

Staff Code of Conduct

Introduction

A code of conduct for staff is an important and mandatory requirement for all schools, and all staff must be aware of the school's own policy (as directed by Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023, paragraph 13). The main guidance that dictates what this policy includes are the **Teachers' Standards** (DfE 2011 –updated 2021) and the **Guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings** (non-statutory advice and guidance, February 2022). Many Essex schools adopt the HR for Schools model Code of Conduct.

Guidance for safer working practice and a staff Code of Conduct

The overriding expectation is that employees, volunteers and those engaged to work in a school will adopt the highest standards of personal integrity and conduct both in and outside work. As role models they must behave, through their words and actions, at all times in a manner which demonstrates their suitability to work with children and which upholds the standards and reputation of the school.

It is the responsibility of all employees to familiarise themselves with, and comply, with their staff Code of Conduct. Any breaches of this Code of Conduct will be regarded as a serious matter which could result in disciplinary action, and in certain circumstances could potentially lead to dismissal.

Teachers' Standards

The current code of conduct for teachers – “Teachers' Standards” – have been in effect since September 2012 and were established by the Department of Education. The standards were updated in 2021, mainly to reflect new terminology.

The purpose of the Teaching Standards is to provide a minimum level of practice for all early years, primary and secondary school teachers training towards, or who have already achieved, qualified teacher status. However, the Teachers' Standards also apply to:

- Trainee teachers working toward Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)
- Early Career Teachers (ECTs)
- School Leaders
- Governing Bodies

Part One of the Teachers' Standards sets out the following expectations, that teachers must:

1. Set high expectations which inspire, motivate and challenge pupils
2. Promote good progress and outcomes by pupils
3. Demonstrate good subject and curriculum knowledge
4. Plan and teach well-structured lessons
5. Adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all pupils
6. Make accurate and productive use of assessment
7. Manage behaviour effectively to ensure a good and safe learning environment
8. Fulfil wider professional responsibilities

Part Two relates to personal and professional conduct.

A teacher is expected to demonstrate consistently high standards of personal and professional conduct. The following statements define the behaviour and attitudes which set the required standard for conduct throughout a teacher's career.

Teachers uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school, by:

- treating pupils with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to a teacher's professional position

- having regard for the need to safeguard pupils’ well-being, in accordance with statutory provisions
- showing tolerance of and respect for the rights of others
- not undermining fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs
- ensuring that personal beliefs are not expressed in ways which exploit pupils’ vulnerability or might lead them to break the law.

Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach, and maintain high standards in their own attendance and punctuality. Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

Specific areas covered by the Essex Code of Conduct

Safeguarding and child protection

It is essential that all adults working with children understand that the nature of their work and the responsibilities related to it, place them in a position of trust. Adults must be clear about appropriate and safe behaviours for working with children in paid or unpaid capacities, in all settings and in all contexts, including outside work.

The relevant requirements specific to safeguarding and child protection are set out in:

- the school’s Child Protection and Behaviour Management Policies and Procedures
- the DfE Statutory Guidance “Keeping Children Safe in Education”

Conduct outside work

The school recognises and respects individuals’ right to a private life without interference. However, individuals connected with the school must not act in a way that would bring the school, or their profession, into disrepute or that calls into question their suitability to work with children. Workers must disclose to the school (Headteacher and in the case of the Headteacher to the Chair of Governors) immediately, any wrongdoing or alleged wrongdoing by a themselves

Secondary employment

Employees must not, without the written consent of the school, undertake any employment or engagement which might interfere with the performance of their duties.

Confidentiality

As a general rule, all information received in the course of employment or whilst volunteering/being engaged by the school, no matter how it is received, held or transmitted, should be regarded as sensitive and confidential and must not be disclosed or divulged within or outside the school other than in accordance with the requirement of the role and/or where specific permission has been provided.

Preserving anonymity

The Education Act 2011 contains reporting restrictions preventing the publication of any material which could lead to the identification of a teacher in the event of an allegation against them made by a pupil at the same school. Any individual who publishes material which could lead to the identification of the employee who is the subject of an allegation of this kind may be subject to criminal and disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

Media queries

Workers must not speak to the press or respond to media queries on any matter relating to the school. All media queries should be referred immediately to the Headteacher/Chair of Governors.

Use of computers, emails and the internet and social media

Those using the school’s equipment and networks are expected to do so responsibly and to comply

with all applicable laws, policies and procedures, and with normal standards of professional and personal courtesy and conduct. Detailed expectations are set out in the school’s Internet Policy.

Appendix 1 of the Code of Conduct related to ICT acceptable use, including:

- Use of school equipment and networks (including personal use)
- Remote/virtual learning
- Use of email
- Social networks
- Security
- Privacy and monitoring

Relationships

The internal school community

All workers are expected to treat member of the school community with dignity and respect and to work co-operatively and supportively. Bullying, Harassment and Victimisation will not be tolerated

The wider community and service users

All workers have a responsibility to ensure courteous, efficient and impartial service delivery to all groups and individuals within the community.

All relationships of a business or private nature with external contractors, or potential contractors, must be made known to Governing Board.

Gifts and hospitality

Workers may not accept any gift or hospitality from a person intended to benefit from their services (or those whom they supervise) or from any relative without the express permission of the school.

There are occasions when pupils or parents wish to pass small tokens of appreciation to staff, and this is usually acceptable. However, it is unacceptable to receive gifts on a regular basis or of any significant value.

Neutrality

Workers must not allow their own personal, political, religious or other views and opinions to interfere with their work. They are expected to be neutral in their views in the course of their work at the school and to present a balanced view when working with pupils.

Close personal relationships at work

These are defined as:

- workers who are married, dating or in a partnership or co-habiting arrangement;
- immediate family members for example parent, child, sibling, grandparent;
- other relationships for example extended family (cousins, uncles, in-laws), close friendships, business associates (outside the school).

Applicants

Applicants are required to disclose on their application form if they have a close personal relationship with any person connected with the school.

References

It is expected that, for those working with children, professional references, and not personal references, are sought and provided.

Relationships at work

It is recognised that situations arise where close personal relationships can be formed at work. Such relationships should be disclosed, in confidence, to the line manager/supervisor by the individuals concerned as this may impact on the conduct of the school.

Workers related to a pupil Any workers related to, or who are the carer of a pupil are expected to separate their familial and employment role.

Dress code

Adults in school are expected to adopt smart standards of dress which project an appropriate professional image to pupils, parents and members of the public.

If the school has a specific dress code it should be included in the Code of Conduct or an indication of where it is found, for example in the staff handbook.

Use of financial resources

Workers must ensure that they use public and any other funds entrusted to them in a responsible and lawful manner. They must strive to ensure value for money and ensure rigorous adherence to Financial Regulations.

School property and personal possessions

Workers must ensure they take due care of school property at all times, including proper and safe use, security, appropriate maintenance and reporting faults. If employees are found to have caused damage to school property through misuse or carelessness this may result in disciplinary action.

Other issues that staff should understand

(refer to the *Guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings*)

- *Infatuations and crushes*
- *Physical contact*
- *Intimate/personal care*
- *Behaviour management*
- *Home visits*
- *Transporting pupils*
- *Educational visits*
- *First aid and medication*
- *Use of mobile phones*
- *Photography, videos and other images/media*

Reporting breaches of standards of good conduct

All schools should promote an open environment that enables individuals to raise issues in a constructive way and with confidence that they will be acted upon appropriately without fear of recrimination. All employees, engaged workers and volunteers are expected to bring to the attention of an appropriate manager/Governing Board/Trustee any impropriety, deficiency in the provision of service or breach of policy or this Code. Where appropriate, individuals should also refer to the School's Whistleblowing Policy.

Additional guidance and further reading

- Teachers Standards <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachers-standards>
- Guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings -February 2022
- Code of Conduct – Education HR Services model for schools and academies
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Financial regulations
- Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2023