



## Our Trust's Code of Conduct

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## 1. Aims, scope and principles

This policy aims to set and maintain standards of conduct that we expect all our employees (hereinafter “colleagues”) to follow.

This Code of Conduct reflects our commitment to setting and maintaining the highest professional standards of conduct we expect of all our employees (hereinafter “colleagues”). The Code should be interpreted in the context of our unique organisational setting, recognising that expectations may vary between primary and secondary schools. If you are uncertain about any aspect of this policy, please seek guidance from a senior leader. Always prioritise managing potential risks effectively, while ensuring decisions are made in the best interest of the pupil's well-being and development.

By creating this policy, we aim to ensure our schools are environments 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-based colleagues have a particularly influential position in their school and should be 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 colleagues, local governors, trustees and volunteers to also act with personal and professional integrity, respecting the safety and wellbeing of others.

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

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

## 2. Legislation and guidance

In line with the statutory safeguarding guidance '[Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)', we should have a Trust code of conduct, which should cover acceptable use of technologies, staff/pupil relationships and communications, including the use of social media.

This policy also complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

## 3. General obligations

Colleagues 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
- Not consume or be under the influence of alcohol or any substance, including prescribed medication, which may affect their ability to care for children
- Show tolerance 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

- Express personal beliefs in a way that will not overly influence pupils, and will not exploit pupils' vulnerability or might lead them to break the law
- Understand the statutory frameworks they must act within
- Voice any concerns you may have in accordance with the Trust's whistleblowing and safeguarding policies
- Adhere to the Teachers' Standards (if you are a teacher) and such other applicable professional standards including this Code for all colleagues.

## **4. Safeguarding**

Colleagues have a duty to safeguard pupils from harm, and to record and report any concerns they have, including what may be seen as "low level concerns". This includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse, or neglect.

Colleagues will familiarise themselves with our safeguarding policy and procedures, and the duties in relation to the Prevent and Female Genital Mutilation initiatives. Colleagues must ensure they are aware of the processes to follow if they have any concerns about a child.

Identity lanyards and identity cards must be worn and displayed at all times, removed only when this presents a safety risk and replaced as soon as the particular activity is complete.

Our child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures are available in each school. New colleagues will also be signposted to copies on arrival.

### **4.2.1 Prevent Duty**

Under Section 26 of the Counterterrorism and Security Act 2015, staff must have "due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism".

Staff should refer any concerns regarding radicalisation to the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead or a senior leader, following the school's normal safeguarding procedures.

Relevant colleagues should understand when it is appropriate to make referral to the local Prevent programme, a mechanism for schools to make referrals if they are concerned that an individual might be vulnerable to radicalisation.

All colleagues should ensure they have undertaken some form of Prevent awareness training and ensure they keep themselves regularly updated.

### **4.2.2 Female Genital Mutilation**

Colleagues should be aware of the personal reporting duty with regard to known cases of female genital mutilation (FGM). Supplementary to Keeping Children Safe in Education, further guidance can be obtained in the "**Mandatory Reporting of Female Genital Mutilation – procedural information**" government document.

## **5. Staff/pupil relationships**

### **5.1 General principles**

Colleagues 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 colleagues and pupils must spend time on a one-to-one basis, colleagues will ensure that:

- This takes place in a public place that others can access.
- Others can see into the room.
- Contact with pupils outside of school hours is avoided if possible.

If such contact does take place, colleagues should conduct themselves in a manner aligned to this policy. We are aware that situations may arise where family interests or loyalties conflict with those of the school. However, colleagues have an obligation to act in the best interests of the school community to avoid situations where there may be a potential or actual conflict of interest.

If a colleague is concerned at any point that an interaction between themselves and a pupil may be misinterpreted, this should be reported to their senior leader/Headteacher/Head of School. More detail on this is given in the following sections.

## **5.2 Infatuations**

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

Colleagues should therefore maintain professional boundaries at all times. They should report to a senior colleague any clear/apparent indications (whether they are verbal, written or physical), that suggest a pupil may be infatuated with them and respond sensitively to such situations in order to maintain the dignity of all parties. This also applies where colleagues have concerns that this applies to a parent or caregiver of a pupil.

## **5.3 Social contact**

Colleagues must not establish or seek to establish social contact with pupils. This includes giving any personal details to a pupil such as a home/mobile phone number, home or email address or social media profiles.

Colleagues must advise the senior leader of any regular social contact that they may have with a pupil through outside interests or through the colleague's own family. In such circumstances, colleagues must be aware of and adhere to this Code of Conduct in their interactions.

Colleagues who are also parents/caregivers must be contacted in the usual way using school processes to discuss their child. This must also be recorded in the usual way. Also, parents and caregivers who are also staff should use the formal processes for contacting the relevant school.

## **5.4 Physical contact**

It is unrealistic to suggest that teachers and teaching support colleagues should never touch pupils. There are occasions when it can be appropriate and proper for colleagues to have physical contact with pupils, such as when a distressed pupil needs comfort and reassurance or as an integral part of some lessons.

Colleagues must adhere to the relevant Trust/school policy regarding use of reasonable force and the annual training they have received and be acquainted with DfE advice ([DfE advice template](#) and [Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school - GOV.UK](#)) in respect of physical contact with pupils and guidance about meeting the medical needs of children and young people in the school.

However, innocent actions and appropriate physical contact can be misconstrued by the child or an observer - and it is therefore crucial that colleagues aim to initiate the least physical contact for the minimum time necessary and in ways appropriate to their own role and the needs of the child.

Colleagues should use their professional judgement at all times and, as appropriate, seek advice from their DSL. Where feasible, colleagues should seek the child's permission before initiating contact. Where a colleague believes that an incident could have been misinterpreted it must be reported to the Headteacher/Head of School. Any use of reasonable force' must be logged with the school's DSL and on the school reporting system within 24 hours. Contact home is the best practice after this action; advice should be sought from the school's DSL.

#### **a. Early Years and Key Stage 1 (EYFS – KS1)**

- Physical contact may be necessary for:
  - Comforting a distressed child.
  - Supporting physical needs (e.g., helping with a coat, applying first aid).
  - Educational activities (e.g., guiding hand in writing or art).
- Staff should be mindful of boundaries and avoid prolonged or unnecessary contact.

#### **b. Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 5**

- Physical contact should be avoided unless:
  - It is to prevent harm (e.g., physical intervention to stop a fight).
  - First aid or medical assistance is required.
  - Non-contact methods of communication are ineffective and immediate support is essential.

Any formally agreed plan for children with SEND or physical disabilities should be understood and agreed by all concerned. This should include parents/designated carers and colleagues who should be provided with relevant information about vulnerable pupils in their care where it is relevant for this to be provided, in order for colleagues to be able to undertake tasks appropriately. If a pupil requires assistance with intimate care needs, the relevant Intimate Care Policy should be followed.

Extra caution may also be required where it is known that a child has suffered previous abuse or neglect. Many such children are often needy and seek out inappropriate contact.

Colleagues should therefore:

- be aware that even well-intentioned physical contact may be misconstrued by the child, an observer or by anyone to whom this action is described;
- never touch a child in a way which may be considered indecent;
- always explain to a pupil the reason why contact is necessary and what form that contact will take;
- look at alternatives, where it is anticipated that a pupil might misinterpret contact and consider involving another colleague, or a less vulnerable pupil in a demonstration;
- never indulge in horseplay, tickling or fun fights
- Use **neutral body language** and avoid close personal proximity when not essential
- ensure a record is kept at the time and the relevant colleagues are kept informed when you have offered comfort to a distressed child or had physical contact in what appears to be a familiar way not linked to comfort or distress. Further guidance on this is available from the relevant school policy and adhered to;
- adhere to the relevant school policy regarding use of reasonable force and be acquainted with DfE advice in respect of physical contact with pupils and guidance about meeting the medical needs of children and young people in the school.
- All concerns or allegations must be reported in accordance with the **Trust's Safeguarding and**

## **Whistleblowing policies.**

Colleagues should NOT:

- **initiate physical contact unnecessarily**
- use their status and standing to form or promote relationships with children, which are of a sexual nature;
- pursue sexual relationships with children and young people either in or out of school, including children in the sixth form;
- enter into or encourage inappropriate, offensive or discriminatory discussion about sexual activity;
- make sexual remarks to a pupil (including by 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 pupils;
- discuss a pupil's sexual relationships in inappropriate settings or contexts;
- confer special attention and favour upon a child which might be misconstrued as being part of a 'grooming' process.

## **5.5 Showers and Changing**

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

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

Colleagues who are regularly involved in supervising children in changing rooms should read and familiarise themselves with the document "Getting changed for PE Guidance".

Colleagues should:

- avoid any physical contact when children are in a state of undress or any visually intrusive behaviour where there are changing rooms;
- announce their intention of entering a changing room and avoid remaining in the room unless pupil needs require it;
- not change in the same place as or shower with children.

## **5.6 One to one situations, overnight supervision, home visits**

When colleagues work regularly on an individual basis with children, they are generally more vulnerable to allegations.

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

Colleagues should not arrange to meet a pupil away from the school premises without good reason, but if this is necessary, only with the expressed approval of parents/designated carers and the Headteacher/Head of School/Designated Safeguarding Lead. Colleagues must ensure that all home visits are justified and recorded.

It is never necessary for a pupil of any age to stay with a colleague in their home.

Colleagues should:

- ensure there is visual access and/or an open door in one-to-one situations;
- inform other colleagues 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 senior colleague any situation which gives rise to complaint, disagreement or misunderstanding or where a child becomes distressed or angry.

## **5.7 Transporting children**

In such cases where children need to be transported between different locations, a designated colleague should be appointed to plan and provide oversight of all arrangements.

Wherever practicable, an adult additional to the driver should act as an escort and all arrangements agreed with relevant parties, including pupils, in advance.

All colleagues:

- should avoid using private vehicles wherever possible;
- must ensure that they have the appropriate insurance (for business use) where they do have to use their private vehicle;
- should ensure that they are alone with a child for the minimum time possible;
- should be aware that a lone pupil should ideally sit in the rear of the vehicle
- should be aware that the safety and welfare of the child 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 child may have.

## **5.8 Educational visits and after school clubs**

Colleagues 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.

Colleagues 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. Colleagues must therefore maintain a professional relationship with students at all times.

Where out of school activities include overnight stays, particular consideration should be given to sleeping arrangements, if applicable, and students, colleagues and parents/designated carers need to be informed of the arrangements in advance.

Therefore, those colleagues involved must:

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

## **6. Communication and social media**

### **6.1 General principles**

Colleagues' social media profiles should not be available to pupils. If a colleague does have a

personal profile on a social media site, they should avoid using their full name, as pupils may be able to find them. Colleagues should consider using a first and middle name instead, and must set public profiles to strictly private.

Colleagues are reminded to exercise caution in their online activities and ensure that their names are not associated with any content or actions that could negatively impact the reputation of their employer.

Wholly professional profiles e.g. on LinkedIn must always abide by the rules and conditions of the platform and contain no content which may breach the Code of Conduct.

Colleagues should follow the relevant school digital/data/communication policies including Mobile Phone Policy, ICT Acceptable Use Policy and Social Networking Policy.

## **6.2 Photography, videos and other creative arts**

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

The use of any images of children for publicity purposes will also require the appropriate consent of the individual concerned and their legal guardian, and irrespective of permission should never be used in a social media context.

School equipment must be used in such circumstances unless in the most exceptional of circumstances and only then with the prior approval of the Headteacher/Head of School.

Colleagues should therefore:

- familiarise themselves with the relevant school policies including the Social Networking and IT Usage Policies
- 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 where being used for publicity purposes;
- ensure that a senior school leader 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 children in their possession;
- ensure that where it has been expressly agreed that personal equipment can be used e.g. a mobile phone, images taken are reviewed by a colleague and then fully deleted from the device as soon as possible;
- avoid making images in one-to-one situations.

## **6.3 Internet use and acceptable use of Trust technology**

Accessing child pornography or indecent images of children on the computer is illegal. Under no circumstances should colleagues in schools access inappropriate images on the internet or access any other site which could call into question the suitability to work with children.

Electronic communications with students/parents/designated carers/guardians for school-based reasons should only be via the school email system. Personal email addresses should not be used.

Colleagues must not attempt to contact pupils or their parents/designated carers 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'/designated carers' social media profiles. Colleagues should not discuss or share data relating to children, parents or designated carers in staff social media groups.

Colleagues must not use Trust technology either in school or at home 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.

## 7. Confidentiality

In the course of their role, colleagues are often privy to sensitive and confidential information about schools, other colleagues, pupils and their parents/designated carers.

This information will never be:

- Disclosed to anyone without the relevant authority
- Used to humiliate, embarrass or blackmail others
- Used for a purpose other than what it was collected and intended for.

This does not overrule colleagues' duty to report child protection concerns to the appropriate channel where colleagues believe a child is at risk of harm.

## 8. Honesty and integrity

Colleagues should maintain high standards of honesty and integrity in their role within and outside of school. This includes but is not restricted to dealing with pupils and other colleagues, handling money, claiming expenses and using school property and facilities.

Colleagues will not accept bribes. Gifts that are worth more than £50 must be declared and recorded on the gifts and hospitality register.

Colleagues will ensure that all information given to the school about their qualifications and professional experience is correct.

From September 2025, all colleagues will be required to complete an annual declaration affirming their continued suitability to work with children. This includes disclosing any new information or changes in circumstances that could impact their ability to provide a safe environment for children, in compliance with child safeguarding standards. This measure is essential to uphold our commitment to the welfare of children, and to ensure that any risks are identified and managed promptly.

## 9. Dress code

**Professional appearance:** Colleagues are expected to maintain a professional appearance that reflects the values and ethos of the school/Trust. While facial piercings are permitted, they should be minimal and not distract from the learning environment or professional interactions. Colleagues should be no less formally dressed than pupils are expected to be and should maintain high standards of appearance. For example, outfits will not be overly revealing and must not display any offensive or political slogans, and we ask that offensive tattoos are covered up.

**Health and Safety Considerations:** Colleagues must ensure that any piercings do not pose a health or safety risk to themselves, colleagues, or students. In specific situations, colleagues may, after consultation, be required to remove or cover piercings for practical or safety reasons.

## **10. Conduct outside of work**

Care must be taken by colleagues to avoid any conflict of interest between activities undertaken outside school and responsibilities within school. In no case should actions or activities undertaken outside of work (including but not limited to relationships and social media contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults) bring the school into disrepute. This ranges from, but is not limited to, relevant criminal offences, such as violence or sexual misconduct, as well as negative comments about an individual colleague, a student, the school or Trust in public or on social media.

Teachers are reminded that the [Teachers' Standards](#), and specifically Part Two: Personal and Professional Conduct, set out their responsibilities in relation to upholding public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school.

Where colleagues are in any doubt as to whether there is a conflict-of-interest advice must be sought from your senior leader.

## **11. Employment matters**

All colleagues involved in appointments and/or tendering process should ensure that these are made on the basis of merit, without discrimination and in accordance with the relevant Trust and/or school's policy including the recruitment and selection policy and procedure.

It is important that colleagues do not put themselves in a position where their duty to the Trust and their private interests' conflict.

Colleagues should:

- not be involved in an appointment or decisions relating to discipline, appraisal, promotion or pay adjustments for any individual who has a family connection to them, or with whom they are in a close personal relationship;
- ensure that all relationships of a business or private nature with external contractors or potential contractors should be made known to the Headteacher/Head of School or the Chair of Governors (if the Headteacher) and for HISP Central/Learning Partnership to the appropriate executive director (Chair of Trustees if Chief Executive Officer or Chief Financial Officer).

If you are in doubt about whether to declare an interest, speak to your Headteacher/Head of School/Executive Director

## **12. Public duty**

Colleagues must 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.

## **13. Other employment/private work**

Any external work that colleagues undertake must not bring HISP and/or any of its schools into disrepute or conflict with the Trust's interests.

Any copyright created by a colleague during their employment with HISP becomes the property of HISP. Employees must seek prior written approval from the Trust before publishing or distributing any materials, including books, that either reference the Trust or its schools or are based on knowledge, information, and/or experiences gained during their employment

Colleagues must not:

- Set up a business or accept employment with a business that is engaged in work, which is in direct competition with HISP and its schools;
- Undertake private work in HISP time;
- Use HISP's premises or equipment without the prior approval of the Headteacher/Head of School/HISP Executive Leadership.

Colleagues must, in accordance with their contractual obligations, seek the prior approval of the Headteacher/Head of School/Executive Director if they wish to take up additional employment. They should also inform their Headteacher/Line Manager if they wish to take up unpaid work in addition to their HISP role. This includes becoming a Governor for HISP or another school or educational institution.

Any approval given for additional employment or unpaid work will be on the condition that it does not conflict with the interests of the School or Trust, does not contravene the Working Time Regulations, and will not affect the individual's performance at work.

## **14. Financial inducements, gifts, hospitality and sponsorship**

Colleagues 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.

While we are aware many pupils and their parents/designated carers may wish to give gifts to colleagues, for example, at the end of the school year, such gifts should not be of significant value or made on a regular basis. Gifts from colleagues to individual pupils are not acceptable. Small gifts to all pupils equally in a class of insignificant value may be acceptable but any such proposal should be agreed in advance with a senior leader within the school and noted in the leadership meeting minutes.

Colleagues should:

- Not seek or receive preferential rates for themselves by virtue of their dealings on behalf of the Trust/school;
- ensure that gifts are declared and recorded.

Colleagues should only accept offers of hospitality if it is to represent the school or Trust in the community. Offers to attend purely social or sporting functions should be accepted only when these are part of the life of the community, or where the school should be seen to be represented. Written approval from the senior leader within the school/unit leader should be obtained before accepting an appropriate offer of hospitality.

Acceptance by colleagues of hospitality through attendance at relevant conferences and courses is acceptable where it is clear the hospitality is corporate rather than personal, where the senior leader or the school/unit leader gives written consent in advance; and where the senior leader/unit leader is satisfied that any purchasing decisions are not compromised. For Central colleagues the unit leader will ask for a written request to be submitted before such consent can be given.

The basic guidelines around accepting sponsorship from an outside organisation for a school activity are like those for accepting gifts or hospitality. When considering sponsorship from an outside organisation, particular care must be taken when dealing with sponsors who are contractors or potential contractors.

Where a school wishes to sponsor an event or service, neither a colleague nor any partner, spouse or relative must benefit from such sponsorship in a direct way, without there being full disclosure to the senior leader of the school of any such interest. Similarly, where the school, through sponsorship, grant aid, financial or other means, gives support in the community, colleagues should ensure there is no conflict of interest involved.

All colleagues, especially budget holders, must have an understanding of HISP's financial procedures to help prevent incidents of fraud. If any colleague suspects financial procedures are not being followed correctly, they should notify the Headteacher/Head of School/HISP executive leadership (as appropriate) immediately.

## **15. Use of HISP/ School Time and Facilities**

HISP property and facilities (e.g. stationery, computers, photocopiers, mobile phones) may only be used for HISP business unless written permission for their private use has been granted from the Headteacher/Head of School/HISP Executive Leadership.

## **16. Publication of Books/Articles**

If a colleague wishes to publish a book, 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 must consult and gain the agreement of the Headteacher/Head of School/HISP Executive prior to publication. Such permission will not be unreasonably withheld.

## **17. Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed every year but can be revised as needed. It will be ratified by the Trust board.

## **18. Links with other policies**

This policy links with our policies on:

- Staff disciplinary procedures, which will be used if colleagues breach this code of conduct. It also sets out a non-exhaustive list of examples of what we will deem as misconduct and gross misconduct.
- Staff grievance procedures
- Safeguarding
- Financial Policies and Procedures Manual
- Gifts and hospitality
- E-safety
- GDPR/digital/data/IT/social media
- Health and safety.