



## **Code of Conduct**

**2023 - 2024**

## Introduction

The overriding expectation is that employees, volunteers and those engaged to work in the 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.

This code of conduct provides an overall framework of the behaviours expected of individuals who work in the school. The code is not intended to be exhaustive and individuals should use sound professional, ethical and moral judgements to act in the best interests of the school, its pupils and its community.

This code should be read in conjunction with:

- other school policies and procedures
- the terms of any employment or service contracts and agreements
- relevant professional standards

## Scope

This Code applies to all individuals employed by the school or those engaged by the school including:

- Relief/casual staff
- Supply staff
- Third parties providing services to the school (including the self-employed)
- Voluntary workers

For the purpose of elements of this code applying to all individuals set out above, they are collectively referred to as “workers”.

## Contacts for key roles

### Head Teacher:

Mr. S. Proctor - [s.proctor@westthurrockacademy.co.uk](mailto:s.proctor@westthurrockacademy.co.uk)

### Chair of Governors:

Mrs. S. Stronach - [Chair@westthurrockacademy.co.uk](mailto:Chair@westthurrockacademy.co.uk)

### Designated Safeguarding Leaders:

Mrs. J. Pitcher - [j.pitcher@westthurrockacademy.co.uk](mailto:j.pitcher@westthurrockacademy.co.uk)

### Local Authority Designated Officer

Duty LADO – 01375 652 921 / 07738821584 (M/T/F) 077624066606 (W/Th) [LADO@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:LADO@thurrock.gov.uk)

### Senior Information Risk Owner

Mr. S. Proctor - [s.proctor@westthurrockacademy.co.uk](mailto:s.proctor@westthurrockacademy.co.uk)

## **Roles and responsibilities**

### **Governing board/trustees**

It is the responsibility of the Governing Board/Trustees to establish and monitor standards of conduct and behaviour within the school, including the establishment of relevant policies and procedures.

Governors and Trustees are subject to their own Code of Conduct.

### **Head Teacher and line managers**

It is the responsibility of Head Teacher and line managers to address promptly any breaches of good conduct and behaviour, using informal procedures where possible but implementing formal procedures where necessary.

### **Employees**

It is the responsibility of all employees to familiarise themselves with, and comply, with this Code. 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.

### **Engaged workers/Volunteers**

Engaged workers and volunteers are required to familiarise themselves, and comply, with this Code in so far as it is relevant to their role. Any breaches of this Code may result in the engagement of the worker/volunteer being terminated, in accordance with any applicable terms of engagement.

## **Reporting breaches of standards of good conduct**

The School wishes to 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 which is available from the school office.

## **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 Department for Education Statutory Guidance "Keeping Children Safe in Education" (as amended from time to time).

This is the key statutory guidance which all employees must follow and all employees and volunteers must, as a minimum, read Part 1 of that Document. Staff working in central services who do not have any contact with pupils may read the abridged version at Appendix A.

"Guidance for Safer Working Practice for those working with Children and Young People in Education Settings" issued by the Safer Recruitment Consortium sets out key expectations for adult interactions with children and young people.

In addition, individuals should be aware that it is criminal offence (s 16. Sexual Offences Act 2003) 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 of that child, even if the relationship is consensual.

Individuals should familiarise themselves with these documents, in conjunction with the body of the Code of Conduct and other relevant school policies and procedures.

## **Identifying and Reporting safeguarding concerns**

Safeguarding concerns cover a wide spectrum from serious issues where a child is harmed or is at risk of harm to lower- level concerns where practice or behaviour is inappropriate, undesirable or not in keeping with usual expectations.

As part of our whole school approach to safeguarding, we promote a culture of openness, trust and transparency in which safeguarding is a shared responsibility and our values and expectations are lived, monitored and reinforced by all staff. In this context, everyone is expected to report any and all safeguarding concerns, no matter how small, as soon as they arise. This includes an expectation of self-reporting where an individual finds themselves in a situation which may be, or appear to be, compromising or where they have fallen short of expectations.

## **Who to report to**

Concerns should be referred to the Head Teacher (or where the concerns relate to the Head Teacher, to the Chair of Governors or equivalent) or to the Designated Safeguard Lead (who will share information with the Head Teacher or chair of governors). In a situation where there is a conflict of interest in reporting the matter internally, it should be reported directly to the local authority designated officer(s) (LADOs).

## **Where children have been harmed or may be at risk of harm**

Where a concern or allegation suggests that an adult has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child, and/or;
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, and/or;
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she may pose a risk of harm to children, and/or;
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children,

the matter must be dealt with in accordance with the Dealing with Safeguarding Allegations against Adults Procedure, as required by Keeping Children Safe in Education.

## **Low Level Concerns Policy**

A low-level concern is any concern – no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a ‘nagging doubt’ - that an adult may have acted in a way that is inconsistent with the code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work (see 6. below), but which does not meet the “harm test” as set out above.

Examples of such behaviour could include, but are not limited to:

- Being over friendly with children;
- having favourites;
- taking photographs of children on their mobile phone, contrary to school policy;
- crossing boundaries between familial and employment/volunteering roles;
- engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door, or;
- humiliating children.

Such behaviour can exist on a wide spectrum, from the inadvertent or thoughtless, or behaviour that may look to be inappropriate, but might not be in specific circumstances, through to that which is ultimately intended to enable abuse.

Our objective is to protect our young people and adults, by identifying issues and providing advice, direction and support to improve our collective and individual practice.

In this regard we want all adults, as well as pupils, to feel empowered and confident to report all concerns in the knowledge that they do so on a neutral basis and that issues raised will be dealt with in a sensitive and proportionate manner.

All low-level concerns will be taken seriously, investigated and may be dealt in the following ways as appropriate:

- Additional support and/or training;
- Provision of advice, guidance or direction either verbally or in writing;
- Through performance management, or in cases of serious poor performance, the Capability Procedure;
- Where there has been a breach of the code of conduct or disciplinary rules, through the Dealing with Safeguarding Allegations against Adults and/or Disciplinary Procedures.

To support our objectives, confidential records of all reported concerns and actions taken will be kept to identify any patterns, enable monitoring and to facilitate improvement in policy and practice.

## **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. This covers relevant criminal offences, such as violence or sexual misconduct, inappropriate behaviour such as lewd or offensive action, as well as negative comments about the school or its community.

Workers must disclose to the school (Head Teacher and in the case of the Head Teacher to the Chair of Governors) immediately, any wrongdoing or alleged wrongdoing by themselves (regardless of whether they deny the wrongdoing/alleged wrongdoing), including any incidents arising from alternative employment or outside of work which may have a bearing on their employment or engagement with the school. Employees should also refer to the expectations set out in their contract of employment and the disciplinary procedures.

In addition, any worker engaged in a post covered by the Childcare (Disqualification) Regulations 2009 ("the Regulations") must immediately inform the school of any events or circumstances which may lead to their disqualification from working in the post by virtue of the Regulations. The statutory guidance relating to Disqualification under the Childcare Act 2006 can be found at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disqualification-under-the-childcare-act-2006/disqualification-under-the-childcare-act-2006#disqualification-under-the-childcare-act> .

## **Secondary employment**

The school does not seek to unreasonably preclude employees from undertaking additional employment but employees are required to devote their attention and abilities to their duties at the school during their working hours and to act in the best interests of the school at all times. Accordingly, employees must not, without the written consent of the school, take secondary employment or engagement once in post. This does not apply to those whose net average weekly earnings are at or below the lower earnings limit, although they should advise the school of any secondary employment so that the employer can have regard to any responsibilities it may have in relation to the Working Time Regulations.

Secondary employment or engagement must not interfere with the performance of the employee's duties with this employer. In addition, employees should not engage in business or employment activities which are incompatible with or might conflict with the school's interests.

## **Confidentiality**

Confidential information can take various forms and be held and transmitted in various ways e.g. manual records (files, reports and notes), verbal discussions and electronic records. 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.

NOTE: All workers must be aware that they are obliged to disclose information relating to child protection issues and should make it clear to the individual either that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed and/or decline to receive the information and direct them to a more appropriate person e.g. the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

The school is committed to being transparent about how it collects and uses the personal data of its workforce, and to meeting its data protection obligations. The Data Protection Policy sets out the school's commitment to data protection, and individual rights and obligations in relation to personal data.

Any actual or suspected/potential breach of data protection must be reported immediately to the school's Senior Information Risk Owner.

### **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.

"Publication" includes any speech, writing, relevant programme or other communication in whatever form, which is addressed to the public at large or any section of the public. For the avoidance of doubt, this includes publishing details of an allegation or other information on a social media site which could lead to the identification of the teacher.

### **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 Head Teacher/Chair of Governors.

### **Use of computers, email and the internet and social media**

The school recognises that electronic devices and media are important tools and resources in an educational context and can save time and expense.

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.

Personal use of social media and other on-line applications which may fall into the public domain should not be such that it could bring the school into disrepute and/or call into question an individual's suitability to work with children.

Detailed expectations are set out in the school's Acceptable Use Policy. If you require an additional copy of this document, please ask the Head Teacher.

Any worker who is unsure about whether or not something he/she proposes to do might breach that policy or if something is not specifically covered in the policy, they should seek advice from their line manager or a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

## **Relationships**

### **The internal school community**

All workers are expected to treat members of the school community with dignity and respect and to work co-operatively and supportively. Bullying, Harassment and Victimisation will not be tolerated (see also the school's Grievance Procedure).

### **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. No favour must be shown to any individual or group of individuals, nor any individual or group unreasonably excluded from, or discriminated against, in any aspect of school business.

## **Contracts**

All relationships of a business or private nature with external contractors, or potential contractors, must be made known to Governing Board. Orders and contracts must be in accordance with standing orders and financial regulations of the school. No special favour should be shown to businesses run by, for example, friends, partners or relatives in the awarding of contracts, tendering process or any other business transaction.

## **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.

Where an outside organisation wishes to sponsor or is seeking to sponsor a school activity, whether by invitation, tender, negotiation or voluntarily, the sponsorship should always be related to the school's interests and never for personal benefit.

The School's policy on gifts and hospitality is available from the school's Business Office. Any breaches of this policy may lead to disciplinary action.

## **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**

Close personal relationships 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.

Applicants are asked to state the name of the person and the relationship. Failure to disclose such a relationship may disqualify the applicant.

Workers should discuss confidentiality with their Head Teacher/line manager, any relationships with an applicant.

It is inappropriate for any worker to sit on an appointment panel, for those with whom they have a close personal relationship.

## **References**

It is expected that, for those working with children, professional references, and not personal references, are sought and provided. All references provided on behalf of the school must be signed by the Head Teacher (Chair of Governors for the Head Teacher).

Anyone agreeing to act as a personal referee must make it clear in the reference that it is provided as a personal or colleague reference and is not a reference on behalf of the school. Personal or colleague references must not be provided on school headed paper.

## **Relationships at work**

It is also 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.

Whilst not all such situations where those in close personal relationships work together raise issues of conflict of interest, implications can include:

- Effect on trust and confidence;
- Perception of service users, the public and other employees on professionalism and fairness;
- Operational issues e.g. working patterns, financial and procurement separation requirements;
- Conflicting loyalties and breaches of confidentiality and trust.

Open, constructive and confidential discussion between workers and managers/supervisors is essential to ensure these implications do not occur and that all parties can be protected.

No-one should be involved in discipline, promotion, pay or other decisions for anyone where there is a close personal relationship.

It may be necessary in certain circumstances to consider transferring workers that form close personal relationships at work. Any such action will be taken wherever possible by agreement with both parties and without discrimination.

Colleagues who feel they are affected by a close personal relationship at work involving other colleagues should at all times feel that they can discuss this, without prejudice, with their Head teacher/line manager, other manager or Governing Board.

### **Workers related to pupils**

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

Workers must not show or provide any preferential treatment to them or become involved in their education or care beyond their specific role as an employee/volunteer or their role as a parent/carer/relation.

### **Presentation Code**

The way that staff present themselves, including their clothing, is an important part of their overall professional demeanour and is often the first indicator of others' perception of our professionalism. The Presentation Code does not need to be adhered to on INSET Days or any other occasions when staff are present in school without the children; however, the code must always be followed when children are present on site.

Whilst we do not wish to be overly prescriptive, we nevertheless expect all staff to adhere to the following standards concerning their professional dress:

- Ensure that their overall appearance is in keeping with the professional image of the school;
- Dress appropriately for their role;
- Ensure they do not wear anything which presents a risk to health and safety (i.e. inappropriate footwear or inappropriate jewellery);
- Ensure they do not wear anything which is likely to bring the school into disrepute (i.e. potentially offensive badges, logos/motifs or inappropriate length of clothing including over leggings);
- Maintain high standards of personal hygiene and grooming;
- Ensure that clothing is clean and tidy;
- Ensure that they are wearing an up-to-date identification badge;
- Ensure that any larger tattoos are covered where appropriate;
- Ensure that the clothes being worn are appropriate for the activity they are completing. (i.e. active wear for PE sessions – this can include hoodies).

If a member of staff regularly breaches this dress code, they could be faced with disciplinary procedures. If you are unsure if you are able to wear something, please ask a member of the school's leadership team who will be able to advise you appropriately.

## **Dress Code for staff handling food**

The school has decided to implement the following dress code for staff who handle food. Handling food includes: serving, preparing and other contact (i.e. cutting food for a child).

- Gloves;
- Tabard;
- Hair net (if hair cannot be completely tied back);
- No jewellery including earrings - apart from a wedding band/other jewellery worn for religious reasons;
- No fake nails or nail varnish to be worn.

If a member of staff regularly breaches this dress code, they could be faced with disciplinary procedures.

## **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.

Workers are responsible for the safety and security of their personal possessions while on school premises. The school will not accept responsibility for the loss or damage of personal possessions.

## **Appendix A**

### **Additional Expectations**

#### **Professional Practice**

Workers must -

Maintain high standards of practice in relation to children, learning, planning, monitoring, assessing, reporting and providing feedback.

Apply their knowledge and experience in facilitating children's holistic development.

Plan and communicate clear, challenging and achievable expectations for all children.

Create an environment where children can become active agents in the learning process and develop lifelong learning skills.

Develop teaching, learning and assessment strategies that support differentiated learning in a way that respects the dignity of all children.

Inform their professional judgement and practice by engaging with, and reflecting on, children's development, learning theory, pedagogy, curriculum development, ethical practice, educational policy and legislation.

In a context of mutual respect, be open and responsive to constructive feedback regarding their practice and, if necessary, seek appropriate support, advice and guidance.

Act in the best interest of the children in their care.

#### **Professional Development**

Workers must -

Take personal responsibility for sustaining and improving the quality of their professional practice by:

- Actively maintaining their professional knowledge and understanding to ensure it is current;
- Completing training that is required of them to complete their role including training linked to: first aid, fire and child protection.
- Reflecting on and critically evaluating their professional practice, in light of their professional knowledge base;
- Availing of opportunities for career-long professional development.

## **Professional Collegiality and Collaboration**

Workers must -

Work with colleagues and children in the interests of sharing, developing and supporting good practice and maintaining the highest quality of educational experiences for all children within the school.

Work in a collaborative manner with children, parents/guardians, school management, other members of staff, relevant professionals and the wider school community, as appropriate, in seeking to effectively meet the needs of all children within the school.

Cooperate with the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills and other statutory and public non-statutory educational and support services, as appropriate.

Engage with the planning, implementation and evaluation of curriculum at classroom and school level.