

# Woodlands Schools



## Staff Code of Conduct including Low Level Concerns

**This Policy includes EYFS, Little Acorns and After School provision**

*Excellence for all through teaching, learning, opportunity and achievement*

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# Staff Code of Conduct

Woodlands Schools, including Little Acorns, and all those working with children must set an appropriate example.

This Code of Conduct applies to all those working within our Schools and Nurseries regardless of status, and you are asked to familiarise yourself with this important set of standards which we ask you to observe and comply with.

## Professional Behaviour

Professional behaviour is a generic term, but within this Code of Conduct includes such aspects as:

- acting in a fair, courteous and mature manner to pupils, colleagues and other stakeholders;
- co-operating and liaising with colleagues, as appropriate, to ensure pupils receive a coherent and comprehensive educational service;
- endeavouring to assist the School achieve its corporate and strategic objectives – in particular, by adopting a positive attitude to marketing and the achievement of quality and equality;
- respect for School property;
- maintaining the image of the School through standards of dress, general courtesy, correct use of School stationery, etc.;
- taking responsibility for the behaviour and conduct of pupils in the classroom and sharing such responsibility elsewhere on the premises;
- being fit for work (ie not adversely influenced by drugs, alcohol, etc.);
- being familiar with job requirements (eg proper preparation, use of suitable methods/systems, maintenance of appropriate/required records, etc), including keeping up-to-date with developments relevant to the job.
- being familiar with communication channels and School procedures applicable to both pupils and staff;
- ensuring all assessments/exams/tests are conducted in a fair and proper (prescribed) manner, and that procedures are strictly followed with respect to confidentiality and security;
- respect for the rights and opinions of others.

This list is not exhaustive but the examples are given as a summary.

## Safeguarding Pupils

Staff have a duty to safeguard pupils from:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect

The duty to safeguard pupils/students includes the duty to report concerns about a pupil/student to the Schools' or Nurseries' DSL

Staff have access to personal copies of the Schools' Child Protection Policy and Whistleblowing Procedure and Staff must be familiar with these documents.

Staff must not seriously demean or undermine pupils, their parents or carers, or colleagues.

Staff must take reasonable care of pupils under their supervision with the aim of ensuring their safety and welfare.

## **Pupil/Student Development**

Staff must comply with School policies and procedures that support the well-being and development of pupils.

Staff must co-operate and collaborate with colleagues and with external agencies where necessary to support the development of pupils.

Staff must follow reasonable instructions that support the development of pupils/students.

## **Expected Behaviour**

Your behaviour and professional conduct must set a good example to all pupils within the Schools and Nursery. Each employee has a responsibility to uphold our core values and reputation as an excellent educational establishment, both inside and outside of your normal working hours.

As a minimum, we ask you to:

- demonstrate high standards of conduct in order to encourage our pupils to do the same;
- avoid putting yourself at risk of allegations of abuse or unprofessional conduct;
- take reasonable care of pupils/students under your supervision with the aim of ensuring their safety and welfare at all times.
- Hold personal conversations out of range of pupils e.g., in staffroom, not on playground

## **Professional Distance**

Staff should rarely need to touch pupils. In all circumstances staff should maintain a safe and appropriate distance. If any form of manual/physical touching is required, it should be provided openly.

In sporting situations manual/physical touching should be provided according to guidelines provided by the appropriate National Governing Body

Under section 131 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, corporal punishment is prohibited for all pupils in independent and maintained schools. The prohibition included threat of administration of corporal punishment to a pupil during any activity, whether or not within the school premises. The prohibition applies to all members of staff. These include all those acting loco parentis, such as unpaid, parent helpers and students.

If staff think it is necessary to restrain a child from doing something they should try non-physical approaches e.g. by talking to them, by asking them not to move if they are injured, by standing in the way. If staff do have to use physical restraint, it should be the minimum necessary for their safety. If they are in imminent danger, it might be necessary to hold them by their clothing. Whatever the circumstances, physical restraint must be appropriate and reasonable.

School staff are required to establish and maintain appropriate professional boundaries in their relationships with children and young people.

Where possible, staff should avoid being alone with a pupil. Where this is impracticable e.g. a timetabled individual lesson, staff should be sensible e.g. keep an open door or be in a room which has a window in the door. There might be rare occasions when students visit the homes of members of staff e.g. those staff who have children at the School. It is common sense that these visits occur with parental permission and that staff should be mindful of the potential difficulties of such situations.

Staff should not use electronic communications with students other than for obviously work-related issues. In all cases School email accounts or School telephones should be used.

Staff should use social media and the internet responsibly and should not have students, or former pupils under the age of 18, as friends on Facebook or followers on Twitter or other social media. Photographs taken within the workplace where other people are included or children can be identified must not be shared on personal social media accounts.

The E-Safety and Acceptable Use policies must be adhered to at all times. Staff should be aware of their duties with regards to Whistleblowing procedures as stated in the Safeguarding Policy.

Our whistleblowing procedures pay due regard to KCSIE Sept 2023.

## **Honesty and Integrity**

Staff must maintain high standards of honesty and integrity in their work. This includes the handling and claiming of money and the use of school property and facilities.

All staff must comply with the Bribery Act 2010. A person may be guilty of an offence of bribery under this act if they offer, promise or give financial advantage or other advantage to someone; or if they request, agree or accept, or receive a bribe from another person. If you believe that a person has failed to comply with the Bribery Act you should refer to the Whistleblowing procedure.

Personal gifts from individual members of staff to individual students are inappropriate and could be misinterpreted.

## **Conduct Outside Work**

Staff must not engage in conduct outside work which could seriously damage the reputation and standing of the School or the employee's own reputation or the reputation of other members of the School community.

Staff must exercise caution when using information technology and be aware of the risks to themselves and others.

Staff must not engage in inappropriate use of social network sites which may bring themselves, the School, School community or employer into disrepute.

## **Confidentiality**

Where staff have access to confidential information about pupils/students or their parents or carers, staff must not reveal such information except to those colleagues who have a professional role in relation to the pupil/student. If a member of staff witnesses actions which need to be confidential, for example, where a pupil/student is bullied by another pupil/student (or by a member of staff), this needs to be reported and dealt with in accordance with the appropriate School procedure. It must not be discussed outside the School including with the pupil's parent or carer, nor with colleagues in the School except with a senior member of staff with the appropriate role and authority to deal with the matter.

However, staff have an obligation to share with their manager or the Schools' Designated Safeguarding Lead any information which gives rise to concern about the safety or welfare of a pupil. Staff must never promise a pupil that they will not act on information that they are told by the pupil.

## **Disciplinary Action**

All staff need to recognize that failure to meet these standards of behaviour and conduct may result in disciplinary action, including dismissal.

## Dress and Appearance

Staff should consider the manner of dress and appearance appropriate to their professional role. We require pupils to be smart in their uniform, smart and professional appearance is expected at all times for staff.

Staff should ensure their appearance and clothing:

- Promotes a positive and professional image, including ensuring that for male staff, facial hair is either well shaved or trimmed and neat. Male staff should wear a shirt and tie.
- Is not likely to be viewed as offensive, revealing or sexually provocative
- Does not distract, cause embarrassment or give rise to misunderstanding
- Is absent of any political or otherwise contentious slogan.

See Staff Handbook and Staff Information Booklet for more detailed information

## Expectations for safe use of personal devices and mobile phones

All use of personal devices and mobile phones will take place in accordance with the law and other appropriate school policies, such as safeguarding and communication.

- Electronic devices of all kinds that are brought in on site are the responsibility of the user at all times. The school accepts no responsibility for the loss, theft or damage of such items. Nor will the school accept responsibility for any adverse health effects caused by any such devices either potential or actual.
- Mobile phones and personal devices are not permitted to be used in certain areas within the school site such as changing rooms, toilets and swimming pools.
- The sending of abusive or inappropriate messages or content via mobile phones or personal devices is forbidden by any member of the community and any breaches will be dealt with as part of the discipline/behaviour policy.
- Members of staff will have access to a landline and email address for the contact of parents. Senior staff/where appropriate will be provided with a designated landline. HT will be provided with mobile phone.
- All members of WSL community will be advised to take steps to protect their mobile phones or devices from loss, theft or damage.
- All members of WSL community will be advised to use passwords/pin numbers to ensure that unauthorised calls or actions cannot be made on their phones or devices if they are lost or stolen. Passwords and pin numbers should be kept confidential. Mobile phones and personal devices should not be shared.
- All members of WSL community will be advised to ensure that their mobile phones and personal devices do not contain any content which may be considered to be offensive, derogatory or would otherwise contravene the schools policies.
- School mobile phones and devices must always be used in accordance with the Acceptable Use Policy and any other relevant policies.
- School mobile phones and devices used for communication with parents and pupils must be suitably protected via a passcode/password/pin and must only be accessed and used by members of staff.
- Staff must not make personal calls or send or receive personal messages in front of pupils

## Photography, videos and other images

Many educational activities involve recording images. These may be undertaken for displays, publicity, to celebrate achievement and to provide records of evidence of the activity. Under no circumstances should staff be expected or allowed to use their personal equipment to take images of pupils at or on behalf of the school or setting.

All settings should have arrangements with regard to the taking and use of images, which is linked to their safeguarding and child protection policy. This should cover the wide range of devices which can be used for taking/recording images e.g. cameras, mobile-phones, smart phones, tablets, web-cams etc. and arrangements for the use of these by both staff, parents and visitors.

Whilst images are regularly used for very positive purposes adults need to be aware of the potential for these to be taken and/or misused or manipulated for pornographic or 'grooming' purposes. Particular regard needs to be given when images are taken of young or vulnerable children who may be unable to question why or how the activities are taking place.

Pupils who have been previously abused in a manner that involved images may feel particularly threatened by the use of photography, filming etc. Staff should remain sensitive to any pupil who appears uncomfortable and should recognise the potential for misinterpretation

This means that staff should:

- adhere to Woodlands Schools' policy
- only publish images of pupils where they and their parent/carer have given explicit written consent to do so
- only take images where the pupil is happy for them to do so
- only retain images when there is a clear and agreed purpose for doing so
- store images in an appropriate secure place in the school or setting
- ensure that a senior member of staff is aware that the photography/image equipment is being used and for what purpose
- be able to justify images of pupils in their possession
- avoid making images in one to one situations

This means that adults should not:

- take images of pupils for their personal use
- display or distribute images of pupils unless they are sure that they have parental consent to do so (and, where appropriate, consent from the child)
- take images of children in a state of undress or semi-undress
- take images of children which could be considered as indecent or sexual

## EYFS (This policy is covered in more detail in the Little Acorns Policy)

Making and using images of pupils will require the age appropriate consent of the individual concerned and their parents/carers. Images should not be displayed on websites, in publications or in a public place without such consent. The definition of a public place includes areas where visitors to the setting have access.

For the protection of children, it is recommended that when using images for publicity purposes that the following guidance should be followed:

- if the image is used, avoid naming the child, (or, as a minimum, use first names rather than surnames)



- if the child is named, avoid using their image schools and settings should establish whether the image will be retained for further use, where and for how long images should be securely stored and used only by those authorised to do so.

With regards to the EYFS The nursery does not allow the use of mobile phones, any image recording device, or personal technical equipment such as lap tops, I pads etc to be used in the setting without prior permission of the manager.

- We do not allow the use of mobile phones, on the premises either indoors or in the outdoor play area during nursery hours.
- Staff are asked to keep their mobile phones in their lockers located in the staff room at Hutton Manor, or in the office at Great Warley while children are on the premises, they may of course use their phones during their lunch break in the school staff room or away from the nursery site.
- In case of emergency, staff are advised that they may give the nursery phone number 01277 245375 Hutton Manor or 01277 240747 Great Warley to immediate family and schools etc to be contacted on.
- All parents and visitors will be advised of this policy as they enter the nursery.
- Parents and visitors will be asked to ensure their phones are kept in their bags for the duration of their visit.
- If parents or visitors need to use their mobile phone they will be asked to leave the premises in order to do so.

## Cameras and videos

- Members of staff must not bring their own cameras or video recorders into the setting
- Photographs and recordings of children are only taken on equipment belonging to the setting
- Camera and video use is monitored by the setting manager.

## Supervision of Changing Rooms

Clear guidelines are recommended because:

- getting changed can make some children feel vulnerable
- getting changed can cause anxiety for some children
- staff can feel unsure about PE changing supervision and how to ensure that both children and adults are safe.

## Changing areas:

Staff need to consider the following things when organising changing facilities for children:

- Where possible, use designated single-gender changing rooms or areas. If boys and girls are getting changed in the same room, think about using furniture or screens to provide separate areas.
- Mixed gender changing areas are less appropriate as children get older and staff need to be sensitive to those who physically mature at a much earlier or later age than their peers.
- Schools need to treat all pupils fairly and with respect for their privacy and dignity.
- Schools should make adequate and sensitive arrangements for changing which take into account the needs of pupils with disabilities and children from different religions, beliefs and cultural backgrounds or gender identity.



- Adults must always change or shower privately; never in the same space as children.

## **Staff supervision**

Schools will need to make a judgement about supervision based on the age and developmental needs of the pupils. It should not be necessary for adults to remain in the room in order to maintain good behaviour; being in close proximity and pupils being aware of this should be enough.

Pupils should know that adults will enter the room if necessary - in response to a disturbance, for example.

### **Staff should also consider the following:**

- It is often possible to leave the door of designated changing rooms slightly open.
- If there is a need for an adult to enter the room, it is recommended they should alert pupils to this by announcing it to give pupils the opportunity to cover up if they want to.
- Where possible, female staff should supervise girls and male staff should supervise boys.
- All adults, but particularly those of the opposite gender, should avoid just standing in the changing room watching pupils, or repeatedly going in and out without good reason.
- Establish a code of behaviour with pupils so they are clear about expectations about their conduct whilst they are unsupervised.
- Pupils who express concern about the behaviour of a member of staff or other pupils should be listened to, and appropriate enquiries should be conducted by the head teacher or designated safeguarding lead.

## **Pupils who need assistance with getting changed**

When organising changing areas for children with additional needs, schools should:

- Refer to the school's Intimate Care Policy for assisting children who are disabled or require additional support.
- Ensure all staff are aware of any intimate care issues for individual pupils. It is best practice to involve pupils and parents in making decisions which involve intimate care.
- Have a written policy and review these arrangements regularly.
- Encourage pupils of all ages to be as independent as possible; consider prompting and giving verbal help/encouragement before offering physical assistance.
- Be especially careful when helping children with underclothes, tights and swimming costumes.
- If necessary, offer assistance openly and not out of sight of others.

## **Using off-site changing rooms**

Schools will need to think about what safeguards need to be put in place to protect children when visiting other sites and consider the following:

- It is not appropriate for school swimmers (for example) to share changing facilities with members of the public (unless this has been carefully risk assessed). If school sessions precede or are followed by public sessions, enough time should be booked either side of the swimming session to allow pupils to get showered and changed before the public are allowed in.
- As far as possible, members of staff should only supervise or assist pupils of the same gender.

- If changing areas are shared with pupils from another school, particularly those who are older/younger, adults from both/all schools should take this into consideration and properly risk assess together.

## **Intimate Care including EYFS**

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.

Additional vulnerabilities that may arise from a physical disability should be considered with regard to individual teaching and care plans for each child. As with all arrangements for intimate care needs, agreements between the child, their parents and the organisation must be negotiated, agreed and recorded.

## **Use of Language**

When we speak to others we will:

- Use a positive statement rather than a negative one so that children can learn what we expect of them in any situation.
- Use a calm tone of voice at all times, to explain something to or instruct the children, so that they can follow our words without feeling threatened or uncomfortable.
- Avoid using sarcastic words or phrases as these demean children and prevent them from developing high self-esteem and never use words or our voice to humiliate a child.
- Speak respectfully to other adults at all times, even if we disagree with them.

## **Staff as Parents/Parents as Staff**

Once you become a professional teacher, your standing as a member of the wider community is open to scrutiny and criticism by members of The School, other parents and the general public who you may come into contact with. This makes it very difficult to engage in some social activities as a Parent and Teacher. Colleagues who fall into this category should:

- Evaluate each social situation sensibly and with caution
- Never put themselves in a position where their actions could be misconstrued by others. Any colleagues in doubt, should speak to their line manager or a member of the SLT for advice.

## **Position of Trust and Duty of Care to Under-18s**

All adults associated with students aged under 18 are automatically in a position of trust and have a legal “duty of care” and responsibilities to safeguard those aged under 18. This means to be aware, vigilant and know to report any concerns, even minor ones or allegations. Everyone who comes into contact with a child has a role to play in sharing information with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and taking prompt action following the Safeguarding policy.

## **Child in distress**

There may be occasions when a pupil/student is in distress and in need of comfort as a 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.

Such incidents should always be recorded and shared with your line manager. If you have a particular concern about the need to provide this type of care and reassurance you should seek further advice from your line manager.

## Low Level Concerns

It may be possible that a member of staff acts in a way that does not cause risk to children, but is however inappropriate. A member of staff who has a concern about another member of staff should inform the Head Teacher about their concern. This will be recorded and filed in accordance with our GDPR and Data Protection Policies.

### What is a low level Concern?

The following is taken from KCSIE 2023: *“The term ‘low-level’ concern does not mean that it is insignificant, it means that the behaviour towards a child does not meet the threshold set out at paragraph 338. A low-level concern is 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 or college may have acted in a way that:*

- *is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work; and*
- *does not meet the harm threshold or is otherwise not considered serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO.*

**Examples of such behaviour could include, but are not limited to:**

- *being over friendly with children;*
- *having favourites;*
- *taking photographs of children on their mobile phone contrary to school policy;*
- *engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door; or,*
- *humiliating pupils.*

*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.*

*It is crucial that all low level concerns are shared responsibly and with the right person, and recorded and dealt with appropriately. Ensuring they are dealt with effectively should also protect those working in or on behalf of schools and colleges becoming the subject of potential false low level concerns or misunderstandings.*

## Clarity around Allegation vs Low-Level Concern vs Appropriate Conduct

### ***Allegation***

*Behaviour which indicates that an adult who works with children has:*

- *behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;*
- *possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child;*
- *behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children.*

### ***Low Level Concern***

*Any concern – no matter how small, even if no more than a nagging doubt’ – that an adult may have acted in a manner which:*

- *is not consistent with an organisation’s Code of Conduct, and/or*
- *relates to their conduct outside of work which, even if not linked to a particular act or omission, has caused a sense of unease about that adult’s suitability to work with children.*

### ***Appropriate Conduct***

*Behaviour which is entirely consistent with the organisation’s Code of Conduct, and the law.*

Low-Level Concerns will not be referred to in references unless they have been formalized into more significant concerns resulting in disciplinary or misconduct procedures.

Whenever staff leave Woodlands Schools, any record of low-level concerns which are stored about them will be reviewed as to whether or not that information needs to be kept. Consideration will be given to:

- (a) whether some or all of the information contained within any record may have any reasonably likely value in terms of any potential historic employment or abuse claim so as to justify keeping it, in line with normal safeguarding records practice; or
- (b) if, on balance, any record is not considered to have any reasonably likely value, still less actionable concern, and ought to be deleted accordingly.

# Process to follow when a Low-Level Concern is raised

