

STAFF CODE OF CONDUCT

AND GUIDELINES FOR SAFE WORKING PRACTICES FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND STAFF

1. Introduction

1.1 The Governors of The Hamble School have a legal duty under section 175 of the Education Act 2002 to safeguard and promote the welfare of students by creating and maintaining a safe learning environment.

1.2 In this regard, all school staff have a duty to keep children and young people safe and protect them from harm. Staff should ensure that they do not put themselves in situations in which allegations of abuse or inappropriate behaviour could be made.

1.3 The Public are also entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from school staff, governors and volunteers and to have trust and confidence in their integrity.

1.4 All adults working in the school should therefore act with the utmost good faith with regard to the business of the school and not do anything, which may adversely affect its reputation.

1.5 The following Code has been drawn up with a view to reducing the risk of staff being accused of improper or unprofessional conduct in all aspects of their work. It aims to help staff work safely and professionally and clarify what behaviour constitutes safe practice and what is unacceptable and/or illegal.

1.6 The Code refers closely to the AMA Guidance for Safer Working Practice for the Protection of Children and Staff in Education Settings and was first introduced by The Headteacher and Governing Body in September 2011.

2. Scope

2.1 The Code applies to all adults working in the school whatever their position, roles or responsibilities and is therefore aimed at all school-based staff and volunteers.

2.2 The Code is predominantly geared towards safe working practices for the protection of children and in this connection should be read in conjunction with the school's Child Protection Policy, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 and the DFE Teachers' Standards. However, the Code also encompasses other general aspects of conduct expected within The Hamble School.

2.3 The Code cannot cover every eventuality. Its purpose is to show the standard expected of employees, but it does not replace the general requirements of the law.

3. General obligations

- Staff should understand the responsibilities that are an intrinsic part of their employment or role. They should make a professional judgement about their actions and behaviour and seek to avoid conduct which could lead any reasonable person to question their motivation or intentions.
- If there is an incident where staff feel there may be a concern, they should discuss the circumstances that informed their action, or their proposed action with a senior colleague, to help ensure that the safest practices are employed and the risk of actions being misinterpreted reduced.
- Records should be made of any incidents and decisions made or further actions agreed, with their justifications, in accordance with school policy.
- All staff should know the designated person for child protection, be familiar with local child protection arrangements and understand their responsibilities to safeguard and protect children and young people.
- Staff should understand their responsibility to voice any general concerns that they might have about practice within the school, in accordance with the school's Protected Disclosure/Whistle Blowing policy.
- Staff should also be aware of and comply with the school's financial and administrative regulations.
- Unlawful, unsafe or inappropriate behaviour may result in disciplinary action being taken in accordance with the school disciplinary procedures.

4. Good practice guidelines

The following Code and guidelines set out specific areas of conduct and behaviour that constitute expected and safe practice.

If staff are in any doubt about any aspect of this guidance or need to seek further clarification about a particular situation in the absence of specific guidance, they should speak to a member of the Leadership Team within the school.

4.1. Propriety and Behaviour

4.1.1 All adults working with children and young people are in a position of trust in relation to the individuals in their care. Staff are expected to adopt high standards of personal integrity and conduct and behave in such a way that does not compromise their position both within or outside the school.

4.1.2 The DFE Teachers' Standards also sets out the minimum professional standards for the regulation of the teaching profession and recognises that 'professionalism involves using judgement over appropriate standards of personal behaviour'.

Staff should not:

- behave in a manner, which would lead any reasonable person to question their suitability to work with children or act as a role model;
- use their power to intimidate, threaten, coerce or undermine students;
- make (or encourage others to make) unprofessional personal comments which scapegoat, demean or humiliate other individuals, including students or might be interpreted as such.

4.2 Confidentiality and Information disclosure

4.2.1 Staff should not use any information obtained in the course of their duties to the detriment of the school or for personal gain or benefit or pass this information on to others who might use it in such a way.

4.2.2 Staff should also take all reasonable steps to ensure that the loss, destruction, inaccuracy or disclosure of information does not occur as a result of their actions, including information relating to school business and student data, including SEND data.

4.2.3 There are some circumstances in which staff may be expected to share information about a student, for example, when child protection issues arise. In such cases staff have a duty to pass information on without delay in line with local procedures. If staff are in any doubt about whether to share information or keep it confidential they should seek guidance from a member of the Leadership Team or a Designated safeguarding Lead.

- Staff should not use their position to gain access to information for their own advantage or to intimidate, humiliate or embarrass a student;
- Staff are expected to treat any information they receive about students and young people in a discreet and confidential manner;
- Staff need to be cautious when passing on information to others about a student/young person and if in any doubt about sharing information, seek the advice of a member of the Leadership Team, or those with designated child protection responsibilities.

4.3 Equality issues

4.3.1 All staff should adhere to the school's Equalities Policy, in addition to the requirements of the law.

- Staff should not discriminate in recruitment and employment practices, nor in the delivery of services;
- Staff should also ensure that in their dealings with parents and other members of the public, they ensure the provision of an efficient and impartial delivery to all individuals.

4.4 Employment matters

4.4.1 All staff involved in appointments and/or tendering process should ensure that these are made on the basis of merit.

- Staff should not be involved in an appointment or decisions relating to discipline, promotion or pay adjustments for any individual who is a relative or with whom they are in a close personal relationship;
- All relationships of a business or private nature with external contractors, or potential contractors should be made known to the Headteacher.

4.5 Public duty and private interest

4.5.1 It is important that staff do not put themselves in a position where their duty to the school and their private interests conflict.

- Staff should not allow their own personal or political opinions to interfere with their work and the provision of a balanced and professional service, ensuring that they work to the professional standard required.

4.6 Other employment/private work

4.6.1 Any external work that staff undertake should not bring the school into disrepute or conflict with the school's interest.

4.6.2 Any copyright created by a member of staff during their employment with the school becomes the property of the school.

- Staff should not set up a business or accept employment with a business that is engaged in work which is in direct competition with the school.
- Private work should not be undertaken in the school's time, or using the school's premises or equipment, without prior approval of the Headteacher.

4.7 Dress and Appearance

4.7.1 Staff should ensure that they are dressed decently, safely and appropriately for the tasks that they undertake and that through their appearance, they promote a positive and professional image. If a member of staff feels that they are unable to comply with the Dress Code shown below at 4.7.2 for a genuine reason, e.g. for religious purposes then they should speak to the Headteacher about their concerns.

4.7.2 School Dress Code for Staff - The school places great store in the highest standards of dress for staff and students. We believe that staff take the lead in this, and all colleagues are therefore expected to dress in a SMART professional manner. Casual wear is not appropriate, nor are 'holiday' clothes such as flip-flops, or other casual items of clothing. Full shoes should be worn at all times (this means a shoe or smart sandal with a back strap).

For male staff, this entails wearing a shirt and tie with the top button done up on all occasions whilst at the school (further guidance will be given by the Headteacher in times of exceptionally high temperatures in order to ensure staff and student comfort).

For female colleagues likewise, dress suitable for a professional environment is expected: short skirts, low cut tops and bare midriffs are not appropriate.

The following may be helpful in clarifying what is and is not appropriate:-

- No denim
- No excessively revealing clothes
- No sports t-shirts (except PE staff, and site team) PE staff will not need to change shirts when moving into classroom-based teaching
- No shorts (except PE staff, staff and site team)
- No inappropriate footwear e.g. flip flops & trainers (except PE staff) PE staff will not need to change trainers when moving into classroom-based teaching
- No extreme hairstyles or colours

In addition, staff should present themselves, their appearance, body language, actions and use of language in a way that sets an example to the students. We have the highest expectations of staff and for this reason, when in front of the students, staff should not:

- Chew gum.
- Use mobile phones for personal use in front of the students on the site (unless an emergency).
- Expose tattoos or body piercings (except earrings).
- Use inappropriate language in either oral or written form.
- Carry hot drinks around the site that are not in a thermos cup.

Staff should wear clothing appropriate to their work area. If you are supplied with a uniform or overalls for your role with the school then you must wear these whilst carrying out your duties.

The Headteacher will decide if any particular dress code falling outside these parameters is inappropriate.

The Headteacher and Governors continue to be very grateful to colleagues for their support of these professional standards.

4.8 Financial inducements, gifts, hospitality and sponsorship

4.8.1 Staff should ensure that they use public funds entrusted to them in a responsible and lawful manner and that they do not give or receive any gift, loan, fee, reward or advantage, which might be misinterpreted.

4.8.2 Although staff should not give or receive gifts from students or parents on a regular basis or of any significant value, it is acceptable however for staff to receive small tokens of appreciation, such as at Christmas time.

- Staff should not seek or receive preferential rates for themselves by virtue of their dealings on behalf of the school;
- Staff should ensure that gifts are declared if they are received;
- Staff should only give gifts to an individual young person as part of an agreed reward system;
- Where staff do give gifts, they should ensure that they are of insignificant value, given to all students equally and seek agreement from the Headteacher.

4.9 Use of School Time and Facilities

4.9.1 The school's property and facilities (eg stationery, computers, photocopiers) may only be used for school business unless permission for their private use has been granted by the Headteacher.

4.10 Publication of Books/Articles

4.10.1 If staff want to publish books, articles, letters, dissertations etc that they have written in connection with their duties and in which they describe themselves as holding an appointment with the school they should consult the Headteacher.

4.11 Infatuations

4.11.1 In cases where a young person develops an infatuation, there is a high risk of words or actions being misinterpreted and for allegations to be made against staff.

- Staff should report to a member of the Leadership Team, or a Designated Safeguarding Lead, any clear/apparent indications (whether they are verbal, written or physical), that suggest a student may be infatuated with them and respond sensitively to such situations in order to maintain the dignity of all parties. If a student appears to be infatuated with members of the Leadership Team, they should report this to the Headteacher and in circumstances where they were infatuated with the Headteacher, the Headteacher should report this to the Chair of Governors.

4.12 Social contact

4.12.1 Staff should not establish or seek to establish social contact with students to secure or strengthen a friendship. This includes giving any personal details to a student such as a home/mobile phone number, home/email address or social networking contacts. Only in exceptional circumstances can this be with the prior approval of a member of the Leadership Team.

- Do not give out personal details such as home/mobile numbers, home address, e-mail address or social networking contacts to students.
- Staff should always approve any planned social contact with students with senior colleagues, for example, when it is part of a reward scheme or pastoral care programme;
- Staff should advise member of the Leadership Team of any regular social contact they have with a student, where it is apparent that it may give rise to a concern.

4.13 Physical contact

4.13.1 It is unrealistic to suggest that teachers should never touch students. There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for staff to have physical contact with students, such as an integral part of some lessons such as PE and music.

4.13.2 However, innocent actions and appropriate physical contact can often be misconstrued and it is therefore crucial that staff only initiate physical contact for the minimum time necessary and in ways appropriate to their own role and the needs of the student.

4.13.3 Staff should use their professional judgement at all times. Where feasible, staff should seek the student's permission before initiating contact. Where a member of staff thinks that an incident could have been misinterpreted it should be reported to a member of the Leadership Team.

4.13.4 Any formally agreed plan for students with SEND or physical disabilities should be understood and agreed by all concerned and staff will be provided with relevant information about vulnerable students in their care where it is relevant for this to be provided in order for staff to be able to undertake tasks appropriately.

4.13.5 Extra caution may also be required where it is known that a student has suffered previous abuse or neglect. Many such students are often needy and seek out inappropriate contact, thereby leading staff to be vulnerable to allegations of abuse.

In this regard, staff should:

- be aware that even well-intentioned physical contact may be misconstrued by the student, an observer or by anyone to whom this action is described;
- never touch a student in a way which may be considered indecent;
- always explain to a student the reason why contact is necessary and what form that contact will take;
- look at alternatives, where it is anticipated that a student might misinterpret contact and consider involving another member of staff, or a less vulnerable student in a demonstration;
- never indulge in horseplay, tickling or fun fights;
- adhere to the School's Child Protection policy, Safeguarding Policy and Keeping Children Safe in Education.

4.14 Showers, Swimming Classes and Changing

4.14.1 Students are entitled to respect and privacy when changing clothes or taking a shower.

4.14.2 However, there does need to be an appropriate level of supervision to safeguard young people and satisfy health and safety considerations. Any supervision should therefore be appropriate to the needs and age of the young people concerned.

4.14.3 Swimming classes - staff supporting very young children (under the age of 8) may be present in changing rooms in order to provide both supervision and meet health and safety requirements. All Sports Complex staff must complete a 'Childcare Disqualification Staff Declaration Form' obtainable from the school's HR Officer before working with children.

- Staff should avoid any physical contact when students are in a state of undress or any visually intrusive behaviour.
- Where there are changing rooms; staff should announce their intention of entering a changing room and avoid remaining in the room unless students' needs/behaviour require it;
- Staff should not change in the same place as, or shower with students.

4.15 Behaviour management and physical intervention

4.15.1 Corporal punishment is unlawful in all schools and physical force should never be used as a form of punishment; to do so is likely to constitute a criminal offence.

4.15.2 However in some circumstances, staff in schools have the right to use physical intervention/reasonable force for the shortest period necessary to control or restrain students. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 provides the legal power for school staff to use reasonable force to prevent students from committing a crime or causing injury, damage or disruption.

- Staff should try to defuse situations before they escalate.
- Staff should keep parents informed of any sanctions.
- Staff should never touch a student as a form of behaviour management or punishment.
- Staff should adhere to the School's Behaviour Policy.
- Where it is identified that staff are likely to have to restrain on a regular basis, they will receive appropriate training.

4.16 Sexual contact with children and curriculum issues

4.16.1 It is a criminal offence for any adult in a position of trust to engage in any form of sexual activity with a young person under 18, even with their consent (Sexual Offences Act 2003). This also includes non-contact activities such as causing children to engage in or watch sexual activity.

4.16.2 There may be occasions when, as part of the curriculum, a teacher has to raise subject matter that is sexually explicit. In such situations, any lesson plan should highlight the areas of risk and sensitivity. Staff should respond to questions with careful judgement and avoid entering into inappropriate or offensive discussions about sexual activity.

In this regard, staff should not:

- use their status and standing to form or promote relationships with students and young people, which are of a sexual nature;
- pursue sexual relationships with students and young people either in or out of school;
- enter into or encourage inappropriate or offensive discussion about sexual activity;
- make sexual remarks to a student (including email, text messages, phone or letter), or use any communication which could be interpreted as sexually suggestive or provocative;
- discuss their own sexual relationships with, or in the presence of students;
- discuss a student's sexual relationships in inappropriate settings or contexts;
- confer special attention and favour upon a student which might be misconstrued as being part of a 'grooming' process.

4.17 One to one situations and overnight supervision

4.17.1 When staff work regularly on an individual basis with students, they are generally more vulnerable to allegations.

4.17.2 To avoid such situations arising meetings should, wherever possible, be arranged so that staff are visible and/or audible and not in secluded areas of the school.

4.17.3 Staff should not arrange to meet a student away from the school premises without good reason, but if this is necessary, only with the expressed approval of parents and a senior member of staff.

4.17.4 However, where the school makes provision for overnight supervision during exam periods and it is necessary for a student to stay with a member of staff in their home, this should only be with the parent's permission and after a full risk assessment has been carried out.

Staff should:

- ensure there is visual access and/or an open door in one to one situations;
- inform other staff of the meeting beforehand, assessing the need to have them present or close by;
- avoid the use of 'engaged' or equivalent signs wherever possible, as they may create an opportunity for secrecy or the interpretation of secrecy;
- always report to a member of the Leadership Team any situation which gives rise to complaint, disagreement or misunderstanding or where a student becomes distressed or angry.

4.18 Transporting students and young people

4.18.1 In such cases where students/young people need to be transported between different locations, a designated member of staff should be appointed to plan and provide oversight of all arrangements.

4.18.2 Staff should not travel alone with students unless it is an emergency or the child is at risk. If this is necessary it should be agreed in advance by the DSL.

All staff:

- should avoid using private vehicles wherever possible;
- should ensure that they have the appropriate insurance (for business use) where they do have to use their private vehicle;
- should be aware that the safety and welfare of the student is their responsibility until this is safely passed over to a parent/carer;
- should report the nature of the journey, the route and expected time of arrival in accordance with agreed procedures;
- should ensure that their behaviour and all arrangements ensure vehicle, passenger and driver safety, taking into account any specific needs that the student/young person may have.

4.19 Educational visits and after school clubs

4.19.1 Staff should always take care to have another adult present during out of school activities, unless otherwise agreed with senior staff. Health and safety requirements should be strictly adhered to in accordance with the school's Off-Site Education Visits policy and Health and Safety Policy

4.19.2 Staff should ensure that they display professional behaviour during activities that take place off the school site and ensure that their behaviour cannot be interpreted as seeking to establish an inappropriate relationship or friendship. Staff should therefore maintain a professional relationship with students at all times.

4.19.3 Where out of school activities include overnight stays, particular consideration should be given to sleeping arrangements if applicable, and students, staff and parents informed of the arrangements in advance.

In this regard, staff should therefore:

- undertake risk assessments;
- have parental consent to the activity;
- ensure that their behaviour remains professional at all times.

4.20 First aid and administration of medication

4.20.1 In cases where first aid or medication needs to be administered, all staff should adhere to the school's Health and Safety policy.

4.20.2 A health care plan should be drawn up in circumstances where the student needs to take regular medication and any such agreement between the student, parents/carers and the school should be negotiated, agreed and recorded.

4.20.3 Where possible, students should be encouraged to administer the medication themselves, with the permission of parents.

Staff should:

- make other staff aware of the task being undertaken;
- explain to the student what is happening.

4.21 Photography, videos and other creative arts

4.21.1 Many school activities involve recording images, but the use of such images needs careful consideration and handling. In particular, students who may have been abused in this way may feel threatened by the use of photography and filming.

4.21.2 The use of any images of students for publicity purposes will also require the appropriate consent of the individual concerned and their legal guardians and comply with GDPR.

Staff should therefore:

- be clear about the purpose of the activity and about what will happen to the photographs when the lesson or activity is concluded;
- ensure consent is gained from the student and their legal guardians when being used for publicity purposes;
- ensure that a senior member of staff is aware that the photography/image equipment is being used and for what purpose;
- ensure that all images are available for scrutiny in order to screen for acceptability;
- be able to justify images of students in their possession;
- never use mobile phones to take images;
- avoid making images in one to one situations.

4.22 Internet use

4.22.1 Accessing child pornography or indecent images of children on the computer is illegal. Under no circumstances should adults in the school access inappropriate images on the internet. The same rule applies to the use of the school's equipment by members of staff at home, e.g. use of laptops.

Staff should follow the school policy on Acceptable use of IT Equipment.

Further reference documents

- **Protected Disclosures (Whistle-blowing) Policy**
 - This policy provides the framework by which staff can voice their concerns in good faith about practice within the school, without fear of repercussion and in accordance with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.
- **Education and Inspections Act 2006**
 - Forbids corporal punishment, but allows all teachers to use reasonable force to prevent a pupil from committing a criminal offence, injuring themselves or others, damaging property, acting in a way that is counter to maintaining good order and discipline at the school.
- **Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006**
 - Allows headteachers (or other school staff who have been authorised by the headteacher) to undertake searches of students where they suspect they are carrying a knife or other offensive weapon).

- **School Policies**

- Behaviour Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Child Protection Policy / Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Safeguarding Policy
- ICT Acceptable Use Policy

Other legal considerations

Education Act 2002 (section 175)

Schools should exercise their functions with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

Children Act 1989

Recognises that the identification and investigation of child abuse together with the protection and support of victims requires multi-agency collaboration

Children Act 2004

Duty on all agencies to make arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998

Gives legislative protection for 'whistle blowers' where there is a qualifying disclosure.

Sexual Offences Act 2003

A criminal offence for any adult in a position of trust to engage in any form of sexual activity with a young person under 18, even with their consent.

Designated Safeguarding Lead: Sarah Pennington-Chick

Deputy DSLs: Chris Andrews, Lorraine Barkshire, Natalie Emmett- Callaghan, Sally Bone, Polly Brierley, Richard James, Sarah Clarkson, Rebekah Baldwin and Kirsty Wigginton

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AND GUIDELINES FOR SAFE WORKING PRACTICES FOR THE PROTECTION
OF CHILDREN AND STAFF

STAFF CODE OF CONDUCT (2023-2024)

Declaration of receipt

I confirm that I have read the Staff Code of Conduct and Guidelines for Safe Working Practice and understand that the associated School policies support my safe practice. I understand that any unlawful or unsafe behaviour could lead to appropriate legal or disciplinary action being taken.

Name: *(please print)*:

Signature: Date:

Please return this slip to Karen Chilcott, HR Officer as soon as possible.