

Staff Code of Conduct

Willow Tree Park School

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Aim of this Code of conduct

Willow Tree Park School expects all students to receive high-quality teaching and learning in a positive and respectful environment.

Employees at the school should ensure that their own behaviour, and the manner in which they conduct themselves with colleagues, students, parents and other stakeholders, sets a positive and professional example for students.

We recognise that the majority of staff members act appropriately and treat each other with dignity and respect; however, we consider it important to clarify the expected standards.

This policy forms part of a staff member's contract of employment and failure to comply with it, along with the associated school policies, may result in disciplinary action being taken, including legal action where this is warranted.

This document applies to staff members who are:

Employed by the school, including the headteacher and volunteers.

These employees are governed by their employment contracts and any relevant laws pertaining to their activities within the school, for example, the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Safeguarding Students

In accordance with 'Keeping children safe in education 2025' (KCSIE), staff members have a responsibility to safeguard students, protect and promote their welfare.

Staff members have a responsibility to ensure that they provide a learning environment in which students feel safe, secure and respected.

To effectively safeguard students, staff members are required to follow the procedures outlined in this Staff Code of Conduct, the Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy and the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, ensuring that they do not act in a way that may put students at risk of harm, or lead others to question their actions.

In accordance with the school's Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy and Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, staff members will be prepared to identify students who may be subject to, or at risk of, various types of abuse and neglect, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse

- Sexual abuse
- Neglect
- Peer-on-peer abuse
- Serious violence
- FGM
- Child sexual exploitation (CSE)
- Child criminal exploitation (CCE)
- Bullying; this includes cyberbullying, and prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying

Copies of policies and a copy of Part one (or Annex A for staff members not working directly with children) of KCSIE will be provided to staff at induction, and when any updates are agreed. Staff will have a clear understanding of the school's policies and procedures with regards to safeguarding issues, e.g. abuse, and the important role they play in preventing harm against students.

In accordance with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, staff will also be aware of the factors that could increase a student's risk of being subject to safeguarding issues, including but not limited to:

- Students who need a social worker (Child in Need and Child Protection Plans).
- Students requiring mental health support.
- LAC and previously LAC.
- Students with SEND.
- Students who identify as LGBTQ+.
- Students perceived to be LGBTQ+.
- Students struggling with mental health needs.
- Students who have a family member in prison, or who are affected by parental offending.
- Students that are frequently absent or permanently excluded from school.

If a staff member identifies a student who is subject to, or at risk of, abuse and neglect, they will follow the necessary reporting and referral procedures outlined in the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. Staff will be aware of the procedures to follow if a student tells them they are experiencing abuse, exploitation or neglect.

In all cases, if a staff member feels unsure as to whether an incident or student would be classed as a safeguarding concern, they will speak directly to the DSL. Staff will not assume a colleague will take action and share information that might be critical in keeping children safe.

Staff will understand that even if there are no reports of peer-on-peer abuse in the school, this does not mean it is not happening. Staff will report any concerns regarding any form of abuse to the DSL without undue delay. Staff will understand

the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between peers that are abusive in nature.

Any staff member that has concerns about another staff member's (including volunteers and supply staff) actions or intent, or believes these actions may lead to a student being put at risk of harm, will report this in line with the Whistleblowing Policy immediately so appropriate action can be taken.

Upskirting is not tolerated by the school and any incidents of upskirting must be reported to the DSL who will decide on the next steps to take, which may include involving the police.

If a staff member feels unable to raise an issue with the school, they will use other whistleblowing channels, including contacting the NSPCC's helpline on 0800 028 0285 (between the hours of 8:00am and 8:00pm Monday to Friday) or email address help@nspcc.org.uk. Staff members can also access guidance at www.gov.uk/whistleblowing. Fear about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of students.

If the concern is regarding the headteacher, staff will report this according to the 'Safeguarding Responsibilities' chart detailed in appendix B of the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Staff will partake in the appropriate safeguarding and child protection training, which will include online safety; additionally, staff will receive regular safeguarding and child protection updates at least annually.

Staff will recognise that, when teaching students about safeguarding and online safety, a one-size-fits-all approach may not be appropriate for every student, and a more personalised or contextualised approach may be needed for students who are vulnerable, victims of abuse and/or have SEND.

Staff will be aware of their local early help process and understand their role in it. Staff will also be aware of the process for making referrals to children's social care service (CSCS) and for statutory assessments under the Children Act 1989, along with the role they may be expected to play in such assessments.

Staff will reassure victims that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe by the school. Staff will never give the impression that students are creating a problem by reporting abuse, sexual violence or sexual harassment, nor should a student ever be made to feel ashamed for reporting an incident.

Staff will be aware that confidentiality must never be promised to a student – staff will understand the procedure for if a student discloses a potential safeguarding issue, in accordance with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Staff will be aware of the school's legal duty to refer anyone who has harmed, or poses a risk of harm to, a child or vulnerable adult to the DBS – this includes where:

The harm test is satisfied in respect of that individual.

The individual has received a caution or conviction for a relevant offence, or if there is reason to believe that the individual has committed a listed relevant offence.

The individual has been removed from working in regulated activity or would have been removed if they had not left their post.

Appearance and dress

The school expects that staff members will:

- Ensure that their appearance is clean and neat when at work or representing the school.
- Dress in a manner that is appropriate to their role.
- Have hair tied up and away from the face.
- Remember that they are role models for students, and that their dress and appearance should reflect this.
- Not dress in a way that would cause embarrassment to students, parents, colleagues or other stakeholders.
- Jewellery is not permitted, aside from a flat wedding band, and small earrings.
- Nails should be kept short.

Attendance

The school expects that staff members will:

- Attend work in accordance with their contract of employment and associated terms and conditions in relation to hours, days of work and holidays.
- Make routine medical and dental appointments outside of their working hours or during holidays where possible.
- Follow the school's Staff Leave of Absence procedure if they need time off for any reason other than personal illness.
- Follow the school's absence reporting procedure when they are absent from work due to illness or injury.

Professional behaviour and conduct

Staff members are expected to treat other colleagues, students, parents, and external contacts with dignity and respect.

The use of foul and abusive language will not be tolerated. Discrimination, bullying, harassment or intimidation, including physical, sexual and verbal abuse, will not be tolerated.

Staff members will not misuse or misrepresent their position, qualifications or experience, or bring the school into disrepute.

Staff members will inform the head of school if they are subject to a criminal conviction, caution, ban, police enquiry, investigation or pending prosecution.

Staff will be aware that professional behaviour and conduct is expected to be extended to extra-curricular trips and visits. Staff attending a trip or visit will act in accordance with this Code of conduct.

Staff will act appropriately in terms of the views they express (in particular political views) and the use of school resources at all times and will not use school resources for party political purposes.

Conduct outside of work

Staff may be permitted to undertake work outside school, either paid or voluntary, provided that it does not conflict with the interests of the school. The nature of the work cannot be seen to bring the school into disrepute, nor be at a level which may contravene the working time regulations or affect an individual's work performance. Staff must seek written approval from the headteacher prior to undertaking such work.

Staff will not engage in outside work which could seriously damage the reputation and standing of the school, the employee's own reputation, or the reputation of other members of the school community. In particular, criminal offences that involve violence, possession or use of illegal drugs, or sexual misconduct are unacceptable.

Staff will not engage in inappropriate use of social network sites which may bring themselves, the school, school community or employer into disrepute. This is explored further in the 'Acceptable use of technology' section of this policy.

Smoking, alcohol and other substances

Staff will not smoke on, or in the direct vicinity of, the school premises.

Staff will not smoke whilst working with or supervising students off-site, such as when on educational visits and trips.

The taking of illegal drugs or alcohol during working hours is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Staff members must never attend work under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.

If alcohol or drug usage impacts on a staff member's performance, the school has the right to discuss the matter with the employee and take appropriate action in accordance with the school's disciplinary procedures, including referral to the police.

Health and safety

Staff members will:

- Be familiar with, and adhere to, the school's Health and Safety Policy and ensure that they take every action to keep themselves and everyone in the school environment safe and well.
- Comply with health and safety regulations and use any safety equipment and protective clothing which is supplied to them.
- Comply with hygiene requirements.
- Comply with accident reporting requirements.
- Inform the head of school of any paid work which is undertaken elsewhere, for compliance with The Working Time Regulations 1998 (as amended).

Declaration of interests

Staff members are required to declare their interests, both personal and financial, where the group or organisation they are affiliated with could be considered to be in conflict with the ethos of the school.

For the purposes of this policy, a financial conflict of interest is one where there is, or appears to be, opportunity for personal financial gain, financial gain for close relatives or friends, or where it may be reasonable for a third party to take the view that financial benefits may affect an individual's actions.

The term 'financial interest' means anything of monetary value, including the following:

Payments for services

Equity interests

Intellectual property rights

Hospitality or gifts

Examples of financial interests that must be declared include, but are not limited to, equity interests in services considered for use by the school.

Non-financial conflicts of interest can also come into conflict, or be perceived to come into conflict, with an individual's obligations or commitments to the school. These interests may include any benefit or advantage including, but not limited to, direct or indirect enhancement of an individual's career or gain for immediate family or someone with whom the individual has a close relationship.

Examples of situations that could give rise to non-financial conflicts of interest include the following:

- Pressure or temptation to accept gifts, inducements or hospitality
- Participating in the appointment, hiring, promotion, supervision or evaluation of a person with whom the individual has a close personal relationship
- Where a member of staff has or develops a close personal relationship with a colleague

Membership to a trade union or staff representative group does not need to be declared.

Staff members will also carefully consider whether they need to declare their relationship with any individual where this might cause a conflict with school activities.

Failure to make a relevant declaration of interests is a serious breach of trust and, therefore, if employees are in doubt about a declaration, they are advised to contact the school or trade union.

All declarations must be returned to HR.

Relationships with students

All staff will:

- Always maintain professional boundaries and relationships with students and consider whether their actions are warranted, proportionate, safe and necessary.
- Act in an open and transparent way that would not lead to others questioning their actions.
- Ensure that they do not establish social contact with students for the purpose of securing a friendship, or to pursue or strengthen a relationship.
- Ensure that they do not develop personal or sexual relationships with students. This includes making sexual remarks and discussing their own sexual relationships with, or in the presence of, students.

- Only contact students via the school's established mechanisms; personal phone numbers, email addresses or social media platforms will not be used to contact students.
- Recognise that they are in a unique position of trust, care, responsibility, authority and influence with their students, which means there is a power imbalance within a student-teacher dynamic.
- Be aware that they have the responsibility to have the best interest of students in mind.
- Ensure that they are a model of good behaviour, challenging inappropriate actions and language, and promoting respect and tolerance.

Staff will be informed that students should not be treated as friends. Staff will not:

- Use inappropriate names or terms of endearment.
- Allow inappropriate conversations or enquiries of a sexual nature to occur.
- Comment on a student's appearance, including personal flattery or criticism.
- Treat students disrespectfully or discriminatorily, based upon their perceived or actual sexual orientation, gender, ethnicity and any other student characteristic.
- Subject students to humiliation, profanity or vilification.
- Allow or partake in suggestive humour, banter, jokes or innuendos of a sexual nature.
- Use obscene or inappropriate gestures and language.
- Partake in personal conversations, including on the phone, where this may be overheard by students.

In the case that any inappropriate contact is made with students, it will be raised with the Headteacher, and handled in line with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and this Staff Code of Conduct.

In the case that a student is attempting to befriend or contact a member of staff on social media, the member of staff will inform the headteacher as soon as possible.

Staff are strongly discouraged from forming personal relationships with former students, including on social media, as well as with the parents of any students on social media.

In the event of the school becoming aware of a close relationship between a member of staff and a former student which may raise concerns about their suitability to work with children, the headteacher will contact the LA designated officer (LADO) for advice and guidance.

Any inappropriate contact made with former students will be handled in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

The headteacher will ensure staff are aware that they must not:

- Discuss personal information with students, such as concerning their lifestyle or marital status, unless it is directly relevant to the topic being taught.
- Correspond in a personal nature through any medium with students, e.g. phone calls or text messages, unless it is within the staff member's role and via an approved communication method, e.g. school emails.
- Adopt an ongoing support role beyond the scope of their position.
- Use personal equipment for approved activities, such as a personal camera, unless approved in writing by the SLT, and will not photograph, audio record or film students without authorisation from the SLT and consent from the student's parent.
- Save images, videos or audio recordings of students on personal devices, unless authorised by the SLT or parents.
- Upload images, videos or audio recordings of students to any location without consent from parents and the SLT.
- Discuss or share information regarding other students or members of staff; staff should be aware of their surroundings when speaking to others, as their conversations may be overheard.
- Ignore instances of sexual harassment and inappropriate behaviour amongst students.

Staff must not:

- Invite or allow students to visit their home.
- Allow students to access staff members' personal devices.
- Attend students' homes or their social gatherings, unless approved by the SLT.
- Be alone with a student outside of teaching responsibilities, unless approved by the SLT.
- Enter changing rooms or toilets occupied by students, when supervision is not required or appropriate, use toilet facilities allocated to students, or undress in facilities intended for use by students.
- Not transport a student in their own vehicle unless agreed in advance by SLT, parental permission is obtained and appropriate insurance is in place.
- Carry out one-to-one tutoring, mentoring or coaching of students, unless approved by the headteacher or SLT.
- Give personal gifts or special favours, or disproportionately single specific students out for special duties or responsibilities.
- Offer overnight, weekend or holiday care as a respite to parents without the approval of the headteacher.

Under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, it is an offence for a person aged 18 or over to have a sexual relationship with a child under 18 where that person is in a position of trust in respect to that child, even if the relationship is consensual.



Physical contact with students

Physical contact

All staff members will, as much as possible, respect the personal space and privacy of all students, and will avoid situations which unnecessarily result in close physical contact.

The school understands that there are, however, circumstances in which it is entirely necessary for staff to have physical contact with students, e.g. when applying first aid, assisting with intimate care, giving a cuddle or deep pressure, or using reasonable force, but staff will only do so in a professional and appropriate manner in line with the school's Administering Medication Policy, Intimate Care Policy and Physical Intervention Policy.

When any necessary physical contact is made with students, it will be conducted in a way which is responsive to their needs, is of as limited duration as possible and is appropriate to their age, stage of development, gender, and background.

Staff will seek the student's permission, where possible, before initiating contact.

Staff will always use their professional judgement when determining what physical contact is appropriate, as this may differ between students. As such, the student's feelings and wishes will always be taken into account.

Staff will never touch a student in a way which is indecent and will be aware that even well-intentioned physical contact may be misconstrued by a student, an observer or by anyone to whom this action is described and, therefore, will be prepared to justify their actions.

If a student is in distress and in need of comfort as reassurance, staff may use age-appropriate physical contact, such as placing their hand on the student's shoulder. Staff will remain self-aware of their actions at all times and ensure that their contact is not threatening, intrusive or subject to misinterpretation.

Physical contact will never be secretive; if a member of staff believes an action could be misinterpreted, this will be reported to the headteacher in line with the Low-level Safeguarding Concerns Policy and appropriate procedures will be followed.

Extra caution will be taken with physical contact where it is known that a student has previously suffered from abuse or neglect.

Showering and changing

Students are entitled to respect and privacy whilst they are changing, e.g. before

and after PE; however, a level of supervision is required to ensure that students are safe, and that they are not subjected to bullying.

The supervision will be appropriate to the needs and ages of the students, and sensitive to the potential for embarrassment.

Staff will announce their intention of entering the changing room to allow students to maintain their privacy.

Staff will never change or shower in the same area as students.

Transporting Students

When it is necessary to transport students off-site, staff will ensure that the transport arrangements of the vehicle meet all legal requirements, they have an appropriate license and the vehicle is roadworthy, has a valid MOT certificate and is insured.

Staff will gain consent from parents before transporting students and will be aware that the welfare of all students in the vehicle is their responsibility. Staff will ensure that all off site visits have the relevant risk assessments in place.

Two or more staff will be present in the vehicle to avoid any discrepancy regarding safeguarding concerns.

Finance inducements

Staff members will:

- Familiarise themselves and comply with the school's financial regulations.
- Declare to the headteacher, in writing, any gifts received, with the exception of:
 - Low cost, functional items suitable for business rather than personal use and displaying the supplier's logo – these items may be accepted.
 - Non-excessive gifts offered by parents or students to school staff to express their gratitude, but staff members should always refuse monetary gifts.
 - Hospitality in the form of meals and drinks where it is part of a normal business meeting.
 - Authorised visits to exhibitions, demonstrations, conferences, business meals and social functions in connection with the school's business, which shall be at the school's expense.
- Not accept a personal gift, payment, or other incentive from a business contact – any such gifts should be returned.

- Declare any gift that cannot be returned to the head of school, who will decide how it will be used.
- Only accept offers to specific events after authorization from the head of school.

Acceptable use of technology

Staff will adhere to the procedures outlined in the school's Online Safety Policy at all times.

Staff will be aware of how the use of technology can impact safeguarding and wellbeing issues, e.g. online abuse. Staff will be vigilant to ensure their own behaviour is respectful and that students are using technology appropriately while under their care.

Staff are required to employ the highest security settings on any personal profiles they may have and use of personal devices, by staff, is strictly prohibited.

Staff will not engage in inappropriate use of social networking sites including contacting students or their family members, accepting or inviting friend requests from students or their family members, or following students or their family members on social media.

The school understands that some staff members are also parents of students at the school and, therefore, may wish to contact other parents. When doing so, staff will exercise their professional judgement and will not contact family members on social media if this would lead to a conflict of interest.

Staff will remain mindful of their use of social media and their web-based presence including written content, videos or photographs, and views expressed directly or indirectly which may bring themselves, the school or the school community into disrepute.

Staff will adhere to the AI guidance outlined in the appendix of the Online Safety Policy.

Premises, equipment and communication

School equipment and systems are available only for school-related activities and will not be used for the fulfilment of another job or for personal use, unless specifically authorised by the head of school.

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.

Employees receiving inappropriate communication or material, or who are unsure about whether something they propose to do might breach this policy, should seek advice from the headteacher.

The school reserves the right to monitor emails, phone calls, internet activity or document production on school-owned equipment, 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 or other irregularity. Access will be secured by the systems manager, only with the permission of the governance team.

Passwords should not be shared and access to computer systems must be kept confidential except on the express request of the headteacher or systems manager. Breaches of this confidentiality may be subject to disciplinary action.

School equipment that is used outside the premises, e.g. laptops, will be returned to the school when the employee leaves employment or if requested to do so by the headteacher.

Photography and videos

Photographs and videos will only be taken using school equipment – using personal mobile phones for this purpose is prohibited.

Consent for taking photographs will be obtained from parents, or the student themselves, if they are deemed old enough and able to make the decision for themselves.

The age of consent that is legislated is 13 and above; however, this is only applicable for online services provided directly to children. For everything else, an appropriate age of consent is considered on a case-by-case basis by the DPO, headteacher and a student's parents (where appropriate).

Students who have not provided consent, either personally or via their parents, to have their photograph taken or be filmed will have their wishes respected, in line with the Photography Policy.

The headteacher will be notified of the proposed use of the imagery or video and the equipment and ensure that the use of such is included in lesson plans where this is necessary.

All photographs and videos will be available for scrutiny, and staff will be prepared to justify the images or footage taken.

Careful consideration will always be given to the activities which are being filmed or photographed, to ensure that images or videos are not indecent and cannot be misused.

Data protection and confidentiality

Regarding personal and sensitive data, staff members are required, under the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018, to:

Consider the legal basis for collecting the data, ensuring that this is documented.

Ensure that the data is stored on a GDPR-compliant server, and that the data is not held for any longer than necessary.

Securely dispose of the data when the relevant retention period ends.

Staff members will not disclose sensitive information about the school, its employees or the LA to other parties.

The only exception whereby it is acceptable for a staff member to disclose information that would otherwise be considered confidential is when the confidential information gives rise to concerns about the safety or welfare of a student.

Staff members have the right to request access to data that is held about them. Such requests will be made to the head of school in writing in accordance with the school's Data Protection Policy.

Probity of records

The deliberate falsification of documents, such as references, academic qualifications or legal documents, is unacceptable. Where a staff member falsifies records or other documents, including those held electronically, this will be regarded as a serious disciplinary matter and potentially a criminal offence.

Contacts



Staff members will not use school business contacts for acquiring materials or services at trade/discount prices for non-school activities, unless participating in concessionary schemes arranged by trade unions or other such groups.

Monitoring and review

This document will be reviewed on an annual basis by the headteacher and School Business Manager and any changes made will be communicated to all members of staff.

All members of staff are required to familiarise themselves with this document as part of their new starter induction.