



CODE OF CONDUCT FOR
SCHOOL EMPLOYEES

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Contents	Page
1 Introduction	2
2 Compliance with the Code of Conduct	2
3 Professional behaviour and conduct	2
4 Declaration of interests	6
5 Probity of records and other documents	7
6 Financial inducements	7
7 Use of school contacts	9
8 Other employment	9
9 Health and Safety	10
10 Use of alcohol and illegal drugs	10
11 Use of school premises, equipment & communication systems	10
12 Social networking websites & social contact	12
13 Personal equipment	15
14 Confidentiality	15
15 Copyright	16
Appendix 1 Declaration of Interests Form	
Appendix 2 Register of Gifts and Hospitality	

1. Introduction

All employees have personal and legal responsibilities. These include, treating others with dignity and respect, acting honestly, using public funds and school equipment appropriately, adhering to health and safety guidelines and practising equal opportunities at all times. These expectations are set out below and should be fully observed by all staff at all levels.

This document highlights the principal areas where employees need to be aware of their responsibilities when working in the school and it is a framework for behaviour. Employees should ensure they are familiar with the specific policies that underpin these behaviours through reference to the documents highlighted in the 'Required Reading' throughout the code or available through the staff section of the school website. If these documents are not supplied at induction, the employee should ask the school for copies.

2. Compliance with the Code of Conduct

Failure to comply with the code of conduct and with the associated school policies and required reading may result in disciplinary action being taken.

3. Professional behaviour and conduct

3.1 Treating other people with dignity and respect

All employees are expected to treat other colleagues, pupils and external contacts, such as parents, with dignity and respect.

Unacceptable behaviour such as discrimination, bullying, harassment or intimidation will not be tolerated in schools. This includes physical and verbal abuse and use of inappropriate language or unprofessional behaviour with colleagues, pupils and parents.

3.2 Appropriate relationships with children

School employees are expected to act in an open and transparent way that would not lead any reasonable person to suspect their actions or intent. Employees in schools are in a position of trust and have a duty to protect young people from discrimination and harm and to maintain appropriate professional boundaries. It is equally important for staff to avoid behaviour that might be misinterpreted by others in order to protect both young people and themselves. Staff are required to read and understand school policies on child protection.

As a result of their knowledge, position and/or the authority invested in their role, all adults working with children and young people are in positions of trust in relation to the young people in their care. Broadly speaking, a relationship of trust can be described as one in which one party is in a position of power or influence over the other by virtue of their work or the nature of their activity. It is vital for all those in positions of trust to understand the power this can give them over those they care for and the responsibility they must exercise as a consequence of this relationship.

A relationship between an adult and a child or young person cannot be a relationship between equals. There is potential for exploitation and harm of vulnerable young people. Adults have a responsibility to ensure that an unequal balance of power is not used for personal advantage or gratification.

Adults should always maintain appropriate professional boundaries and avoid behaviour which might be misinterpreted by others. They should report and record any incident with this potential to their line manager.

Where a person aged 18 or over is in a specified position of trust with a child under 18, it is an offence for that person to engage in sexual activity with or in the presence of that child, or to cause or incite that child to engage in or watch sexual activity.

This means that adults should not:

- use their position to gain access to information for their own or others' advantage

- use their position to intimidate, bully, humiliate, threaten, coerce or undermine children or young people
- use their status and standing to form or promote relationships which are of a sexual nature, or which may become so

Particular care needs to be taken around the vulnerability of young staff working with older pupils

Occasionally, a child or young person may develop an infatuation with an adult who works with them. If an adult believes that a child or young person is making unrequested frequent attempts to see them, for example, then this situation should be sensitively handled so that the dignity and safety of all concerned is maintained. They should remain aware, however, that such infatuations carry a high risk of words or actions being misinterpreted and should therefore make every effort to ensure that their own behaviour is above reproach.

An adult, who becomes aware that a child or young person is developing an infatuation, should discuss this at the earliest opportunity with a senior leader or parent/carer so appropriate action can be taken to avoid any hurt, distress or embarrassment.

This means that adults should:

- report and record any incidents or indications (verbal, written or physical) that suggest a child or young person may have developed an infatuation with an adult in the workplace
- always acknowledge and maintain professional boundaries

3.3 Professional behaviour

Employees must not misuse or misrepresent their position, qualifications or experience or bring the reputation of the school into disrepute. Such behaviour may lead to disciplinary action.

All adults working with children and young people have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of children and young people. It is therefore expected that they will adopt high standards of personal conduct in order to maintain the confidence and respect of the public in general and all those with whom they work.

There may be times, for example, when an adult's behaviour or actions in their personal life come under scrutiny from local communities, the media or public authorities. This could be because their behaviour is considered to compromise their position in their workplace or indicate an unsuitability to work with children or young people. Misuse of drugs, alcohol or acts of violence would be examples of such behaviour.

Adults in contact with children and young people should therefore understand and be aware, that safe practice also involves using judgment and integrity about behaviours in places other than the work setting.

The behaviour of an adult's partner or other family members may raise similar concerns and require careful consideration by an employer as to whether there may be a potential risk to children and young people in the workplace.

This means that adults 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.
- make, or encourage others to make, unprofessional personal comments which scapegoat, demean or humiliate, or which might be interpreted as such

This means that adults should:

- be aware that behaviour in their personal lives may impact upon their work with children and young people
- follow any codes of conduct deemed appropriate by their organisation
- understand that the behaviour and actions of their partner (or other family members) may raise questions about their suitability to work with children and young people

A person's dress and appearance are matters of personal choice and self-expression. However adults should dress in ways which are appropriate to their role, and this may need to be different to how they dress when not at work.

Adults who work with children and young people should ensure they take care to ensure they are dressed appropriately for the tasks and the work they undertake.

Those who dress in a manner which could be considered as inappropriate could render themselves vulnerable to criticism or disciplinary action.

This means that adults should wear clothing which:

- is appropriate to their role
- 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 slogans
- is not considered to be discriminatory and is culturally sensitive

3.4 Criminal actions

School employees must inform the Headteacher (Governing Body if the employee is the Headteacher) immediately if they are subject to a criminal conviction, caution, ban, police enquiry, investigation or pending prosecution. The Headteacher or Governing Body will discuss this with the employee in the context of their role and responsibilities in order to help safeguard children and other employees at the school.

3.5 Wider Responsibilities

Employees must inform the Headteacher immediately if they are involved with any child protection incidents or issues regarding their own children or those of others.

3.6 Required reading:

- School's safeguarding policy and procedure.
- Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who Work with Children and Young People (available from the Inclusion Manager)

4. Declaration of interests

An employee is required to declare this where the group or organisation would be considered to be in conflict with the ethos of the school. Membership of a trade union or staff representative group would not need to be declared.

Employees should also consider carefully whether they need to declare to the school their relationship with any individual(s) where this might cause a conflict with school activities. For example, a relationship with a Governor, another staff

member or a contractor who provides services to the school.

Failure to make a relevant declaration of interests is a very serious breach of trust and therefore if employees are in doubt about a declaration, they are advised to take advice from their school or union.

All declarations, including nil returns, should be submitted in writing on a school Register of Business Interests (see appendix1).

5. Probity of records and other documents

The deliberate falsification of documents is not acceptable. Where an employee falsifies records or other documents, including those held electronically, this will be regarded as a serious disciplinary matter and potentially a criminal offence.

6. Financial inducements

6.1 Financial Regulations for schools

All school employees must comply with the school's and local authority's Financial Regulations. Employees should familiarise themselves with the regulations but some of the principal employee requirements are summarised below.

6.2 Business Contacts

In this section, "business contact" refers to any person, body or organisation with which the school is involved on a financial or charitable basis (including contractors; developers; consultants; regional or national charities). This also includes business contacts who are potential suppliers (e.g. they are tendering for future business).

6.3 Declaration of gifts

Any gifts that are received should be declared in writing to the Governing Body on the Register of Gifts and Hospitality (see appendix 2) with the exception of those items specifically identified in sections 6.4 and 6.5 below. This document shall remain available for inspection by the authority's Internal Audit department.

6.4 Gifts or hospitality to an employee

Where a business contact offers a personal gift, personal payment or other incentive such as secondary employment to an employee, these should not be accepted and should be returned with a suitable official letter. Such offers should be declared to the Governing Body and recorded in the Register of Gifts and Hospitality.

If it is not possible to return gifts then the employee who deals with that supplier should declare the gift to the Governing Body who will keep a record of it and decide how it is to be used. Such gifts remain the property of the school and should be included in the Register of Gifts and Hospitality.

The only exceptions to these are:

- Low cost, functional items suitable for business use rather than personal use and displaying the supplier's logo e.g. diaries, calendars and pens. These items may be accepted and do not have to be included in the Register of Gifts and Hospitality.
- Gifts offered by parents or students to school staff to express their thanks, such as boxes of chocolates, however, only gifts with an individual value of £25 or less may be accepted. Such gifts do not have to be declared in writing to the Governing Body or be included in the Register of Gifts and Hospitality. For the avoidance of doubt employees must always refuse gifts of money.

Where hospitality in the form of meals and drinks is offered by a business contact, this is only acceptable where it forms part of a normal business meeting (for example, refreshments at training events or meals at evening meetings). Offers of hospitality to specific events, such as a dinner or sporting event, should only be accepted after authorisation from the Governing Body. These would normally only be approved where there is a clear and demonstrable benefit to the school and the hospitality would not expose the school to criticism that the business contact was exerting undue influence. These should be recorded in the Register of Gifts and Hospitality.

Visits by employees to exhibitions, demonstrations, conferences, business meals and social functions in connection with the school's business and authorised by the school, shall be at the school's expense.

6.5 Gifts or hospitality to the school

Where a business contact sends a gift to the school (for example, a stationery supplier sending a gift), these should not be accepted and should be returned to the supplier. Such offers should be declared to the Governing Body and recorded in the Register of Gifts and Hospitality.

If it is not possible to return the gift, the employee who usually deals with the supplier should declare the gift to the Governing Body who will keep a record of it and decide how it is to be used. Such gifts remain the property of the school and should be included in the Register of Gifts and Hospitality.

The only exceptions to this are low cost, functional items suitable for business use (as opposed to personal use), such as diaries, calendars or pens, may be accepted and do not have to be declared on the Register of Business Interests.

7 Use of school contacts

Apart from participating in concessionary schemes arranged by trade unions or other such groups for their members, employees shall not use school business contacts for acquiring materials or services at trade / discount prices for non-school activities.

7.1 Required reading:

- Financial regulations for schools – available through the school office.

8. Other employment

Employees are permitted to take up secondary employment outside the school, as long as the activity does not constitute a conflict of interest, adversely affect their primary employment at the school or exceed the legal maximum working week of 48 hours as defined by the Working Time Regulations.

The secondary employment must be undertaken outside the working hours of the employee's normal post and employees are required to keep the Headteacher (Governing Body if the employee is the Headteacher) informed of

their employment at other organisations. Teachers who undertake exam marking may seek clarification about this point.

9 Health and safety

Employees must adhere to the school's Health and Safety policy, procedure and guidance and must ensure that they take every action to keep themselves and everyone in the school environment safe and well.

This includes taking immediate safety action in a potentially harmful situation (either at school or off-site) by complying with statutory and school guidelines and collaborating with colleagues, agencies and the local authority.

9.1 Required reading:

- School's Health and Safety Policy.

10. Use of alcohol and illegal drugs

The use of illegal drugs or alcohol during working hours is unacceptable and may lead to disciplinary action. All employees are expected to attend work without being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs and without their performance being adversely impacted by the consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs.

If alcohol or drug usage impacts on an employee's working life, the school has the right to discuss the matter with the employee and take appropriate action, having considered factors such as the school or local authority's reputation and public confidence. This may also lead to disciplinary action.

11. Use of school premises, equipment & communication systems

School equipment and systems (e.g. phone, email and computers) are available only for school-related activities and should not be used for the fulfilment of another job or for personal use. This is unless authorised by the Headteacher.

Illegal, inappropriate or unacceptable use of school equipment or communication systems may result in disciplinary action and in serious cases could lead to an employee's dismissal. This list is not exhaustive but includes;

- creating, sending or forwarding any message that would reasonably be considered inappropriate or unacceptable.
- committing or implying commitment to any contractual arrangements.
- access to or publication of illegal, offensive, unacceptable or inappropriate or non-work related material.
any illegal activities.
- posting confidential information about the school and/or other employees, children or parents.
- gambling or gaming.
- unauthorized use of school facilities (or employee's personal IT equipment), for personal use during employee's working time .

Employees who are unsure if something he/she receives or proposes to do might breach this policy should seek advice from their Headteacher.

The school has the right to monitor e-mails, phone-calls, internet activity or document production, principally in order to avoid offensive or nuisance material and to protect systems from viruses, but also to ensure proper and effective use of systems. Communication systems may be accessed when the school suspects that the employee has been misusing systems or facilities, or for the investigation of suspected fraud, child protection incidents or other irregularity.

Accredited Trade Union representatives can use school communication systems for the purposes of undertaking trade union duties and these will be treated as confidential.

Passwords should not be shared and access to computer systems must be kept confidential. Breach of this confidentiality may be subject to disciplinary action and staff are responsible for their own security.

Any school equipment that is used outside school premises, for example laptops, should be returned to the school when the employee leaves employment or upon request by the Headteacher.

12. Social networking websites and social contact

In order to make best use of the many educational and social benefits of new technologies, children and young people need opportunities to use and explore the digital world, using multiple devices from multiple locations. They need to be protected when using these technologies and educated as to the possible risks they may put themselves in. It is now recognised that e-safety risks are posed more by behaviours and values than the technology itself. Adults working in this area must therefore ensure that they establish safe responsible and professional online behaviours. This means working to local and national guidelines on acceptable user policies. These detail the way in which new and emerging technologies may and may not be used and identify the sanctions for misuse. Learning Platforms are now widely established and clear agreement by all parties about acceptable and responsible use is essential. Learning Platforms do allow for professional dialogue between a child / young person and an adult.

Communication between children and adults, by whatever method, should take place within clear and explicit professional boundaries. This includes the wider use of technology such as mobile phones text messaging, e-mails, digital cameras, videos, web-cams, websites and blogs. Adults should not share any personal information with a child or young person. They should not request, or respond to, any personal information from the child/young person. Adults should ensure that all communications are transparent and open to scrutiny. In the event you need to make contact with a child / young person, you should obtain your line manager's agreement and record this on file. A log of any subsequent communication should be kept on file.

Consent must be obtained from the parent if the child is under 16. It is also recommended that for young people over 16, their parents are also informed of the intention to communicate with their child via, for example use of text messaging.

Adults should also be circumspect in their communications with children so as to avoid any possible misinterpretation of their motives or any behaviour, which could be construed as grooming. They should not give their personal contact details to children and young people including e-mail, home or mobile telephone numbers. E-mail or text communications between an adult and a young person outside agreed protocols may lead to disciplinary and/or criminal

investigations. This also includes communications through internet based web sites. In relation to Social Networking Sites, adults should not maintain 'e-relationships' with children and young people they work with or have previously worked with. Examples of sites include My Space, Facebook or Twitter. Adults are strongly advised, in their own interests, to take steps to ensure that their personal data is not accessible to anybody who does not have permission to access it. A number of these sites may be accessed by young people without consent of parents. There is a facility with a 'Report Abuse' button on some of these sites, which allows children / young people to report suspicious individuals or behaviours directly.

Internal e-mail systems should only be used in accordance with the organisation's Acceptable Use Policy (AUP).

This means that the organisation should:

- have in place a signed (if paper) Acceptable Use policy (AUP)
- continually self-review e-safety policies in the light of new and emerging technologies
- ensure that, when it is considered necessary for staff to use equipment to communicate with children, this is provided by the organisation

This means that adults should:

- refrain from identifying themselves as working for the school in a way which has, or may have, the effect of bringing the school into disrepute.
- not identify other school employees, children or young people without their consent.
- not make any defamatory remarks about the school, its employees, children or young people, or conduct themselves in a way that is detrimental to the school.
- not disclose personal data or information about the school, employees, children or young people, that could breach the Data Protection Act 1998, for example, posting photographs or images of children or young people.
- not allow pupils to access their personal social networking accounts and where they are contacted by a pupil they should bring it to the Headteacher's attention.

- ensure that personal social networking sites are set as private and pupils are never listed as approved contacts
- never use or access social networking sites of pupils.
- not give their personal contact details to children or young people, including their mobile telephone number
- only use equipment e.g. mobile phones, provided by organisation to communicate with children, making sure that parents have given permission for this form of communication to be used
- only make contact with children for professional reasons and in accordance with any organisation policy
- recognise that text messaging is rarely an appropriate response to a child in a crisis situation or at risk of harm. It should only be used as a last resort when other forms of communication are not possible
- not use internet or web-based communication channels to send personal messages to a child/young person

Adults who work with children and young people should not seek to have social contact with them or their families, unless the reason for this contact has been firmly established and agreed with senior leaders. If a parent seeks to establish social contact, the adult should exercise her/his professional judgement in making a response and should discuss the situation with their line manager. Adults should be aware that social contact with young people in certain situations could be misconstrued as grooming.

Where social contact is an integral part of work duties, e.g. pastoral work in the community, care should be taken to maintain appropriate personal and professional boundaries. This also applies to social contacts made through interests outside of work or through the adult's own family or personal networks.

It is recognised that some adults may support a parent who may be in particular difficulty. Care needs to be exercised in those situations where the parent comes to depend upon the adult for support outside their professional role. This situation should be discussed with a member of the senior leadership team and where necessary referrals made to the appropriate support agency.

This means that adults should:

- have no secret social contact with children and young people or their parents

- consider the appropriateness of the social contact according to their role and nature of their work
- always approve any planned social contact with children with senior colleagues
- be aware that the sending of personal communications such as birthday or faith cards should always be recorded and/or discussed with line manager.
- understand some communications may be called into question and need to be justified

13. Personal equipment

Employees must not use their own personal equipment such as mobile phones or cameras to make recordings of pupils, parents or other employees. School property must not be photographed where such images may be used inappropriately.

School equipment is available on request from the senior ICT technician where school related, appropriate recordings need to be made.

14. Confidentiality

All employees at the school and the Governing Body come into contact with a significant volume of data and information in relation to pupils, staff, school activities and many other matters. There is an obligation to read and to observe the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.

14.1 Managing data

Under the Data Protection Act, staff are required to collect, maintain and dispose of sensitive or personal data in a responsible manner.

14.2 Disclosing data

Staff should not disclose sensitive information about the school, its employees or the local authority to other parties, for example, parents or colleagues. There are particular exceptions to this; for example disclosure of suspected or alleged abuse of a pupil to Child Protection Officers; discussion with a person accompanying or representing an employee in a formal meeting or disclosure under the Whistleblowing Procedure. All communication with the media must be directed through the Headteacher or their nominee.

There are circumstances in which staff are obliged to release pupil data, for example, parents seeking information about pupil progress or other colleagues

Outwoods Primary School
in the school.

Staff should be aware that, from time to time, information about employees' salaries is matched with other public sector information in order to prevent fraudulent claims.

14.3 Access to data

Everyone has the right to request access to data that is held about them and such requests should be made to the Headteacher who will address the request in conjunction with the Local Authority's Data Protection Officer.

15. Copyright

Copyright legislation should be displayed next to photocopier machines and employees are required to adhere to the guidance provided about use of educational resources.

15.1 Required reading:

- Copyright notices in school

Staff Disclosure of a Pecuniary Interest

Full Name _____

Please complete as appropriate:-

either

1. I and/or my partner and/or my immediate family have a direct or indirect interest in the companies/organisation/bodies listed below from which the school may wish to purchase goods or services:

Name of Company or Body	Nature of Interest	Nature of your / partner / family interest

or

2. Neither I nor my immediate family have any direct or indirect interest in any company/organisation/body from which the School may wish to purchase goods or services.

Signed _____ **Date** _____

REGISTER OF GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY

Governors and staff declaration form

I wish to declare the following information in accordance with the Governing Body's requirements that a Register of Gifts and Hospitality should be maintained.

Name:

Post:

Signature:

Date:

You should provide full details of your declaration below, including a nil return:

Declaration of gifts and hospitality		
Date gift received	From whom	Gift or hospitality