

# Staff Code of Conduct Policy

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Signed by		Date
CBERNIE	Headteacher	02.10.25

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Version	Date	Amended by	Substantive changes
1.0	01/08/2024		Initial set up of Trust wide policy
2.0	07/11/2024	HRE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amended wording relating to nut free school (4.2)</li> <li>• Clarified procedure for staff refusal of testing (4.4)</li> <li>• Appearance – reference to staff uniforms and covering of tattoos (4.6)</li> <li>• Assistance to parents whose first language isn't English (4.9)</li> <li>• Notification of convictions and offences (4.12)</li> <li>• Staff or family involvement with social care, police, other agencies (4.12)</li> <li>• Caution in relation to auto addressee in emails (4.14)</li> <li>• Minor changes in response to Trustee queries</li> </ul>

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### **1. Context**

This policy is intended to encourage staff to achieve the highest possible standards of conduct and to minimise the risk of inappropriate conduct occurring.

Each school may provide additional information in their Staff Handbook.

### **2. Legal and advisory framework**

This document should be read alongside:

- Staff Handbook for the school
- Probation Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Child Protection/Safeguarding Policy
- Dignity at Work and Equal Opportunities Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- IT Acceptable Use Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Anti bribery Policy

Staff are in a unique position of trust and influence as role models for students and must adhere to behaviour that sets a good example to all students within the school. Staff also have an individual responsibility to maintain their reputation and the reputation of the school, both inside and outside working hours and the work setting.

All staff are expected to read and comply with this policy. Breach or failure to observe this policy may result in action being taken under the school Disciplinary Procedure including, but not limited to, dismissal.

Staff are required to read and understand Part One of the Department for Education's statutory guidance, 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'. Staff are required to undertake annual safeguarding training.

This Staff Conduct Policy is not an exhaustive list of acceptable and unacceptable standards of behaviour. In situations where guidance does not exist in this policy, staff are expected to exercise their professional judgement or seek guidance from senior leaders and always act in the best interests of the students and the school.

### **3. Roles/Aims/Scope**

This Staff Conduct Policy sets out clear guidance on standards of behaviour expected of all staff including:

- All school staff
- Volunteers
- Agency and casual staff
- Directly engaged contractors
- Temporary and supply staff whether directly engaged or via an agency
- Work experience placements
- Student placements including those undertaking initial teacher training and apprentices
- Secondees

#### 4. Conduct

All misconduct cases should be assessed with regards to the seriousness and where appropriate the individual will be supported to improve or redress the situation.

There is discretion for cases of minor misconduct to be dealt with informally in the first instance. A quiet word may be all that is required to improve a member of staff's conduct or performance. In some cases, additional training, coaching and advice may be what is needed. At Brookfields please refer to the schools Issue Resolution Policy and Procedures document for advice on how we expect staff to do this (Appendix 1).

Where there is no improvement in conduct or where there is a succession of minor cases, the Disciplinary Policy should be used.

##### 4.1 Attendance and timekeeping

Staff who expect to be absent or late for any reason must notify the school as early as possible, following the school's notification procedure. For class-based staff this must be before the school day begins so that appropriate cover may be arranged.

##### 4.2 Eating and drinking

- Staff may only eat with students if modelling behaviour and encouraging students to eat e.g. student snack time (healthy snacks). Staff may eat with students at organised events such as school Christmas lunch. Hot drinks are not allowed when working with students. Hot drinks must be in secure lidded cups when staff are walking through the school (e.g. to meetings).
- Chewing gum is not permitted in school.
- The school endeavours to be nut-free due to allergies. Everyone at or visiting the school is requested not to bring nuts or food and drinks containing nuts into the school.

##### 4.3 Smoking, including use of E-cigarettes and vapor devices

- Smoking is strictly forbidden anywhere on site for all students, staff and visitors. This includes the school driveway, car parks and smoking inside vehicles parked on school property.
- If the school has a staff smoking zone outside of the school main gate, this may be used in accordance with school guidance, usually before students arrive or have left and during staff lunch breaks.
- Smoking is not allowed during off-site activities with students.
- Smoking is not allowed during public community or social events, unless permitted explicitly by the Headteacher.
- The Headteacher has the right to allow or disallow use of special smoking zones on site, as they see fit without a need to explain the reasons behind any such decision and with no prior notice.

##### 4.4 Alcohol and drugs misuse

- Consumption of alcohol is not permitted on site, except where the Headteacher has given permission for a school function when modest amounts of alcohol may be consumed.
- Consumption of illegal drugs is never permitted.
- Staff conduct and performance must not be adversely impacted by alcohol or prescription drugs.
- The school is committed to the prevention of the adverse effects of drugs and alcohol in the workplace and the early diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of staff who have alcohol or drug-related problems.
- If any staff member with an alcohol or drug problem fails to comply with the recommendations of the agreed programme of treatment, then the disciplinary procedure may be followed. Staff enrolled on a rehabilitation programme will usually be subject to normal sickness/absence rules.
- It is anticipated that most cases will not proceed to a drug and alcohol screen but will be handled

using normal line management practices. However, in the absence of a satisfactory explanation for the behaviour or performance, and where the staff member is suspected of, or admits to, being in breach of this policy, a drug and alcohol screen may be performed. The staff member may be suspended on full pay pending the screening process or until the results of the test are known.

- If a staff member refuses to co-operate with the screening or to allow the school access to the results, they will be suspended immediately on full pay and the school's Disciplinary Policy will be instigated.
- It is always the school's intention that suspension should be for as short a time as possible.

#### 4.5 Security

- In the interests of security, staff must wear their identity card (security pass) whilst in school and should challenge anyone in school who doesn't have a visible card. Lost cards may be replaced for a fee.
- Staff must not remove any school documents or property from the site or take any photographs without permission. When working from home or other locations, documents relating to staff or students must be accessed electronically via school systems and paper copies should not be taken home or to other non-workplace locations. Should we have concerns that a member of staff has prohibited items or is behaving in a concerning way, the school reserves the right to search the outer clothing, bags, lockers and vehicles etc. of staff whilst on site. Staff may have a colleague in attendance on such occasions.

#### 4.6 Appearance

- In an environment where we work with children of different ages, abilities and support needs, it is important that staff dress safely and appropriately. Clothing must be clean, fresh and presentable to a range of students, staff and visitors in all situations we may encounter.
- The dress code for the school is smart casual, that is appropriate for wearing around children. No explicit writing/print/images, no political statements, no ripped, see-through, or overly worn-out fabrics, no blue denim or camouflage. Footwear must be smart, safe and comfortable. No flip flops, /high-heeled shoes to be worn, and open-toed footwear is worn at the individual's own risk.
- Jewellery must be discreet. Jewellery must not be dangling; ear studs are preferable. Body jewellery is not to be exposed to students. Long hair must be tied back and safe. Tattoos of a political or explicit nature must be covered.
- Staff working with students should keep their fingernails short (level with top of fingertips) and smooth to ensure that students and other colleagues do not get hurt if a need for physical support arises. This applies equally to personal hygiene support and behavioural support.
- Leadership Team members may request that a staff member leaves the premises to change their appearance or have nails/nail extensions removed or cut before returning. Any such request will result in unpaid leave of absence being recorded for part of the day.
- Staff who work in catering, cleaning and maintenance will be provided with uniforms or PPE relevant to their roles.
- There is a uniform allowance available for all staff.

#### 4.7 Mobility and flexibility

Due to the demands and nature of the school, staff should be prepared to transfer upon request within departments either temporarily or permanently and/or to undertake work of a different nature, providing it is reasonable and safe to do so, and the individual is adequately trained. Staff may be required to work anywhere in the school.

#### 4.8 Gifts and rewards

- Staff should take care to ensure that they do not appear to accept a gift that may be construed as a bribe or lead the giver to expect preferential treatment.
- Non-cash gifts to staff (for example from parents) may be accepted. Unless a specific staff member is named, gifts should usually be shared amongst the relevant staff team. Gifts may not be accepted if they appear to be disproportionately generous or could be construed as an inducement to affect a business/school decision. In the case of any doubt, staff should seek guidance from a member of the leadership team.
- Staff should exercise care when selecting students for school teams, productions, trips and/or specific work tasks to avoid perceptions of favouritism or injustice. Similar care should be exercised when excluding a child from an activity without prior consultation with the Headteacher.
- Staff should not give presents/rewards to an individual outside of the school reward system. Gifts from staff to students may only be given as part of an organised event (e.g. Santa) or with the prior agreement of their line manager and the student's parent/carer.

#### 4.9 Communication with parents

- Teachers are expected to be the first point of contact between parents and the school, although enquiries will also come through the school office. Staff can contact parents by telephone, email or via the school's agreed communication system. Staff should not contact students, parents or conduct any school business using personal email addresses or telephone numbers. It is important that the communication is not only professional, but also grammatically correct and spelt without errors.
- No formal letters (on headed paper) are allowed to be sent out without the Headteacher's permission.
- It is important to let parents know what positive things their child has been doing that day and any home learning which may be appropriate. If something negative has happened, for example challenging behavior or an injury, staff must ensure that parents receive a **phone call**. Parents and carers must always be notified if a student has been physically restrained.
- Staff must inform the Headteacher and HR if they receive an offensive email.
- Staff who speak other languages may occasionally be asked to assist with translation for parents whose first language is not English.

#### 4.10 Communication with students

- Staff should carefully consider the way they communicate with students to avoid any possible misinterpretation of their motives or behaviours.
- Staff should not give their personal mobile phone numbers or email addresses to students, nor should they communicate with them by social media, text message or personal email. If staff need to speak to a student by telephone, one of the school's telephones should be used. Emails to students must be via school systems.

#### 4.11 Professional boundaries at work

- Relationships with parents of students should be welcoming and friendly. However, this does not mean that professional boundaries do not exist. It is important that staff do not make the mistake of trying to be a friend to parents rather than a friendly professional.
- This is an important distinction: part of a professional mental attitude is not getting emotionally involved to the extent that staff forget the need to put the child first. As professionals staff need to be able to focus on other's needs rather than their own and respond rationally and helpfully. For instance, when a parent becomes distressed or angry, or makes negative comments about the school, it is not helpful to them, staff or the school to collude or agree with them or cry with them.
- Staff must also be aware of the need for confidentiality and be mindful of information they are

sharing with parents and discussing in front of parents and students. Highly sensitive or personal information about others attending or working at the school should not be shared with parents or students. Likewise, sensitive information or disagreements about the operation of the school should remain internal to the school and should not be shared externally. Such actions may cause damage or distress to individuals or the school.

- The school may have some parents and relatives working at the school as part of the staff team. Such staff may have access to information about the school that is not routinely shared with parents and other relatives and so should keep this confidential within school.
- Professional boundaries and neutrality are an essential part of all roles at the school.
- **Remember: you are a friendly and neutral professional who maintains confidentiality.**
- Staff should not:
  - arrange meetings with students off the school premises without the prior approval of the Headteacher
  - arrange private tuition of any of the school's students in school or outside of school whether in term-time or outside of term-time without the prior written approval of the Headteacher
  - give students their home address or any of their personal contact details.
- On occasion, students may develop an infatuation for a member of staff. If a member of staff suspects or becomes aware of an infatuation, the advice of the Headteacher or DSL (Designated Safeguarding Lead) must be sought immediately.

#### 4.12 Conduct outside of work

- Staff must not engage in conduct outside work which could seriously damage the reputation and standing of the school/Trust, or their own reputation, or the reputation of other members of the school community. Criminal offences that involve violence, or possession, or misuse of drugs, or sexual misconduct are likely to be regarded as unacceptable and may be dealt with under the school's Disciplinary Policy as gross misconduct. Staff must exercise caution when using information technology and be aware of the risks to themselves and others.
- If at any time during employment with the school a staff member is arrested, convicted, or receive a caution reprimand, or warning from the police for any reason, they must advise HR or the Headteacher immediately in person or by email. This includes driving convictions and speeding offences. If staff or their family members receive visits or support from social services, police or other agencies with regards to their children, they must inform the Headteacher.
- Failure to inform the school of these matters may result in formal disciplinary action which could be considered gross misconduct.

#### 4.13 Confidentiality and disclosure of information

- All staff are expected to treat any student or school data in the strictest confidence. No staff member should discuss a student with unauthorised personnel, or any person outside the school, unless they are involved in providing support for that student.
- Any documentation or other relevant information must be filed as soon as possible.
- Any confidential information that is no longer required must be shredded or put into shredding bin kept in the school office, to ensure it has been destroyed.
- Staff may, during their employment become aware of personal or other confidential information, some of which may fall within the scope of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The Governing Body and Trustees require that the confidentiality of this information be respected.
- Staff must not use information obtained during employment/engagement for personal gain or benefit, nor should they pass it on to others who might use it in such a way unless it is necessary and within the law to do so, i.e. where a police investigation is necessary.
- Information concerning a staff members' private affairs will not be supplied to any person outside the school unless the consent of the staff member is obtained first.

- Staff are expected to treat any student or school data in the strictest confidence. Staff should not discuss a student with unauthorised personnel, or any person outside the school, unless they are involved in providing support for that student.
- Staff must not take part in any activities or make any public statement, for example in the broadcast or print media or at public meetings, which has any bearing on the business of the school, its staff, students, parents or other stakeholders or which refers to their employed/engaged capacity with the school, without the prior approval of a member of the Headteacher.
- Any breach of school or student confidentiality or unauthorised disclosure of confidential information will be treated as a disciplinary offence and may lead to legal prosecution under data protection laws.

#### 4.14 Electronic communications and social media

- Whatever staff members write relating to their work or when using work systems, whether via an email, on a web forum/extranet, by text or within a letter means that staff are corresponding on behalf of the school and the school is considered to be the publisher.
- Such correspondence can be produced as evidence in Court or at an employment tribunal or other recognised authority and can be disclosed under the GDPR or Freedom of Information Act.
- If staff are writing about an individual, it is likely to be considered personal information under the *General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)* if it contains identification details such as name, age, gender, address and phone numbers, bank account details or nationality. If disclosed without permission, it could cause distress or damage and breach the person's privacy or human rights. Whatever staff members write may be disclosable.
- Anything staff members post to external social media sites could reflect on the school and its work by virtue of their employment. Staff members should carefully consider what is posted in a personal capacity on, for example: Twitter/X, YouTube, Facebook, and LinkedIn.
- Including a statement saying that the views expressed are the staff member's own does not absolve them of their responsibilities in relation to this. Staff must also refrain from making any reference to others in their capacity as staff or students (and parents) of the school and should not befriend parents or students on social media.
- The school could be considered "vicariously liable" (i.e. responsible) for anything that staff members write using school systems or by any method that identifies people connected to the school.
- Staff must not use, communicate, download, upload or access anything that could damage the schools', Trust, or their own, reputation or could be considered a breach of confidentiality, defamatory or harassment.
- Staff should not contact parents/carers or students outside of the school's formal or agreed communication methods, for example staff should not text or WhatsApp message these.
- To summarise:
  - Don't write anything about students, parents or staff of the school on social media (Facebook etc.)
  - Don't use apps such as WhatsApp to communicate about students, parents or staff of the school
  - Be careful what you send by email and text – everything you write has the potential to be shown to/seen by others. Texts should not include names or personal details about staff, students or parents/carers
  - Writing inappropriate comments or giving personal information could get you and the school into trouble
  - Take great care to check emails have been addressed correctly. Be wary of auto correct and auto completion features
  - If in doubt, don't write it
- If staff have any concerns, they should raise them with a member of the leadership team.

- Teams may set up WhatsApp groups for informal messaging. Formal school business should not be communicated via WhatsApp. School email should be used to communicate formal school business.
- Some team members may not wish to be part of a WhatsApp group; it is important that they don't miss out on any essential team information – alternatives are email and a text informing them that an email message has been sent. All team members should have access to the same information on school-related matters and line managers are to ensure that this happens through appropriate channels.
- Messaging out of hours can also disrupt work/life balance which all staff are encouraged to be mindful of.
- Staff should remain mindful of their digital footprint and exercise caution in all their use of social media or any other web-based presence they have. This includes written content, videos or photographs and views expressed either directly or by 'liking' certain pages or posts or following certain individuals or groups. In addition, care must be taken when using dating websites where staff could encounter students.

#### 4.15 Mobile phone use

- Staff may use their mobile phones during staff break periods but are not permitted to use them during lessons or in the playground. Staff members must not use their phone in view of the students, even during a break, as this gives students a false impression that it is acceptable in school. Mobiles should be placed on silent mode during the working day and kept in staff members bags/lockers. Family members may use the main school number to leave messages; notification of these will be sent via email unless it is an emergency.
- Personal mobile phones should not be used to contact parents/carers.
- Personal mobile phones, tablets and other electronic devices should not be used to take photographs or film students.
- The school does not accept any responsibility for the loss, theft, damage or unauthorised calls on staff or students' mobiles.
- School based staff will be made aware of the security implications of using personal devices to access work emails and will be advised on how to ensure security is maintained.

#### 4.16 Diversity and dignity

- The school respects and values the diversity of individuals and embraces equality and diversity in everything it does. Harassment and bullying are unlawful and failure to comply with required standards of behaviour will not be tolerated or condoned in the workplace. As with all issues, staff are encouraged and supported to find an informal resolution wherever possible.
- Student dignity can be compromised in many ways and staff must be aware of the need to maintain student dignity at all times.
- Staff are expected to always act in a professional manner when discussing confidential information about students.
- **Staff must not** have a casual discussion about a student with another member of staff, where other students, or other members of staff, can overhear.
- Staff members should check their location and have the conversation in a discreet place.
- When practical the student under discussion should be present.
- **Staff must not** discuss a student in front of other students even if the student is present.
- Action will be taken if the emotional or physical dignity of a student is compromised.
- As all members of staff are "significant others" to students – **staff must not** discuss other members of staff in front of students.
- If staff have a concern about a situation, a decision that has been taken, or a comment made by another member of staff, it is expected that they talk to the member of staff concerned in the first instance. Please see Issue Resolution policy for further details.

- If the situation is not resolved, then the issue should be discussed with their line manager and confidentiality should be respected and staff should act with professionalism at all times. ***The school is committed to equal treatment for all staff and students regardless of their race or colour, nationality or national or ethnic origins, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity, marital or civil partnership status, gender reassignment, age, and disability (together known as “Protected Characteristics”).***
- The school aims to create a friendly, caring and perceptive environment in which every individual is valued.
- Bullying, harassment, victimisation and/or discrimination will not be tolerated. The school treats all students and their parents fairly and with consideration which they are expected to reciprocate towards each other, the staff and the school. Staff should ensure that they are familiar with the relevant school policies that promote equality of opportunity and dignity.

## **5. Equalities statement**

Brookfields School/The Ascendancy Partnership Trust is an equal opportunities and inclusive employer which celebrates and values diversity. We are committed to a workplace that inspires and respects all individuals without discrimination, regardless of any protected characteristic. Employment-related matters such as reward, progression and promotion will be based on individual merit.