



The Meadows

Code of Conduct

2023-2024

Approved by:	Bridget Watt Chair of Interim Executive Board	Date: 25.3.2024
Signed by:		(Chair)
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1. Aims, scope and principles

This policy aims to set and maintain standards of conduct that we expect all staff to follow. By creating this policy, we aim to ensure our school is an environment where everyone is safe, happy and treated with respect.

Many of the principles in this code of conduct are based on the [Teachers' Standards](#). School staff have an influential position in the school and will act as role models for pupils by consistently demonstrating high standards of behaviour.

We expect that all teachers will act in accordance with the personal and professional behaviours set out in the Teachers' Standards. We expect all support staff, governors and volunteers to also act with personal and professional integrity, respecting the safety and wellbeing of others.

In our school we support extremely vulnerable young people who frequently have experienced past trauma Dr Dan Hughes offers the acronym PACE - **Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy**. These principles help to promote the experience of safety in our interactions with young people.

Failure to follow the code of conduct may result in disciplinary action being taken, as set out in our staff disciplinary procedures.

Please note that this code of conduct is not exhaustive. If situations arise that are not covered by this code, staff will use their professional judgement and act in the best interests of the school and its pupils.

2. Legislation and guidance

We are required to establish procedures for the regulation of staff conduct under regulation 7 of [The School Staffing \(England\) Regulations 2009](#).

In line with the statutory safeguarding guidance [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#), we should have a staff code of conduct, which should cover acceptable use of technologies (including the use of mobile devices), staff/pupil relationships and communications, including the use of social media.

3. General obligations

Staff set an example to pupils. They will:

- Maintain high standards in their attendance and punctuality
- Never use inappropriate or offensive language in school
- Treat pupils and others with dignity and respect
- Show tolerance and respect for the rights of others
- Not undermine fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs
- Not express personal beliefs in a way that exploits pupils' vulnerability or might lead them to break the law

- Understand the statutory frameworks they must act within
- Adhere to the Teachers' Standards

4. Safeguarding

Staff have a duty to safeguard pupils from harm, and to report any concerns they have. This includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse, and neglect.

Staff will familiarise themselves with our child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures, and the Prevent initiative, and ensure they are aware of the processes to follow if they have concerns about a child.

Our child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures are available on our website: www.themeadowsschool.info/school-policies. New staff will also be training through the induction process. New staff / visitors will also be given access on arrival.

5. Allegations that may meet the harm threshold

This section is based on 'Section 1: Allegations that may meet the harm threshold' in part 4 of Keeping Children Safe in Education.

This section applies to all cases in which it is alleged that anyone working in the school, including a supply teacher, volunteer or contractor, 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 they 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 – this includes behaviour taking place inside or outside of school

We will deal with any such allegation quickly and in a fair and consistent way that provides effective child protection while also supporting the individual who is the subject of the allegation.

A 'case manager' will lead any investigation. This will be the headteacher, or the chair of governors where the headteacher is the subject of the allegation.

6. Low-level concerns about members of staff

A low-level concern is a behaviour towards a child by a member of staff that does not meet the harm threshold, is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, and may be as simple as causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt'. For example, this may include:

- Being over-friendly with children
- Having favourites
- Taking photographs of children on a personal device
- Engaging in 1-to-1 activities where they can't easily be seen
- Humiliating pupils

Low-level concerns can include inappropriate conduct inside and outside of work.

All staff should share any low-level concerns they have using the reporting procedures set out in our child protection and safeguarding policy. We also encourage staff to self-refer if they find themselves in a situation that could be misinterpreted. If staff are not sure whether behaviour would be deemed a low-level concern, we encourage staff to report it.

All reports will be handled in a responsive, sensitive and proportionate way.

Unprofessional behaviour will be addressed, and the staff member supported to correct it, at an early stage.

This creates and embeds a culture of openness, trust and transparency in which our values and expected behaviour are constantly lived, monitored and reinforced by all staff, while minimising the risk of abuse.

Reporting and responding to low-level concerns are covered in more detail in our child protection and safeguarding policy. This is available in the staff room and from the school office, as well as in the policies section of our school website.

Our procedures for dealing with allegations will be applied with common sense and judgement.

7. Whistle-blowing

Whistle-blowing reports wrongdoing that it is “in the public interest” to report. Examples linked to safeguarding include:

- Pupils’ or staff’s health and safety being put in danger
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation or statutory requirement
- Attempts to cover up the above, or any other wrongdoing in the public interest

Staff are encouraged to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible. Their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated, and their confidentiality will be respected.

Staff should consider the examples above when deciding whether their concern is of a whistle-blowing nature. Consider whether the incident(s) was illegal, breached statutory or school procedures, put people in danger or was an attempt to cover any such activity up.

Staff should report their concern to the Headteacher. If the concern is about the Headteacher, or it is believed they may be involved in the wrongdoing in some way, the staff member should report their concern to the chair of the governing board.

Concerns should be made in writing wherever possible. They should include names of those committing wrongdoing, dates, places and as much evidence and context as possible. Staff raising a concern should also include details of any personal interest in the matter.

For our school’s detailed whistle-blowing process, please refer to the DCC whistle-blowing policy that we adopt.

8. Staff-pupil relationships

Staff will observe proper boundaries with pupils that are appropriate to their professional position. They will act in a fair and transparent way that would not lead anyone to reasonably assume they are not doing so.

If staff members and pupils must spend time on a one-to-one basis, staff will ensure that:

- This takes place in a public place that others can access
- Others can see in to the room
- A colleague or line manager knows this is taking place
- Staff should avoid contact with pupils outside of school hours if possible

Personal contact details should not be exchanged between staff and pupils. This includes social media profiles.

While we are aware many pupils and their parents may wish to give gifts to staff, for example, at the end of the school year, gifts from staff to pupils are not acceptable.

If a staff member is concerned at any point that an interaction between themselves and a pupil may be misinterpreted, or if a staff member is concerned at any point about a fellow staff member and a pupil, this should be reported in line with the procedures set out in our child protection and safeguarding policy.

9. Communication and social media

School staff's social media profiles should not be available to pupils. If they have a personal profile on social media sites, they should not use their full name, as pupils may be able to find them. Staff should consider using a first and middle name instead, and set public profiles to private.

Staff should not attempt to contact pupils or their parents via social media, or any other means outside school, in order to develop any sort of relationship. They will not make any efforts to find pupils' or parents' social media profiles.

Staff will ensure that they do not post any images online that identify children who are pupils at the school without their consent.

Staff should be aware of the school's online e-safety policy and acceptable use policy.

10. Acceptable use of technology

Staff will not use technology in school to view material that is illegal, inappropriate or likely to be deemed offensive. This includes, but is not limited to, sending obscene emails, gambling and viewing pornography or other inappropriate content.

Staff will not use personal mobile phones and laptops, or school equipment for personal use, in school hours or in front of pupils. They will also not use personal mobile phones or cameras to take pictures of pupils.

We have the right to monitor emails and internet use on the school IT system.

11. Confidentiality

In the course of their role, members of staff are often privy to sensitive and confidential information about the school, staff, pupils and their parents.

This information should never be:

- Disclosed to anyone unless required by law or with consent from the relevant party or parties
- Used to humiliate, embarrass or blackmail others
- Used for a purpose other than what it was collected and intended for

This does not overrule staff's duty to report child protection concerns to the appropriate channel where staff believe a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm, as detailed further in our child protection and safeguarding policy.

12. Honesty and integrity

Staff should maintain high standards of honesty and integrity in their role. This includes when dealing with pupils, handling money, claiming expenses and using school property and facilities.

Staff will not accept bribes. Gifts that are worth more than £10.00 must be declared and recorded on the gifts and hospitality register. Staff will ensure that all information given to the school is correct.

This should include:

- Background information (including any past or current investigations/cautions related to conduct outside of school)
- Qualifications
- Professional experience

Where there are any updates to the information provided to the school, the member of staff will advise the school as such as soon as reasonably practicable. Consideration will then be given to the nature and circumstances of the matter and whether this may have an impact on the member of staff's employment.

13. Dress code

Staff will dress in a professional, appropriate manner; no jeans, hair tied back, appropriate footwear. Outfits will not be overly revealing and will cover upper arms and we ask that tattoos are covered up. Clothes will not display any offensive or political slogans.

14. Conduct outside of work

Staff will not act in a way that would bring the school, or the teaching profession, into disrepute. This covers conduct including but not limited to relevant criminal offences, such as violence or sexual misconduct, as well as negative comments about the school on social media.

15. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually but can be revised as needed. It is approved by the Governing Body. Our Governors will ensure this code of conduct is implemented effectively, and will ensure appropriate action is taken in a timely manner to safeguard children and deal with any concerns.

16. Links with other policies

This policy links with policies including:

- Staff disciplinary procedures, which will be used if staff breach this code of conduct. It also sets out examples of what we will deem as misconduct and gross misconduct
- Staff grievance procedures
- Child protection and Safeguarding
- e-safety

17. Appendix 1

Understanding Low Level Concerns

Concerns regarding adult's behaviour may exist on a continuum from 'low-level' concerns which are concerns regarding adults that do NOT meet the threshold of harm through to allegations of harm that do meet the threshold. This does not mean that behaviours by adults towards children that cause any concern, are in any way insignificant or acceptable. However, clear evidence of harm and disclosure are often required to meet that harm threshold. It is therefore imperative that information regarding any level of concern that exists on this continuum is shared quickly and effectively.

It is also necessary that the same route of intervention is applied across the continuum and that **any** and **all** concerns are always shared directly to the Headteacher immediately. If concerns are regarding the Headteacher this should be shared directly to the Chairs of Governors.

Prevention of Low-Level Concerns/Creating a Safe Culture

As part of a whole school approach to safeguarding, The Meadows will ensure that they promote an open and transparent culture in which all concerns about all adults working in or on behalf of the school or college (including supply teachers, volunteers and contractors) are dealt with promptly and appropriately. Creating a culture in which all concerns about adults (including allegations that do not meet the harm threshold) are shared responsibly and with the right person, recorded and dealt with appropriately, is critical. If implemented correctly, this will encourage an open and transparent culture; enable our school to identify concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour early; minimise the risk of abuse; and ensure that adults working in or on behalf of the school are clear about professional boundaries and act within these boundaries, and in accordance with the ethos and values of the institution.

A safe and effective response to concerns of any nature, demonstrates a culture of taking safeguarding seriously. It also empowers and encourages the workforce to continue sharing and seeking advice from the Headteacher across the continuum of concerns and thus hopefully leading to a reduction of serious incidents.

Describing Low-Level Concerns

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 working in or on behalf of the school or college may have acted in a way that: #

- is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work/online; and
- does not meet the allegations threshold or is otherwise not considered serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO.

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;
- engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door; or,
- using inappropriate sexualised, intimidating, offensive, humiliating language.

As stated, 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.

It is crucial that any such concerns are shared responsibly and with the right person and recorded and dealt with appropriately by the Headteacher. Ensuring they are dealt with effectively should also protect those working in or on behalf of the school from potential false allegations or misunderstandings.

Sharing Low-Level Concerns

Low-level concerns about a member of staff, supply staff, volunteer or contractor should be reported directly to the Headteacher. Reports about supply staff and contractors should be notified to their employers, by the Headteacher, so any potential patterns of inappropriate behaviour can be identified.

It is critical that in our school, staff feel there is a safe environment where they are encouraged and feel confident to self-refer, where, for example, they have found themselves in a situation which could be misinterpreted, might appear compromising to others, and/or on reflection they believe they have behaved in such a way that they consider falls below the expected professional standards outlined in the Staff Behaviour Policy.

Recording Low-Level Concerns

All low-level concerns will be recorded in writing, following our school's recording policy and agreed system through the staff portal. The record will include details of the concern, the context in which the concern arose, and action taken. The name of the individual sharing their concerns will also be noted, if the individual wishes to remain anonymous then this will be respected as far as reasonably possible.

These records will be kept confidential, held securely and comply with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) (see paragraph 109 for more information). Records will be reviewed so that potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified. Where a pattern of such behaviour is identified, the school will decide on a course of action, either through disciplinary procedures or where a pattern of behaviour moves from a concern to meeting the harms threshold, in which case it will be referred by the Headteacher to the LADO. Consideration will be given to whether there are wider cultural issues within the school/college that enabled the behaviour to occur and where appropriate policies will be revised, or extra training delivered to minimise the risk of it happening again. Our school will retain the information at least until the individual leaves their employment.

References

The school should only provide substantiated safeguarding allegations in references. Low level concerns will not be included in references unless they relate to issues which would normally be included in a reference, for example, misconduct or poor performance. It follows that a low-level concern which relates exclusively to safeguarding (and not to misconduct or poor performance) will not be referred to in a reference. However, where a low-level concern (or group of concerns) has met the threshold for referral to the LADO and found to be substantiated, it will be referred to in a reference.

Responding to Low-Level Concerns

It is the responsibility of the Headteacher to fact find, following the reporting of a low-level concern. If the concern has been raised via a third party, the Headteacher will collect as much evidence as possible by speaking either directly to the person who raised the concern, (unless it has been raised anonymously) or to the individual involved and any witnesses. The information collected will help to categorise the type of behaviour and determine what further action may need to be taken. All of this will be recorded along with the rationale for the decisions and action taken.

Learning from Low-Level Concerns

As stated, following any reports of low-level concerns our school will review any necessary changes to policy and practice to minimise the chance of a further concern being reported and ensure that the member of staff who reported the concern has been fully supported and empowered to share future concerns. Any changes to policy or practice will be shared with all members of the workforce via either a team meeting or enhanced training.

