

Oaklands School



Staff Code of Conduct

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Context

Oaklands School is a small independent school offering provision from pupils age 5 to 16 years. All pupils at Oaklands School have Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) with specific outcomes under the areas of need (Communication and Interaction; Cognition and Learning; Sensory and Physical; Social; Emotional and Mental Health)

All children have a right to a broad, balanced and relevant education which provides continuity and progression and takes individual differences into account. Work in school should be planned to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum taking account of the need to differentiate the learning experiences of our children.

Aims, scope and principles

This policy aims to set and maintain standards of conduct that we expect all staff to follow.

By creating this policy, we aim to ensure our school is an environment where everyone is safe, happy and treated with respect.

Many of the principles in this code of conduct are based on the Teachers' Standards. School staff have an influential position in the school and will act as role models for pupils by consistently demonstrating high standards of behaviour.

We expect that all teachers will act in accordance with the personal and professional behaviours set out in the Teachers' Standards.

We expect all support staff, governors and any other persons involved with the school to also act with personal and professional integrity, respecting the safety and wellbeing of others.

At Oaklands School, we expect all staff to uphold our vision and mission in promoting learning and wellbeing for all pupils and to follow our Trauma Informed approach taking into consideration the pupils' special educational needs.

Failure to follow the code of conduct may result in disciplinary action being taken, as set out in our staff disciplinary procedures.

Please note that this code of conduct is not exhaustive. If situations arise that are not covered by this code, staff will use their professional judgement and act in the best interests of the school and its pupils.

Legislation and guidance

In line with the statutory safeguarding guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023, we have a staff code of conduct that covers low-level concerns, allegations against staff and whistleblowing, as well as acceptable use of technologies (including the use of mobile devices), staff/pupil relationships and communications, including the use of social media.

General obligations

Staff set an example to pupils. They will:

- Maintain high standards in their attendance and punctuality
- Never use inappropriate or offensive language in school
- Treat pupils and others with dignity and respect
- Adhere to the Teachers' Standards

Staff must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of our school and maintain high standards of their own attendance and punctuality.

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.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

All staff are required to understand the types of discrimination and bullying that students and colleagues may be subject to. Staff are required to have read and understood our Anti Bullying policy.

Staff must not ignore any form of discrimination. This includes inappropriate jokes and banter. Employees must positively promote equality and diversity and inclusion at all times.

Staff will:

- Treat pupils with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to their professional position
- Have regard for the need to safeguard pupils' well-being, in accordance with statutory provisions
- Show tolerance of and respect for the rights of others
- Not undermine fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs
- Ensure that personal beliefs are not expressed in ways which exploit pupils' vulnerability or might lead them to break the law.

Safeguarding

Staff have a duty to safeguard pupils from harm, and to report any concerns they have. This includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse, and neglect.

Staff will familiarise themselves with our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and procedures, and the Prevent initiative, and ensure they are aware of the processes to follow if they have concerns about a child.

Our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and procedures are available digitally on the school's website (<https://www.fhnschool.co.uk/>), on the school's digital Policy folder. There are also paper copies of the policy at reception and in the staffroom. As part of our Initial Staff Induction, all new staff will read the policy and sign to confirm that they have read, understood and will follow all aspects of the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Allegations that may meet the harm threshold

This section is based on 'Section 1: Allegations that may meet the harm threshold' in part 4 of Keeping Children Safe in Education.

This section applies to all cases in which it is alleged that anyone working in the school, including a supply teacher, volunteer or contractor, has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child, and/or
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, and/or
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children, and/or
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children – this includes behaviour taking place inside or outside of school

We will deal with any such allegation quickly and in a fair and consistent way that provides effective child protection while also supporting the individual who is the subject of the allegation.

A 'case manager' will lead any investigation. This will be the Headteacher, or the Chair of the Board where the headteacher is the subject of the allegation.

Low level concerns about members of staff

A low-level concern is a behaviour towards a child by a member of staff that does not meet the harm threshold, is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, and may be as simple as causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt'. For example, this may include:

- Being over-friendly with children
- Having favourites
- Taking photographs of children on a personal device
- Humiliating pupils

Low-level concerns can include inappropriate conduct inside and outside of work.

All staff should share any low-level concerns they have using the reporting procedures set out in our child protection and safeguarding policy. We also encourage staff to self-refer if they find themselves in a situation that could be misinterpreted. If staff are not sure whether behaviour would be deemed a low-level concern, we encourage staff to report it.

All reports will be handled in a responsive, sensitive and proportionate way.

Unprofessional behaviour will be addressed, and the staff member supported to correct it, at an early stage.

This creates and embeds a culture of openness, trust and transparency in which our values and expected behaviour are constantly lived, monitored and reinforced by all staff, while minimising the risk of abuse.

Reporting and responding to low-level concerns is covered in more detail in our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and in our Low Level Concern Policy. These are available digitally on the school's website (<https://www.fhhschool.co.uk/>), on the school's digital Policy folder. There are also paper copies of the policy at reception and in the staffroom.

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

Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing reports wrongdoing that it is "in the public interest" to report. Examples linked to safeguarding include:

- Pupils' or staff's health and safety being put in danger
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation or statutory requirement
- Attempts to cover up the above, or any other wrongdoing in the public interest

Staff are encouraged to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible. Their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated, and their confidentiality will be respected.

Staff should consider the examples above when deciding whether their concern is of a whistleblowing nature. Consider whether the incident(s) was illegal, breached statutory or school procedures, put people in danger or was an attempt to cover any such activity up.

Staff should report their concern to the Headteacher. If the concern is about the Headteacher, or it is believed they may be involved in the wrongdoing in some way, the staff member should report their concern to the Chair of the Board.

Concerns should be made in writing wherever possible. They should include names of those committing wrongdoing, dates, places and as much evidence and context as possible. Staff raising a concern should also include details of any personal interest in the matter.

For our school's detailed whistleblowing process, please refer to our Whistleblowing policy.

Staff – Pupil relationships

Staff will observe proper boundaries with pupils that are appropriate to their professional position. They will act in a fair and transparent way that would not lead anyone to reasonably assume they are not doing so.

If staff members and pupils must spend time on a one-to-one basis, staff will ensure that:

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

Staff should avoid contact with pupils outside of school hours if possible.

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

While we are aware many pupils and their parents may wish to give gifts to staff, for example, at the end of the school year, gifts from staff to pupils are not acceptable.

If a staff member is concerned at any point that an interaction between themselves and a pupil may be misinterpreted, or if a staff member is concerned at any point about a fellow staff member and a pupil, this should be reported in line with the procedures set out in our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Physical Contact

There are occasions when it is appropriate and proper for staff to have physical contact with pupils. Staff must ensure that they only do so in ways that are appropriate to their professional role and in response to the pupil's needs at the time. For example, if a young pupil has hurt himself / herself and needs comforting. This should be of limited duration and appropriate to the age, stage of development, gender and background of the pupil. Staff should always be able to explain why they have made physical contact with a pupil.

Staff may legally physically intervene with pupils to prevent them from injuring themselves, injuring others, causing damage to property, engaging in behaviour prejudicial to good order and to maintain good order and discipline. Physical force should never be used as a form of punishment.

Social Contact

Staff should not establish or seek to establish social contact, via any channels (including social media), with pupils for the purposes of securing a friendship or to pursue or strengthen a relationship. Staff should use their work provided equipment only for communicating electronically with pupils. Staff must not provide their personal contact details, including phone numbers, email address, etc. to any pupils.

Our school is part of our community and we recognise that, as members of the community, staff might come into contact with pupils outside of the school. We expect staff to use their professional judgement in such situations and to report to Headteacher any contact that they have had with a pupil, outside of school, that they are concerned about or that could be misinterpreted by others.

One to One work with pupils

There are times where a staff member is working one to one with a pupil as part of our individualised approach to learning. Staff need to understand that this means that they may be more vulnerable to allegations being made against them. Therefore, it is important that staff:

- Avoid meeting on a one to one basis in secluded areas of the school
- Ensure that the door to the room is open or that there is visual access into the room
- Inform a colleague or line manager of the meeting, preferably beforehand
- Reports to their line manager if the student becomes distressed or angry.

Communication and social media

School staff's social media profiles should not be available to pupils. If they have a personal profile on social media sites, they should not use their full name, as pupils may be able to find them. Staff should consider using a first and middle name instead, and set public profiles to private.

Staff should not attempt to contact pupils or their parents via social media, or any other means outside school, in order to develop any sort of relationship. They will not make any efforts to find pupils' or parents' social media profiles.

Staff will ensure that they do not post any images online that identify children who are pupils at the school without their consent.

Staff should be aware of the school's Online Safety Policy.

Acceptable use of technology

Staff will not use technology in school to view material that is illegal, inappropriate or likely to be deemed offensive. This includes, but is not limited to, sending obscene emails, gambling and viewing pornography or other inappropriate content.

Staff will not use personal mobile phones and laptops, or school equipment for personal use, in school hours or in front of pupils. They will also not use personal mobile phones or cameras to take pictures of pupils.

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

Confidentiality

In the course of their role, members of staff are often privy to sensitive and confidential information about the school, staff, pupils and their parents.

This information should never be:

- Disclosed to anyone unless required by law or with consent from the relevant party or parties
- Used to humiliate, embarrass or blackmail others
- Used for a purpose other than what it was collected and intended for

This does not overrule staff's duty to report child protection concerns to the appropriate channel where staff believe a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm, as detailed further in our child protection and safeguarding policy.

The school holds and processes data that is protected under the Data Protection Act 1998. Staff are expected to comply with GDPR and the school's systems for collecting, storing and using data. If any staff becomes aware that data is at risk of compromise or loss, or has been compromised or lost they must report it immediately to the Headteacher.

Honesty and integrity

Staff should maintain high standards of honesty and integrity in their role. This includes when dealing with pupils, handling money, claiming expenses and using school property and facilities.

Staff will not accept bribes. All gifts must be declared and recorded. Staff should declare any gifts to Human Resources.

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

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

- Qualifications
- Professional experience
- Medical Conditions

Where there are any updates to the information provided to the school, the member of staff will advise the school as such as soon as reasonably practicable. Consideration will then be given to the nature and circumstances of the matter and whether this may have an impact on the member of staff's employment.

Staff will uphold public trust in our school and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school.

Honesty and integrity outside work

Staff are expected to operate within the law. Unlawful or criminal behaviour, at work or outside work, may lead to disciplinary action, including dismissal, being taken. However, being investigated by the police, receiving a caution or being charged will not automatically mean that an employee's employment is at risk.

Staff must ensure that they:

- Uphold the law at work
- Never commit a crime away from work which could damage public confidence in them or the school or which makes them unsuitable for the work they do. This includes, for example:
 - submitting false or fraudulent claims to public bodies (for example, income support, housing or other benefit claims)
 - breaching copyright on computer software or published documents
 - sexual offences which will render them unfit to work with children or vulnerable adults
 - crimes of dishonesty which render them unfit to hold a position of trust
 - motoring offences which render them unfit to drive where this is essential for their role or for them to attend work

Staff must write and tell the Headteacher immediately if they are questioned by the police, charged with, or convicted of, any crime whilst they are employed at the school (this includes outside of their working hours). The Headteacher and/or the Proprietor will then need to consider whether this charge or conviction damages public confidence in the school or makes the employee unsuitable to carry out their duties.

Honesty and integrity at work

Staff are expected to demonstrate consistently high standards of personal and professional conduct. The following value statements underpin the behaviour and attitudes which set the required standard for conduct at our school:

- Respectful – we are respectful of all views and personal circumstances, whatever they may be
- Honest – we are open and transparent in all we do
- Kind – we treat everyone with kindness and the care they may need
- Committed – we are focussed on meeting all our students' needs
- Loyal – we respect the confidentiality of all

Health and Safety

Staff must ensure they are aware of the Health and Safety Procedures at the school.

Staff will comply with the Health and Safety Regulations and use any safety equipment and protective clothing which is supplied by the school.

Staff will comply with hygiene requirements.

Staff will comply with accident reporting requirements

Staff will never act in a way which might cause risk or damage to any other members of the school community or visitors.

Staff will inform the Headteacher of any paid work undertaken elsewhere. This is to comply with the Working Time Regulations, which are a Health and Safety initiative.

Dress code

Staff will dress in a professional, appropriate manner. This might be practical and suited to the task performed by the staff. For example, staff might need to wear informal outfits if engaging in movement, PE or other similar activities. Clothes will not display any offensive or political slogans.

Outfits will not be overly revealing. Staff will be mindful of the appropriateness of outfits taking into consideration the pupils special educational needs and possible puberty and adolescent responses which can be detrimental to the pupils and staff.

We ask that tattoos are covered up as much as possible. All tattoos which could be construed as offensive must be covered up (e.g. political content, sensual or sexual content, content that might cause distress to pupils).

We ask that staff are mindful when wearing jewellery and piercings as these can pose a risk when supporting pupils.

Conduct outside of work

Unlike some other forms of employment, working at our school means that a staff member's conduct outside of work could have an impact on their role.

Staff will not act in a way that would bring the school, or the teaching profession, into disrepute. This covers conduct including but not limited to relevant criminal offences, such as violence or sexual misconduct, as well as negative comments about the school on social media.

We expect staff to make us aware immediately of any such situations that have happened outside of the school.

Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually but can be revised as needed. It will be approved by the Chair of the Board.

Our Chair of the Board will ensure this code of conduct is implemented effectively, and will ensure appropriate action is taken in a timely manner to safeguard children and deal with any concerns.

Links to other policies

This policy links with our policies on:

- Staff Disciplinary Procedures, which will be used if staff breach this Code of Conduct. It also sets out examples of what we will deem as misconduct and gross misconduct
- Staff Grievance Procedures
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- IT Acceptable Use Policy