Gardener Schools Group

Professional Code of Conduct

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Professional Code of Conduct for Staff

Introduction

This policy applies to all Staff and volunteers in the School regardless of their position, role or responsibility. It sets out clear guidance on the standards of behaviour expected from all Staff (as defined below) at the School.

This policy relates to all of the following groups:

- all members of staff including teaching and support staff;
- directors;
- volunteers;
- casual workers;
- temporary and supply staff, either from agencies or engaged directly; and
- student placements, including those undertaking initial teacher training and apprentices.

The principles underlying the guidance aim to encourage you to achieve the highest possible standards of conduct and minimise the risk of inappropriate conduct occurring.

You are in a unique position of trust and influence as role models for pupils and must adhere to behaviour that sets a good example to all pupils within the School.

you also have an individual responsibility to maintain your reputation and our reputation, both inside and outside working hours and whether you are inside or outside the work setting. This policy therefore applies equally when you are conducting lessons online or when it is necessary for you to work from home.

We require that you have read and agree to comply with this policy. Breach or failure to observe this policy may result in action being taken under our disciplinary procedures including, but not limited to, dismissal.

The Staff of Conduct Policy is not an exhaustive list of acceptable and unacceptable standards of behaviour. In situations where guidance does not exist in this policy, you are expected to exercise your professional judgement and act in the best interests of the pupils and the School.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following related policies and procedures:

- Safeguarding / Child Protection Policy;
- Low-level Concerns Policy
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy;
- Use of Email, Internet and Communication Systems Policy;
- Social Media Policy;
- Health and Safety at Work Policy;
- Anti-Bribery Policy; and
- Whistleblowing Policy.

You should ensure that you have read and are familiar with these policies and procedures.

If you work directly with children, you are required to read and understand Part One and Annex A of the statutory guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'. If you do not work directly with children, you will be required to read Part One of Keeping Children Safe in Education.

Attendance and Timekeeping

Should you need to be absent or expect to be late for any reason, you should ask your Head Teacher in advance when possible. If this is not possible, please contact your Head Teacher at the earliest opportunity.

If you are absent due to sickness, upon your return you must complete a Notification of Absence Due to Sickness Form, have it signed, and submit it to the designated absence contact in the school or HR.

For absences for reasons other than illness, a Leave of Absence (LOA) Form must be completed in advance and submitted to the Headteacher for approval with supporting documentation. Only the Headteacher can authorise such leave. Once the form has been completed and approved, please forward it to the designated contact in the school or HR.

Signing In Procedures

For health and safety reasons, all staff must sign in at the designated terminals upon arrival at the school. This ensures an accurate record of all personnel on site in case of emergencies or evacuations. Please ensure you use the terminals correctly and sign in each day you are on site and when going off site.

Eating and Drinking

1. **Designated Eating Areas:**
   Staff Room: Staff members are permitted to eat and drink in the staff room during their breaks. This area is designated for meals and snacks.

2. **Offices:**
   Eating and drinking are allowed in personal offices, provided it does not interfere with work duties or meetings.

3. **Classroom:**
   No Eating: Staff should refrain from eating in classrooms, especially during lessons. This helps maintain a focused learning environment.

   Drinks: Staff may have water, tea, or coffee in classrooms, but drinks should be in closed containers to prevent spills. Drinking should be done discreetly to avoid distracting students.

4. **Hallways and Common Areas:**
   No Eating or Drinking: Staff should avoid eating or drinking in hallways, the library, or other student common areas. These spaces should remain clean and free of food and drink to maintain hygiene and prevent accidents.

5. **Break Times:**
   Scheduled Breaks: Staff should use their designated break times for eating and drinking. It is important to adhere to the break schedule to ensure continuous student supervision.

6. **Special Considerations:**

Medical Needs: Staff members with medical conditions that require them to eat or drink outside of scheduled breaks should inform the headteacher/HR. Accommodations will be made as necessary.

Allergies: Staff should be mindful of food allergies and avoid consuming allergenic foods in shared spaces or where students may be present.

7. **Cleanliness and Hygiene:**

Clean Up: Staff members are responsible for cleaning up after themselves in any area where they eat or drink. This includes disposing of trash properly and wiping down surfaces.

Hygiene: All staff are expected to maintain good personal hygiene while on site, including regular handwashing and following any health and safety guidance. Maintaining high hygiene standards helps protect the wellbeing of staff, students, and visitors.

Smoking

To promote a healthy and pleasant working environment and because of the fire risk, smoking (in any form, including the use of e-cigarettes) is not allowed anywhere on site or within any of our School vehicles. You must not smoke on school premises or outside school gates. if you wish to smoke, you must leave the school grounds.

You must not smoke whilst working with or supervising pupil's offsite.

Alcohol Consumption at School Events and Illegal Drugs

Staff must not consume alcohol during working hours. At school events where staff are representing the school, alcohol may be consumed only in moderation and in a manner that maintains professionalism, safety, and wellbeing. Staff are not permitted to bring their own alcohol to any school event. All staff must ensure their conduct does not compromise the reputation, safety, or wellbeing of students, colleagues, or the school. Any breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action.

Consumption of illegal drugs is never permitted.

Your conduct and performance must not be adversely impacted by alcohol or drugs when undertaking your duties.

Security

In the interests of security, you must carry your identity card whilst in School and produce it on request. You must not remove any School documents from the site or take any photographs without due permission. We reserve the right to search the outer clothing, bags, lockers and vehicles etc. of you whilst you are on site. You may have a colleague in attendance on such occasions.

Health and Safety

You have a duty to ensure that a safe working environment exists. Fire and evacuation procedures must be adhered to at all times and you are required to familiarise yourself with the procedures and your responsibilities set out in our Health and Safety at Work Policy/Manual.

Personal Appearance

We regularly receive visits from parents, potential parents and others, and naturally wish to convey an impression of professionalism and organisation. Therefore, whilst not wishing to impose unreasonable obligations, you are, nonetheless, required to look smart in appearance at all times, please refer to the Group Dress Code policy).

When working from home or remotely (including the delivery of online lessons, or virtual meetings using a virtual meeting platform such as Zoom and/or Teams) you must ensure you are dressed appropriately in clothing that is smart and of a similar style to what you would wear on a normal school day.

Mobility and Flexibility

Due to the demands and nature of the School, you should be prepared to transfer upon request within departments either temporarily or permanently and/or to undertake work of a different nature, providing it is reasonable and safe to do so and the individual is adequately trained.

Gifts, Rewards and Favours

You should take care to ensure that you do not appear to accept a gift that may be construed as a bribe or lead the giver to expect preferential treatment. You are required to familiarise yourself with the content of our Anti-Corruption and Bribery Policy.

You 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 excluding a child from an activity without prior consultation with the Head or the Deputy Head.

You should not give presents/rewards to an individual outside of our reward system.

Communication

Good communication between all members of the school community is vital to ensure a safe, respectful, and effective learning environment. All communication between staff, pupils, and parents should be conducted within clear, explicit, and professional boundaries. Staff must maintain a respectful tone, avoid ambiguous or informal language when discussing school matters, and ensure that messages are appropriate for the intended audience.

Communication with Parents

Form tutors are expected to be the first point of contact between parents and the School, although enquiries will also come through the School Office. You can contact parents by telephone, email or letter. Teams can also be used with prior arrangement. You should not contact pupils, parents or conduct any school business using personal email addresses.

If you receive an email from a parent, a reply should normally be made within one working day. If a full reply cannot be made within that time, you should send a brief acknowledgment e-mail and let the parent know when a fuller reply can be expected.

If you send emails to parents/carers, you are advised to send a copy (cc or bcc) to the Head, the Deputy Head, the pastoral/line manager or the class teacher/tutor.

You must inform the Head or Deputy Head if you receive an offensive email.

Communication with Pupils

You should carefully consider the manner in which you communicate with pupils at all times so as to avoid any possible misinterpretation of your motives or behaviours.

You should not give your personal mobile phone numbers or email addresses to pupils, nor should you communicate with them by social media, text message or personal email. If you need to speak to a pupil by telephone, you should use one of the School's telephones and email using the School system. Any communication on video call platforms, such as Teams or Zoom must be for professional reasons only and should accord with the rules of this policy at all times.

The group leader on all trips and visits involving an overnight stay should take a school mobile phone with him/her and may ask the pupils for their mobile numbers before allowing them out in small, unsupervised groups. The School mobile should be used for any contact with pupils that may be necessary. The group leader will delete any record of pupil'' mobile phone numbers at the end of the trip or visit and should ensure that pupils delete any Staff numbers that they may have acquired during the trip.

Pupils should be encouraged to discuss with their parents or guardians any issues that are troubling them. It may be appropriate to suggest that a pupil sees our School counsellor or a member of the pastoral team.

Relationships with Pupils

You should understand that you are in a position of trust in relation to pupils, giving them influence and power by virtue of the knowledge you have and/or the authority invested in your role. You should ensure that your relationship with pupils clearly takes place within the boundaries of a respectful, professional relationship and avoid behaviour which may be misinterpreted by others.

You are encouraged to self-refer under our Low-Level Concerns Policy in the event that you have found yourself in a situation which may be misinterpreted, might appear compromising to others, and/or on reflection you believe you have behaved in a way that may be considered to fall below the expected professional standard. All concerns will be handled sensitively and will be dealt with appropriately and proportionately.

You 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 power, even if the child is over 16 and the relationship is consensual.

Infatuations

On occasion, pupils may develop an infatuation for a member of Staff. If you suspect or become aware of an infatuation, the advice of the Head or Deputy Head must be sought immediately.

Other members of Staff must alert a colleague to the possibility of an infatuation in order that appropriate steps can be taken.

You should deal with these situations sensibly and appropriately to maintain the dignity and safety of all concerned.

One to One Situations

If working individually with pupils, you should be aware of the potential vulnerability of pupils and Staff in such situations. You should manage these situations and take reasonable and sensible precautions to ensure the safety and security of the pupil and yourself alike.

Individual work with pupils should not be undertaken in secluded areas or behind a closed door. Where it is necessary to close doors for reasons of confidentiality a colleague should be made aware

of this and asked to remain vigilant. Wherever possible one to one work should only be undertaken with the knowledge and consent of a senior member of staff to minimise risk to those involved.

Where it is necessary to conduct a one to one session online (for example, using a platform such as Zoom or Teams) you must ensure that a senior member of staff is aware of the session and, wherever possible, arrange for a parent to be in the same room, or alternatively, ask a colleague or a member of SLT to join the session.

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.

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. Physical contact may be appropriate in the following circumstances:

- when a pupil needs to get comfort or reassurance e.g. following an accident or personal crisis;
- when a pupil needs encouragement to attempt a new challenge e.g. to climb on to a piece of apparatus; or
- when there is a need to take urgent action to avoid an incident or injury.

You should use your professional judgement at all times. Physical contact must be appropriate for the age, understanding and sex of the child and must never threaten or be sexually inappropriate. You must also be sensitive to an individual's cultural background and any special educational needs.

You 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.

Prevent Duty

You should understand that we have a legal duty under section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 to have 'due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism'. This is known as the Prevent duty.

We are required, in recognition that pupils may be susceptible to being drawn into terrorism or other forms of extremism, to carry out appropriate risk assessments which assess how pupils or staff may be at risk of being radicalised into terrorism, including online. Consequently, you should:

- understand the factors that lead people to support terrorist ideologies or engage in terrorist related activity
- be able to recognise susceptibility to terrorism and be aware of what action to take in response
- be aware of what action to take in response, including our internal Prevent referral arrangements

We protect children from being drawn into terrorism by having robust safeguarding policies in place to ensure that those at risk of radicalisation are identified and appropriate support is provided. Our procedure for dealing with concerns that a pupil may be susceptible to being drawn into to extremist ideology and radicalisation is set out in our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

There is no single way of identifying whether a child is likely to be susceptible to an extremist ideology, there are possible indicators that should be taken into consideration alongside other factors and contexts. As with other safeguarding risks, you should be alert to changes in children's behaviour, which could indicate that they may be in need of help or protection. You should use your judgement in identifying children who might be susceptible and act proportionately, which may include making a Prevent referral. More guidance for schools from the DfE on this can be found at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64f8498efdc5d10014fce6d1/14.258_HO_Prevent_Duty_Guidance_v5c.pdf

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-prevent-duty-safeguarding-learners-vulnerable-to-radicalisation

This guidance should be read in conjunction with other relevant guidance including

- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2025
- Keeping Children Safe in Education, and;
- Information Sharing: Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers.' (July 2018)

Transporting Pupils

In certain circumstances it may be appropriate for you to transport pupils offsite on approved school business. The Head must oversee the plan and provide oversight of all transport arrangements. You should not transport pupils without prior authorisation or in the case of an emergency.

You should ensure that the driver is not distracted while the vehicle is in motion for any reason other than an emergency and should also ensure all passengers are wearing correctly fastened seatbelts.

Prior to transporting pupils offsite, consent must be obtained from a pupil's parent/guardian and you should be aware that the safety and welfare of the pupils is your responsibility until they are safely passed back to their parent/carer.

You should never be alone in a vehicle with a pupil, except in cases of an emergency.

Contact with Pupils Out of School

You should not:

- arrange meetings with pupils off the School premises (whether in person or online) without the prior approval of the Head;
- arrange private tuition of any of our pupils in school or outside of school whether in term-time or outside of term-time without the prior written approval of the Head; and
- give pupils your home address or any of your personal contact details.

Conduct Out of School

You are expected to be loyal to our stated aims and objectives and may not engage in any outside activity which, in the reasonable view of the Head, might interfere with the efficient discharge of their duties or is in conflict with our School's interests.

You should at all times, both in and out of School, uphold our ethos and conduct yourself in a manner consistent with your position.

You must notify us of any outside conduct, activity or circumstances that are likely to either bring the School into disrepute or put into question a staff members suitability for their role at the School.

School Events

All staff are expected to behave appropriately at school events, including school-organised social occasions. A school event—whether held during or outside of working hours, and whether on or off school premises—is considered an extension of the school environment. Therefore, the standards of behaviour outlined in this policy apply equally to such events.

Where alcohol is served and consumption is authorised by the Headteacher, staff may drink only in moderation and must maintain a professional demeanor at all times. Staff are not permitted to bring their own alcohol to any school event. All staff conduct must ensure the safety, wellbeing, and reputation of students, colleagues, and the school are upheld. Any breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action.

Acceptable Use of Technologies

You should ensure that you are familiar with and comply with our Use of, Email, Internet and Communication Systems Policy and the Social Media Policy at all times. In particular, you must:

- not engage in inappropriate use of social network sites which may bring yourself, the School or the School community into disrepute;
- adopt the highest security settings on any personal profiles you have;
- remain mindful of your digital footprint and exercise caution in all your use of social media or any other web based presence you have. This includes written content, videos or photographs and views expressed either directly or by 'liking' certain pages or posts or following certain individuals or groups;
- exercise care when using dating websites where you could encounter students; and
- not contact pupils, their guardians or family members, accept or initiate friend requests or follow pupils' or their guardians' accounts on any social media platform.

Equal Treatment

We are committed to equal treatment for all Staff and pupils regardless of their race or colour, nationality or national or ethnic origins, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity, marital or civil partnership status, gender reassignment, age, and disability (together known as "Protected Characteristics").

We aim to create a friendly, caring and perceptive environment in which every individual is valued. We endeavour to contribute positively towards the growing autonomy, self-esteem and safety of each pupil.

Bullying, harassment, victimisation and/or discrimination will not be tolerated. We treat all our pupils and their parents fairly and with consideration which we expect them to reciprocate towards each other, the Staff and the School. You should ensure that you are familiar with our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy and the Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy and our pupil policies on Equal Opportunities and Anti-Bullying.

Photographs

Many school activities involve recording images as part of the curriculum, extra school activities, publicity or to celebrate an achievement. In accordance with data protection legislation, the image of a pupil is personal data.

Photographs must only be taken of children with the permission of a parent or an individual with parental responsibility. Such consent must have been provided in writing [via our consent form]. It is also important to consider the wishes of the pupil, remembering that some pupils do not wish to have their photograph taken or be filmed.

Where photographs are taken by you to evidence a child's progress, such photos should only be taken on School cameras. They must then be downloaded onto a School computer. Photos cannot be used or passed on outside the School. Neither you nor children should use your own mobile phones or any other personal device to take or store photographs.

Concerns or Complaints

We aim to create an atmosphere in which a diverse range of people can work together openly in the spirit of mutual respect and trust towards a common purpose. Nevertheless, we recognise that it is possible for misunderstandings and disagreements to arise or for mistakes to occur.

Staff Complaints

Complaints should be dealt with immediately and openly and you should try to resolve issues informally in the first instance. If this approach is impractical or unsuccessful, you may wish to raise your concerns more formally in accordance with our Grievance Procedure or Whistleblowing Procedure, depending upon the nature of the concern.

Parental Complaints

You must ensure that parental complaints are dealt with in accordance with our Complaints Policy.

Safeguarding

For procedures for dealing with concerns or allegations about a child or disclosures / allegations of abuse, you should refer to our Safeguarding / Child Protection Policy.

Low-level concerns

As part of our whole school approach to safeguarding, we promote an open and transparent culture in which all concerns about adults working in or on behalf of the School are dealt with promptly and appropriately. This includes any concern – no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt'–- that an adult working in or on behalf of the School may have acted in a way that:

- is inconsistent with this Staff Behaviour Policy, including inappropriate conduct outside of work; and
- does not meet the harm threshold set out in Part 4 of the statutory guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), or is otherwise not serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO.

Such allegations or concerns are referred to as "low-level concerns" within KCSIE. The term "low-level" does not mean that it is insignificant. Such behaviour can exist on a wide spectrum, from the inadvertent or thoughtless, or behaviour that may look to be inappropriate, but might not be in specific circumstances, through to that which is ultimately intended to enable abuse.
In order to create and embed a culture of openness, trust and transparency in which our values and expected behaviour set out in this Staff Code of Conduct Policy are lived, monitored and reinforced constantly by all staff, it is vital that any such low-level concerns are shared in accordance with our Low-Level Concerns Policy.
Any questions regarding low-level concerns and/or the procedure for reporting them should be raised with the DSL and/or Headteacher.
Reviewed Sept 2025