

Staff Code of Conduct (Staff Behaviour Policy)

Executive Summary of Key Principles for Staff and Volunteers

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Key principles

1. The Staff Code of Conduct, sometimes referred to as the Staff Behaviour Policy, is consistent with statutory guidance ***Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE 2026)*** and ***Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE 2026)***; and local inter-agency safeguarding procedures issued by Staffordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership.
2. All staff and volunteers must read the full Code of Conduct before starting work with children. This executive summary serves only as a brief reference point for staff, parents, governors and other stakeholders. The Code of Conduct must also be read in conjunction with the Trust's ***Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy***.
3. The Code of Conduct applies to all adults, paid and unpaid, whose work brings them into contact with children who attend the school, both on site and off site. Where this summary refers to staff, it includes all such adults.
4. The Code of Conduct sets out what is expected in terms of professional behaviour when working with children both face to face and online; it gives clear advice about what constitutes illegal behaviour and what might be considered misconduct. It also describes safe practice and behaviours that should be avoided.
5. The Code of Conduct provides a clear message that unacceptable behaviour will not be tolerated and that, where appropriate, legal or disciplinary action is likely to follow. The school may refer to the Code of Conduct in any disciplinary proceedings.
6. Staff are responsible for their own actions and behaviour and should avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and/or intentions. The relationship between an adult working with a child is one in which the adult has a position of power and influence. The potential for exploitation and harm of vulnerable children and young people means that adults have a responsibility to ensure that an unequal balance of power is not used for personal advantage or gratification.
7. All staff are expected to treat students, other colleagues, parents and external contacts with dignity and respect and to comply with all relevant school/Trust policies. Staff should work, and be seen to work, in an open and transparent way.
8. All staff have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of children and young people. They should adopt high standards of personal conduct, ensuring their behaviour, both face-to-face and online, remains professional at all times, in order to maintain the confidence and respect of the general public and all those with whom they work. This includes the way in which staff dress, their use of language, including terms of endearment, (see para 11 below) and their online communication, both in and out of school, which is, or could become, visible to students, their parents/carers and/or the general public.
9. Personal conduct also includes the way in which staff speak to students. A positive, respectful and encouraging tone should be used at all times. Where it is necessary to challenge inappropriate behaviour or to get students' attention, it is reasonable for staff to raise their voices and/or use an authoritative tone. However, it is not appropriate for staff to shout at students habitually or punitively, or speak to them disrespectfully.
10. Staff should never set out to cause a student to feel frightened, ashamed or humiliated. Admonishments should focus on behaviour rather than the student's personality or character and targets for desired behaviour should be described by the member of staff.
11. Members of staff should refer to students by name. Disrespectful nicknames, words and terms should be avoided. Staff should exercise caution in referring to students by affectionate nicknames and more general terms of endearment or familiarity such as 'Dear, Love, Petal, Mate, Dude' and must avoid terms associated with grooming such as 'Sweetheart, Princess, Angel, Darling'.
12. Staff should discuss and/or take advice promptly from the Headteacher if they have acted in a way which may give rise to concern. Staff should inform the Headteacher about any relationships, associations or matters in and out of school, both face-to-face or online, which might have implications for safeguarding children.

13. Staff should apply the same professional standards regardless of culture, disability, gender, gender identity, language, racial origin, religious belief, marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity and/or sexual orientation or identity.
14. Staff should not consume or be under the influence of alcohol or any substance, including prescribed medication, which may affect their ability to care for and work with children.
15. Staff must treat information about children and their families discreetly and not disclose confidential matters, except in accordance with school policies.
16. Staff are in a position of trust and must never engage in any sexual relationships with students of any age, including those over 18.
17. Only areas of the curriculum approved by the school's Strategic Leadership Team should contain any sexual or other sensitive material. Otherwise, staff should not engage in conversations with students about sexual matters. The Headteacher or DSL should be consulted if there is any possibility of misinterpretation by students or parents/carers.
18. Physical contact should be minimal, time limited, age appropriate and able to be justified.
19. Physical intervention must only be used if it is necessary to keep a student or member of staff safe, prevent serious damage to property or disruption of school business; must always be reasonable and proportionate in the circumstances and in order to achieve the objective; and only used when all non-physical strategies to manage the situation have been exhausted or will not be successful in time to prevent harm or serious damage/disruption. All incidents of physical intervention must be recorded clearly and reported in accordance with school policy. Any search of a student must be carried out in accordance with the Trust's *Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy*.
20. Intimate care and first aid should only be administered according to relevant procedures and by qualified personnel.
21. Staff should not offer transport to students outside agreed arrangements. Staff must never offer transport to a student if on their own, except where doing so is the only way to prevent harm. Any impromptu or emergency arrangements should be disclosed without delay to a line manager, recorded and should be able to be justified.
22. Staff should guard against young people developing an infatuation with them and report any such concerns to the Headteacher.
23. Staff should not accept gifts, other than small tokens of appreciation from students or parents/carers.
24. Staff should not give gifts to students other than as part of an agreed reward system.
25. Appropriate social contact between staff, students and their families (e.g. when a staff member and parent are part of the same social circle or extended family) should be easily recognised, openly acknowledged and declared in writing to the Headteacher/DSL.
26. Unless social relationships have been declared in writing to the Headteacher or DSL, staff should not engage in any electronic or telephone communication with students or their parents/carers using personally owned ICT or telephone equipment or personal telephone or social media accounts/platforms. This includes texting, messaging, email, video chat, social networking sites etc. All communication must be open, transparent, through school systems/accounts and using school owned equipment.
27. Any other out of school contact, including staff undertaking independent tutoring or sports coaching which may bring them into contact with students and their families, should be planned and agreed with the Headteacher and parents/carers in advance.
28. Internet use, including online teaching and video conversations with children, should be in accordance with school policy and inappropriate content must not be accessed.
29. Photographs and video recordings of students must only be taken with parental consent, for school/trust purposes and using school/trust-owned equipment. They will remain the property of the school/trust and must only be stored on school/trust-owned equipment. They can only be published with the express consent of parents/carers.

30. Staff should not work with students on a one-to-one basis or undertake home visits except by agreement with a senior leader and in accordance with school policies and appropriate risk assessments. Only in exceptional circumstances, which have been fully approved in advance by the Headteacher, would it ever be appropriate for a member of staff to invite a student into their own home.
31. Staff should be mindful of situations in which a student or parent/carer comes to depend on them for support outside their role and should discuss this promptly with the DSL or Headteacher.
32. Staff accompanying students on offsite and residential visits should remain mindful of, and work in accordance with, safeguarding and whistleblowing procedures, visit briefings and risk assessments at all times.
33. Staff should acknowledge that deliberately invented/malicious allegations are extremely rare. Staff are expected to report all concerns about possible child abuse and/or poor practice by colleagues, including low-level concerns, and any breach of the Staff Code of Conduct, to the Headteacher. Concerns should be recorded using the 'Logging a concern about a member of staff or volunteer form'. Leaders investigating concerns or allegations should follow the process detailed in the CAT Safeguarding Allegations Against Staff Flowchart.
34. Concerns or complaints about the Headteacher should be reported to Jo Howell, Director of Safeguarding and Behaviour, who will inform the Chair of the School Standards Committee. Staff who do not feel able to raise concerns internally, can alternatively contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), who is responsible for the co-ordination of responses to allegations against people who work with children. The Staffordshire County Council LADO can be contacted on 0300 111 8033 or by completing a form on Staffordshire County Council website. Alternatively, staff may phone the NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line on 0800 028 0285 or email help@nspcc.org.uk for confidential support and guidance.
35. Additional advice/support is also available from Jo Howell at jhowell@catschools.uk or Education Safeguarding Advice Service (ESAS) on 01785 895836.