that they are reasonably investigated, those who report or act as witnesses are not victimised, repeat offenders are dealt with appropriately, cultural clashes are identified and resolved and workforce training is targeted where needed.

6. Staff-pupil relationships

Staff will observe proper and professional 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 1-to-1 basis, staff will make sure that:

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

Staff should avoid contact with pupils outside of school hours if possible. If unable to do so, professional boundaries should be observed. Staff should not engage in activities outside work which could damage their own reputation, the school's reputation or the reputation of the school's pupils and/or employees.

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

While we are aware that many pupils and their parents/carers may wish to give gifts to staff (e.g. at the end of the school year – see section 10 of this policy), gifts from staff to pupils are not acceptable.

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 immediately in line with the procedures set out in our child protection and safeguarding policy.

Any inappropriate relationship between staff and a pupil will be investigated and the staff member may be subject to the school's disciplinary policy. Their actions may be considered as gross misconduct, which could lead to summary dismissal and referral to professional regulatory bodies. In suspected cases of an abuse of position of trust, the school may report those concerned to the police and the LADO.

7. Communication and social media

School staff's social media profiles should not be available to pupils. If staff 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. Refusal to do so could result in disciplinary action being taken in line with the school's disciplinary policy.

Where possible, staff members should not list their workplace on social media platforms.

Staff should not attempt to contact pupils or their parents/carers 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/carers' 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 Mobile Phone and Devices Policy.

8. 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. Any personal use must be in the employee's own time (for example, before or after working hours or during unpaid lunch breaks). All personal use must comply with the standards and restrictions set out in this code of conduct, mobile phone policy and acceptable use of IT policy.

Staff will not use their personal mobile phones or similar devices to take pictures of pupils.

It is a criminal offence to take and share nude or semi-nude images, including those generated by AI, of anyone under the age of 18.

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

There may be occasions where it is appropriate for staff to use a mobile phone or similar device for professional duties, such as:

Setting homework
Recording rewards and sanctions
Using multi-factor authentication

All staff must consistently enforce the school's policy on mobile phones being prohibited for pupils throughout the school day.

Any misuse of IT systems, either during work-related duties, working hours or outside of working hours will be a breach of the code of conduct and may result in disciplinary action being taken in line with the school disciplinary policy.

Staff are only permitted to use AI within certain platforms and should use AI with caution. AI should never have access to sensitive information which breach the school's GDPR procedures. Staff should never use AI for parental communications or reports.

9. 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/carers.

This information should never be:

- Stored or handled in a way that breaches data protection laws, including the UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018, and the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025
- 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 a staff member's 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 child protection and safeguarding policy.

10. Honesty and integrity

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 will not accept bribes. Gifts, hospitality, awards, prizes or other benefits that are worth more than the amount within this handbook, amounts over this must be declared to the School Business Manager and recorded on the gifts and hospitality register.

10.1 Sharing information with the school

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

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

11. Dress code

Staff will dress in a professional, appropriate manner.

Outfits will not be overly revealing, and we ask that tattoos are covered up.

Clothes will not display any offensive or political slogans.

12. 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. Any conduct of this nature could lead to disciplinary action.

This also includes conduct on social occasions and work gatherings / social events. If staff are deemed to behave in a way which may harm or upset other staff or in a way which may cause reputational damage to the school, then this could result in disciplinary action. This is in line with the school's alcohol policy.

13. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually but can be revised as needed. It will be approved by the governing body. Our governing body 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.

14. Links with other policies

This policy links with our policies on:

Staff disciplinary procedures, which will be used if staff breach this code of conduct. It also sets out examples of what we will deem as misconduct and gross misconduct

Staff grievance procedures

Child protection and safeguarding

Behaviour policy

Drugs and Alcohol Policy

GDPR Procedure

Online safety

Whistle-blowing

Mobile phone and mobile devices policy

Acceptable use of IT