



Staff Code of Conduct Policy

28 June 2023

About this Document

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History

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This document provides a guide for staff, volunteers and visitors working in the school about acceptable and desirable conduct to protect both adults and students. It refers to and complements other policies and guidance in The Vine Christian School including:
 - i. Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy including Online E-Safety
 - ii. Appointment of Staff and Safer Recruitment
 - iii. Whistleblowing Policy
 - iv. Behaviour Policy
 - v. Physical Interventions Policy
 - vi. Low Level Concerns Policy
 - vii. Guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings
 - viii. Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023
- 1.2. All school staff are role models and are in a unique position of influence and must adhere to behaviour that sets a good example to all the students within the school. As a member of a school community, each staff member has an individual responsibility to maintain their reputation and the reputation of the school, whether inside or outside working hours.
- 1.3. A culture of vigilance is critical within the school. All concerns about adults (including allegations that do not meet the harms threshold – See KCSIE) should be shared responsibly and with the right person, recorded and dealt with appropriately. An open and transparent culture will enable the school to identify concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour early; and minimise the risk of abuse. A culture of vigilance will help to 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 school.
- 1.4. Any behaviours that fall short of the guiding principles outlined in the document Guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings must be shared responsibly and with the right person. All concerns that do not meet the harm threshold must be recorded and dealt with appropriately as a low-level concern as referenced below in Keeping Children Safe in Education.
- 1.5. This Code of Conduct applies to all employees of the school. This Code of Conduct does not form part of any employees' contract of employment.

2. Setting An Example

- 2.1. All staff who work in schools set examples of behaviour and conduct which can be copied by students. Staff must therefore for example avoid using inappropriate or offensive language at all times.
- 2.2. All staff must, therefore, demonstrate high standards of conduct to encourage our pupils/students to do the same.
- 2.3. All staff must also avoid putting themselves at risk of allegations of abusive or unprofessional conduct.

- 2.4. All staff should maintain professional standards of behaviour and appropriate boundaries at all times in relationships between themselves and pupils, themselves and the parents and avoid behaviour which could be misinterpreted by others. Staff should report any such incident to the headteacher or DSL. This is as relevant in the online world as it is in the classroom; staff engaging with pupils and/or parents online have a responsibility to model safe practice at all times.
- 2.5. This Code helps all staff to understand what behaviour is and is not acceptable, regard should also be given to the disciplinary rules set out in the Schools' Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.
- 2.6. All staff are expected to familiarise themselves and comply with all school policies and procedures.

3. Safeguarding Students

- 3.1. Staff have a duty to safeguard students from abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect.
- 3.2. The duty to safeguard students includes the duty to report concerns about a student or colleague to the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) for Child Protection.
- 3.3. The school's DSL is Mrs. René Esterhuizen.
- 3.4. Staff must be familiar with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Whistleblowing Procedure.
- 3.5. Staff should treat children with respect and dignity and must not seriously demean or undermine students, their parents or carers, or colleagues.
- 3.6. Staff should not demonstrate behaviours that may be perceived as sarcasm, making jokes at the expense of students, embarrassing, or humiliating students, discriminating against, or favouring students.
- 3.7. Staff must take reasonable care of students under their supervision with the aim of ensuring their safety and welfare.

4. Safer Working Practices

- 4.1. The school has regard to the Guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings 2022 underpinning principles as follows:
 - i. The welfare of the child is paramount.
 - ii. Staff should understand their responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils.
 - iii. 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 intentions.
 - iv. Staff should work, and be seen to work, in an open and transparent way including self-reporting if their conduct or behaviour falls short of these guiding principles.
 - v. Staff should acknowledge that deliberately invented/malicious allegations are extremely rare and that all concerns should be reported and recorded.
 - vi. Staff should discuss and/or take advice promptly from the headteacher if they have acted in a way which may give rise to concern.

- vii. Staff should apply the same professional standards regardless of culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief, and sexual orientation.
- viii. 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 children.
- ix. Staff should be aware that breaches of the law and other professional guidelines could result in disciplinary action being taken against them, criminal action, and/or other proceedings including barring by the Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) from working in regulated activity, or for acts of serious misconduct prohibition from teaching by the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA).
- x. Staff and managers should continually monitor and review practice to ensure this guidance is followed.
- xi. Staff should be aware of and understand their establishment's child protection policy, arrangements for managing allegations against staff, staff behaviour policy, whistleblowing procedure and their local authority safeguarding procedures.

5. Disqualification

- 5.1. Disqualification under the Child Care Act applies to staff themselves who work in a childcare capacity, whether paid, volunteer or are on work placements.
- 5.2. Relevant staff are those working in childcare, or in a management role because they are: working with reception age children at any time; or working with children older than reception until age eight, outside school hours.
- 5.3. All staff must declare if they are disqualified under the Child Care Act.
- 5.4. Disqualification by Association applies if a person is living in the same household where another person who is disqualified lives or is employed (disqualification 'by association') as specified in regulation 9 of the 2018 regulations. Under the 2018 regulations, schools are no longer required to establish whether a member of staff providing, or employed to work in childcare, is disqualified by association.
- 5.5. However, there is now an expectation for all staff to inform the school where their relationships and associations, both within and outside of the workplace (including online), may have implications for the safeguarding of children in the school.
- 5.6. If your circumstances change you must inform the headteacher of the school, including informing them of any name changes that have not previously been declared.

6. Relationships With Students

- 6.1. Staff must declare any relationships that they may have with students outside of school; this may include mutual membership of social groups, tutoring, or family connections. Staff should not assume that the school is aware of any such connections. A declaration form may be found in appendix 1 of this document.
- 6.2. Relationships with students must be professional at all times, physical relationships with students are not permitted and may lead to a criminal conviction.

- 6.3. Contact with students must be via school authorised mechanisms. At no time should personal telephone numbers, email addresses or communication routes via personal accounts on social media platforms be used to communicate with students.
- 6.4. If contacted by a student by an inappropriate route, staff should report the contact to the Headteacher immediately.

7. Student Development

- 7.1. Staff must comply with school policies and procedures that support the well-being and development of pupils/students.
- 7.2. Staff must co-operate and collaborate with colleagues and with external agencies where necessary to support the development of students.
- 7.3. Staff must follow reasonable instructions that support the development of students.

8. Honesty And Integrity

- 8.1. Staff must maintain high standards of honesty and integrity in their work. This includes the handling and claiming of money and the use of school property and facilities.
- 8.2. All staff must comply with the Bribery Act 2010. A person may be guilty of an offence of bribery under this act if they offer, promise, or give financial advantage or other advantage to someone; or if they request, agree, or accept, or receive a bribe from another person. If you believe that a person has failed to comply with the Bribery Act, you should refer to the Whistleblowing procedure for schools. For further information see the Model Anti Bribery Policy for Schools available on the Grid.
- 8.3. Gifts from suppliers or associates (including students or parents) of the school must be declared to the Headteacher, apart from "one off" token gifts from students or parents. Personal gifts from individual members of staff to students are inappropriate and could be misinterpreted and may lead to disciplinary action. A record will be kept of all gifts received.

9. Conduct Outside of Work

- 9.1. Staff must not engage in conduct outside work which could seriously damage the reputation and standing of the school or the employee's own reputation or the reputation of other members of the school community.
- 9.2. Criminal offences that involve violence or possession or use of illegal drugs or sexual misconduct are likely to be regarded as unacceptable.
- 9.3. Staff may undertake work outside school, either paid or voluntary, if it does not conflict with the interests of the school nor be to a level which may contravene the working time regulations or affect an individual's work performance in the school.

10. E-Safety and Internet Use

- 10.1. Staff must exercise caution when using information technology and be aware of the risks to themselves and others. Regard should be always given to the schools' E-Safety and ICT Acceptable Use Policy both inside and outside of work.
- 10.2. Staff must not engage in inappropriate use of social network sites which may bring themselves, the school, school community or employer into disrepute. Staff should ensure that they adopt suitably high security settings on any personal profiles they may have.
- 10.3. Staff should exercise caution in their use of all social media or any other web-based presence that they may have, including written content, videos or photographs, and views expressed either directly or by 'liking' certain pages or posts established by others. This may also include the use of dating websites where staff could encounter students either with their own profile or acting covertly.
- 10.4. Contact with students should only be made via the use of school email accounts or telephone equipment when appropriate.
- 10.5. Photographs/stills or video footage of students should only be taken using school equipment, for purposes authorised by the school. Any such use should always be transparent and only occur where parental consent has been given. The resultant files from such recording or taking of photographs must be stored in accordance with the school's procedures on school equipment.

11. Confidentiality

- 11.1. Where staff have access to confidential information about students or their parents or carers, staff must not reveal such information except to those colleagues who have a professional role in relation to the student.
- 11.2. All staff are likely at some point to witness actions which need to be confidential. For example, where a student is bullied by another student (or by a member of staff), this needs to be reported and dealt with in accordance with the appropriate school procedure. It must not be discussed outside the school, including with the student's parent or carer, nor with colleagues in the school except with a senior member of staff with the appropriate authority to deal with the matter.
- 11.3. However, staff have an obligation to share with the Headteacher or the school's Designated Senior Person any information which gives rise to concern about the safety or welfare of a student. Staff must never promise a student that they will not act on information that they are told by the pupil/student.

12. Dress And Appearance

- 12.1. All staff must dress in a manner that is compliant with professional standards and promotes a positive professional image.
- 12.2. Staff should dress in a manner that is not likely to be viewed as offensive, revealing or sexually provocative.
- 12.3. Staff should dress in a manner that does not distract, cause embarrassment or give rise to misunderstanding.

12.4. Staff should dress in manner that is absent from political or other contentious slogans, and in a way that is not considered discriminatory.

12.5. In online engagement, clothing should be similar to the clothing worn on a normal school day.

13. Disciplinary Action

13.1. Staff should be aware that a failure to comply with this Code of Conduct could result in disciplinary action including but not limited to dismissal.

14. Compliance

14.1. All staff must complete the form in appendix 2 to confirm they have read, understood, and agreed to comply with the code of conduct. This form should then be signed and dated.

15. Professional Responsibilities

15.1. When using any form of ICT, including the Internet, in school and outside school:

15.2. For your own protection we advise that you:

- i. Ensure all electronic communication with students, parents, carers, staff, and others are compatible with your professional role and in line with school policies.
- ii. Do not talk about your professional role in any capacity when using social media such as Facebook and You Tube.
- iii. Do not put online any text, image, sound, or video that could upset or offend any member of the whole school community or be incompatible with your professional role.
- iv. Use school ICT systems and resources for all school business. This includes your school email address, school mobile phone and school video camera.
- v. Do not disclose any passwords and ensure that personal data (such as data held on MIS software) is kept secure and used appropriately.
- vi. Only take images of students and/or staff for professional purposes, in accordance with school policy and with the knowledge of the school leadership team.
- vii. Do not browse, download, upload, or distribute any material that could be considered offensive, illegal, or discriminatory.
- viii. Ensure that your online activity, both in school and outside school, will not bring the school or professional role into disrepute.
- ix. Emails should be checked daily, as a minimum on working days or every other day if one day is particularly busy.
- x. You have a duty to report any e-Safety incident which may impact on you, your professionalism, or the school.

16. Low Level Concerns

16.1. Staff are expected to report concerns, no matter how small, about their own behaviour or that of another member of staff, volunteer, supply teacher, contractor or other person working in the school.

16.2. A low-level concern is any concern, no matter how small, even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt', that a person working in or on behalf of the school may have acted in a way that:

- i. Is inconsistent with the "Guidance for safer working practice", including inappropriate conduct outside of work, and
- ii. Does not meet the allegations threshold or is otherwise not considered serious enough to make a referral to the LADO.

16.3. Reporting low-level concerns:

- i. Where a low-level concern has been identified this will be reported as soon as possible to the headteacher. However, it is never too late to share a low-level concern if this has not already happened.
- ii. Where the headteacher is not available, the information will be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (i.e., the most senior member of the SLT acting in this role).
- iii. Low-level concerns about the Designated Safeguarding Lead will be reported to the headteacher and those about the headteacher will be reported to the safeguarding governor.
- iv. Where the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the headteacher are the same person, all concerns will go directly to the safeguarding governor.
- v. Where the low-level concern has been reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, they will inform the headteacher of the details as soon as possible.

17. Key Dates for The Plan

Priority	Date	Action
Update relationships with students outside of work declaration	May 23	All new staff, volunteers, governors, and trustees to complete updated paperwork.
Update confirmation of compliance with school Code of Conduct form.	May 23	All new staff, volunteers, governors, and trustees to complete updated paperwork.

Appendix 1

Relationships with students outside of work declaration

It is recognised that there may be circumstances whereby employees of the school are known to students outside of work. Examples include membership of churches, sports clubs, family connections, or private tutoring.

Staff must declare any relationship outside of school that they may have with students.

Employee Name	Student Name	Relationship

I can confirm that I am fully aware of the code of conduct relating to contact out of school with students in line with this policy.

If I am tutoring a student outside of school, I am aware that the following must be adhered to: -

- I emphasise to parents that this is done completely independently of the school.
- No monies come through the school at any point, informally (e.g., via the child) or formally.
- No private tutoring is to take place on the school premises.

I confirm that if these circumstances change at any time, I will complete a new form to ensure the school is aware of any relationships.

Signed

Date

Once completed, signed, and dated, please return this form to the Headteacher.

Appendix 2

Confirmation of compliance

I hereby confirm that I have read, understood, and agree to comply with the school's Code of Conduct.

Name

Position/Post Held.....

Signed

Date

Once completed, signed, and dated, please return this form to the Headteacher.