

Oakwood School

Staff Code of Conduct



Safe Working Practices for the Protection of Children and Staff (to be read in conjunction with the Staff Handbook)

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Underpinning Principles

- The welfare of the child is paramount and all those working with children must set an appropriate example.
- This code of conduct applies to all those working within our school, regardless of status and role. It is based on various guidance documents provided by the DfE and other bodies.
- Staff are responsible for their own actions and behaviour and should avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions.
- Staff should work, and be seen to work, in an open and transparent way.
- Staff should discuss and/or take advice promptly from their line manager or another senior member of staff over any incident which may give rise to concern.

Definitions

“CPS”	Child Protection & Safeguarding
“DBS”	Disclosure and Barring Service
“DfE”	Department for Education
“DSL”	Designated Safeguarding Lead
“SMT”	Senior Management Team
“TRA”	Teaching Regulation Agency

Behaviour Management

All pupils have a right to be treated with respect and dignity. Corporal punishment is unlawful in all schools. Equally, staff should not use any form of degrading treatment to punish a pupil. The use of humour can often help to defuse a situation. The use of sarcasm, demeaning or insensitive comments towards pupils is not acceptable in any situation.

Bullying and Peer on Peer Abuse

Our policy on the prevention of bullying is set out in a separate policy document, which acknowledges that to allow or condone bullying may lead to consideration under our Child Protection & Safeguarding procedures.

Some children are thought to be particularly vulnerable to physical, sexual and emotional abuse by their peers. Such abuse is taken as seriously as abuse perpetrated by an adult.

Cameras/photographs

Staff may not use personal devices to take photos and recordings of children, only school equipment can be used. All photos are for school use only and should be saved onto the server in a designated folder. On school trips, only members of staff may take photos of pupils - so parent helpers may not take photos (including of their own children).

Changing for PE

Young people are entitled to respect and privacy when changing clothes. However, there needs to be an appropriate level of supervision in order to safeguard young people, satisfy health and safety considerations and also to ensure that bullying or teasing does not occur. This supervision should be appropriate to the needs and age of the young people concerned and sensitive to the potential for embarrassment.

Our school's procedures are as follows: Children in the Early Years & Infants change together in the classroom with staff present. Children in the juniors change in separate classrooms (or cloakrooms) for boys & girls, staff may or may not be present. Children who attend after school sports clubs may change in the hall with adults in attendance. Staff should always be vigilant about their own behaviour and be mindful of the needs of the pupils. Respect for children's privacy requires staff to be especially prudent when children are changing. Staff should always avoid being alone with a single child in the cloakroom.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

Members of staff may have access to confidential information about pupils in order to undertake their everyday responsibilities. In some circumstances staff may be given additional highly sensitive or private information (refer to Data Protection and Information Sharing sections in Staff Handbook).

- Staff should never use confidential or personal information about a pupil or her/his family for their own, or others', advantage (including partners, friends, relatives or other organisations).
- Information must never be used to intimidate, humiliate, or embarrass the pupil.
- Confidential information about a child or young person should never be used casually in conversation or shared with any person other than on a need to know basis. In circumstances where the child's identity does not need to be disclosed the information should be used anonymously.
- There are some circumstances in which a member of staff may be expected to share information about a child, for example when abuse is alleged or suspected. In such cases, individuals have a duty to pass on information without delay, but only to those with designated child protection responsibilities.
- If a member of staff is in any doubt about whether to share information or keep it confidential they should seek guidance from a senior member of staff.
- Any media or legal enquiries should be passed to our Head.

Dress and Appearance

A person's dress and appearance are matters of personal choice and self esteem. However, staff should consider:

- The manner of dress and appearance appropriate to their professional role which may be different from that adopted in their personal life.
- Staff should ensure that they are dressed decently (not viewed as offensive, revealing or sexually provocative), safely and appropriately for the tasks they undertake.
- Those who dress or appear in a manner which could be considered as inappropriate could render themselves vulnerable to criticism or allegation.

In order to promote high standards within the whole school community, staff are expected to adopt 'smart professional work wear' that sets a good example to pupils. As professionals, a smart and tidy appearance is expected by all members of staff on all occasions. Men in teaching roles should wear a shirt, tie and trousers (with jacket if appropriate). Females should wear smart dresses or separate blouses and skirts/trousers. Staff should also dress appropriately for the subjects they teach or role that they perform: eg. PE/games – tracksuit and trainers.

The following are not considered appropriate workwear:

- casual T shirts (ie with slogans or writing on them)
- leggings, jeans or other denim items
- trainers (unless involved in a sports activity)
- short skirts
- low-cut, see-through or strappy tops
- low-cut trousers exposing midriff
- clothes that are very faded or worn
- revealing or excessively tight items
- visible underwear

Footwear should be smart and suitable for work, meaning excessively high heeled shoes and Ugg-style boots worn outside trousers may not be worn. Sandals should either have a heel or a back strap (ie. no 'flip-flops are allowed).

When going on a school trip, both children and staff should be appropriately dressed for the type of activity. For example if the trip is an outdoor field trip and children are wearing their PE kit, then staff can wear casual clothes, eg. tracksuit or jeans and trainers. However if the trip is indoors and children are wearing their normal school uniform, then staff should wear their usual work attire.

“Extremes of fashion” are not acceptable, including hairstyles, makeup, jewellery, clothes, visible tattoos and visible body piercing, except in the ear lobes.

Staff should not chew gum when in the presence of pupils.

Expectant mothers should also adhere to the dress code described above.

Duty of Care

Teachers and other education staff are accountable for the way in which they exercise authority, manage risk, use resources and protect pupils from discrimination and avoidable harm.

All staff, whether paid or voluntary, have a duty to keep young people safe and to protect them from physical and emotional harm. This duty is in part exercised through the development of respectful, caring and professional relationships between staff and pupils and also through the behaviour demonstrated by staff which reflects integrity, maturity and good judgement.

Local Authorities (LAs), schools and parents have legitimate expectations about the nature of professional involvement in the lives of pupils. When individuals accept a role that involves working with children and young people, they must understand and acknowledge the responsibilities and trust inherent in that role.

Educational Visits and After-School Clubs

Staff should take particular care when supervising pupils in the less formal atmosphere of a residential setting or after-school activity.

During school activities that take place off the school site or out of school hours, a more relaxed discipline or informal dress and language may be acceptable.

However, staff remain in a position of trust and need to ensure that their behaviour cannot be interpreted as seeking to establish an inappropriate relationship or friendship.

Where out of school activities include overnight stays, careful consideration needs to be given to sleeping arrangements. Pupils, staff and parents should be informed of these prior to the start of the trip.

Health and safety arrangements require members of staff to keep colleagues/employers aware of their whereabouts, especially when involved in an out of school activity.

Exercise of Professional Judgement

This guidance cannot provide a complete checklist of what is, or is not, appropriate behaviour for staff in all circumstances. However, it does highlight behaviour that is illegal, inappropriate or inadvisable. There will be occasions and circumstances in which staff have to make decisions or take action in the best interests of the child or young person which could contravene this guidance or where no guidance exists. Individuals are expected to make judgements about their behaviour in order to secure the best interests and welfare of the children in their charge and, in so doing, will be seen to be acting reasonably. Ideally individuals should:

- discuss any proposed action with a senior colleague whenever possible.
- record the events and any discussions/actions taken with reasons.

Internet Use (inc. social media)

The School's ICT/Computing policy provides details about access to and use of the Internet. Further information is also provided to staff in our Handbook and Acceptable Use Guidelines.

Under no circumstances should adults in school access inappropriate images. Accessing child pornography or indecent images of children on the internet, and making, storing or disseminating such material, is illegal and, if proven, will invariably lead to the individual being barred from working with children and young people.

Using school equipment to access inappropriate or indecent material, including adult pornography, is likely to result in disciplinary action being taken.

Staff using social media may not become 'friends' with pupils online. Staff should not upload content or photographs, or make comments that would bring themselves, the school or the teaching profession into disrepute (whether inside or outside of school).

Intimate/personal care

Intimate care can be defined as care tasks of an intimate nature, associated with bodily functions, bodily products and personal hygiene, which demand direct or indirect contact with, or exposure of, the sensitive parts of the body. Children and young people may require help with eating, drinking, washing, dressing and toileting (which includes personal care). This is particularly relevant to children in the Early Years and those with special educational needs. Staff should ensure that pupils are treated with courtesy, dignity and respect at all times.

Mobile phones

Staff with mobile phones should keep them switched off during lesson time. Due to safeguarding considerations, staff should not use their mobile phones when children are present. The same rules apply to visitors. Staff should also not have any children's mobile numbers stored on their phones.

One-to-One Situations

Staff working in one to one situations with children and young people may be more vulnerable to allegations. Teachers and others must recognise this possibility and should 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.

- Ensure all meetings whenever possible take place in an open area and not in remote or secluded locations around the School.
- Ensure there is visual access and/or an open door in one-to-one situations.
- If providing transport, always carry a minimum of 2 pupils in the vehicle.
- Always report to a senior colleague any situation where a pupil becomes distressed or angry.
- Pre-arranged meetings with pupils away from the School premises should not be permitted unless approval is obtained from their parent and our Head or other senior colleague with delegated authority.

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.

It is unrealistic to suggest that teachers should never touch pupils, and they have the right to restrain and control pupils in certain circumstances.

If it is necessary to restrain or control a pupil, the amount of force used must be no more than is needed for the individual to regain control of themselves. 'Physical intervention' may be used to restrain a child in order to try and prevent injury to a child, if a child is in danger of hurting themselves, where action is necessary in self-defence or because there is an imminent risk of injury or significant damage to property. Any incident of physical intervention must be recorded in the incident log book in our Head's

office. A copy of the DfE information booklet on 'Use of force to control or restrain pupils' is available from the school office.

All staff must clearly understand the need to maintain a professional relationship with pupils at all times. Teachers must make sure that appropriate boundaries are maintained during their dealings with pupils. This includes the type of language they use and also their conduct, which should not be such as to give rise to comment or speculation.

A "no touch" approach is impractical for most staff and may in some circumstances be inappropriate. When physical contact is made with pupils this should be in response to their needs at the time, limited in duration and appropriate given their age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity and background. Appropriate physical contact in schools may occur most often with younger pupils and those with special educational needs.

It is not possible to be specific about the appropriateness of each individual occurrence of physical contact, since an action that is appropriate with one child in one set of circumstances may be inappropriate in another, or with a different child. Staff should, therefore, use their professional judgement at all times.

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 and copies given to the DSL.

The administration of corporal punishment to a pupil is prohibited during any activity, whether or not within school premises, and this applies to all members of staff (including volunteers).

Activities which may require physical contact:

Some staff, for example, those who teach PE and games, or those who offer music tuition, will on occasions have to initiate physical contact with pupils in order to support a child so they can perform a task safely, to demonstrate the use of a particular piece of equipment/instrument or to 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. Staff should remain sensitive to any discomfort expressed verbally or non-verbally by the child.

Power and Position of Trust

As a result of their knowledge, position and/or the authority invested in their role, all adults working with children and young people in educational settings are in positions of trust in relation to the young people in their care. **A relationship between a member of staff and a pupil cannot be a relationship between equals.** There is potential for exploitation and harm of vulnerable young people and staff have a responsibility to ensure that an unequal balance of power is not used for personal advantage or gratification. Staff should therefore ensure that their behaviour and actions do not place pupils or themselves at risk of harm or of allegations of harm to a pupil (for example, in one-to-one tuition or tutorials, conveying a single pupil by car, engaging in inappropriate electronic communication with a pupil, showing excessive one-to-one attention beyond the requirements of their usual role and responsibilities etc).

- Wherever possible, staff should avoid behaviour which might be misinterpreted by others, and report and record any incident with this potential.
- Where a person aged 18 or over is in a position of trust with a child under 18, it is a criminal offence for that person to engage in sexual activity with or in the presence of that child, or to cause or incite that child to engage in or watch sexual activity.

Prevent Duty

The Prevent Duty describes the responsibilities for schools to have 'due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism'. Protecting children from the risk of radicalisation and building up their resilience to radicalisation is part of our wider safeguarding duties, as we can provide a safe environment for debating controversial issues and helping our pupils to understand how they can influence and participate in decision-making. Staff training will be provided on promoting fundamental British values, understanding factors that make people vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism and how to challenge extremist ideas. The DSLs will also liaise as necessary with external bodies such as the Croydon LSCB, the local police force, the DfE or 'Channel' (a programme which focuses on providing support at an early stage to vulnerable people). Staff should refer to the website 'Educate against hate' for various resources. If any member of staff has a concern in this area they should consult the DSLs straight away. Also see 'Preventing Extremism & Radicalisation' Policy.

Propriety and Behaviour

All staff have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of children and young people. They should adopt high standards of personal conduct in order to maintain the confidence and respect of their peers, pupils and the public in general.

An individual's behaviour, either in or out of the workplace, should not compromise her/his position within the work setting. The Teaching Agency (previously the General Teaching Council) makes explicit that "teachers recognise the value and place of the school in the community and the importance of their own professional status. They understand that this requires judgement about appropriate standards of personal behaviour" (March 2009).

Staff should never:

- Make sexual remarks to a student (including in email, text messaging, chat room, phone or letter communication).
- Discuss their own sexual relationships with, or in the presence of, students.
- Humiliate or demean a student or encourage others to do so.

Pupils in Distress

There may be occasions when a distressed pupil needs comfort and reassurance. This may include age-appropriate physical contact. Staff should remain self-aware at all times in order that their contact is not threatening, intrusive or subject to misinterpretation.

Where a member of staff has a particular concern about the need to provide this type of care and reassurance she/he should seek further advice from a senior manager.

Safeguarding

The welfare of all children in our care is paramount. Staff must have due regard for all elements of our Child Protection & Safeguarding (CPS) Policy, available on our server in 'Policies' folder. This includes being familiar with both our school's and our local child protection arrangements and understanding their responsibilities to safeguard and protect children and young people. Mrs Askew is the main Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), and Mrs Teague is the Early Years & Deputy DSL. Any member of staff or parent should contact one of them if there is a concern about a particular child.

Sharing Concerns and Recording Incidents

All staff should be aware of our school's CPS Policy and procedures, including dealing with allegations against staff.

Staff who are the subject of allegations are advised to contact their professional association.

In the event of an incident occurring, which may result in an action being misinterpreted and/or an allegation being made against a member of staff, the relevant information should be clearly and promptly recorded and reported to senior staff. Any notes are kept in the Incidents File in our Head's office. Early discussion with a parent or carer could avoid any misunderstanding.

Members of staff should feel able to discuss with their line manager any difficulties or problems that may affect their relationship with pupils so that appropriate support can be provided or action can be taken.

It is a requirement to report to the DBS and TRA (previously the NCTL) within one month of leaving the school, any person (employed, contracted, a volunteer or pupil) whose services we no longer use because he or she is considered unsuitable to work with children. In this context, ceasing to use a person's services includes: dismissal, non-renewal of a contract, no longer using a teacher from a supply agency, terminating a student's placement, no longer using staff employed by contractors, no longer using volunteers, resignation or voluntary withdrawal from any of the above. 'Compromise agreements' cannot apply in this connection, or where the individual refuses to co-operate with an investigation.

It may be necessary to suspend a member of staff from duty while an investigation is carried out.

Social Contact

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. Even if a young person 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.

Staff should not give their personal details such as home phone number or home e-mail address to pupils unless the need to do so is agreed with our SMT. Internal e-mail systems should only be used in accordance with school policy.

Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing is when someone reports suspected wrongdoing at work, also referred to as 'making a disclosure which is in the public interest'. This may be if they feel something is not right, or illegal, or if someone is neglecting their duties, including:

- someone's health, safety or welfare is in danger
- damage to the environment
- a criminal offence
- the company isn't obeying the law (for example not having the right insurance in place)
- covering up wrongdoing

Whistleblowing is the mechanism by which staff can voice their concerns, made in good faith, without fear or repercussion.

Staff should acknowledge their individual responsibilities to bring matters of concern to the attention of our SMT and/or relevant external agencies. This is particularly important where the welfare of children may be at risk.

See our 'Whistleblowing' policy for further details (available on our server in 'Policies' folder).