



Ark Swift
Primary Academy

STAFF CODE OF CONDUCT

2022-23

Introduction and scope

This Code of Conduct sets out the minimum standards that should apply to all staff, whether teacher or support staff (including volunteers), visitors or locums, working with pupils on and off site. This code is designed to be supportive and aims to help employees maintain professional standards of behaviour and protect themselves from misunderstanding or criticism.

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to provide a framework for safe, professional practice and effective partnerships between staff, leaders and parents/carers.

The Code does not supersede local operating guidelines, nor the need for employees to fulfil their obligations laid down in their job description, work plan and contract of employment. It does not attempt to identify every rule that exists but highlights some key rules which broadly apply to all employees.

Staff in Schools have a common law duty of care towards pupils. They also have a legal obligation to safeguard and promote the welfare and wellbeing of all pupils, whose needs must be of paramount consideration (Children Act 1989, Education Act 2002, Education and Inspections Act 2006).

Behaviour and standards

Each employee shares a responsibility for recognising the sensitivities and feelings of others, which may be different from their own but no less valid. All employees should be committed to high standards in delivering work and dealing with colleagues. This will not only be about the tasks people do, but the effect of their words, how they interact/engage with others and tackling discriminatory or inappropriate behaviour.

Employees also have a responsibility to not behave in such a way that may 'bring the reputation of the school into disrepute' outside of working hours, particularly if they live and work in the local community.

Employees have a responsibility to work with colleagues and treat them with respect. Teachers are also subject to the standards of personal and professional conduct in the Teachers' Standards.

All employees are expected, without fear of recrimination, to report to the appropriate manager any impropriety or breach of procedure. The school has a procedure for "whistle blowing" (raising a concern) to facilitate this.

Professional relationships

With pupils:

All pupils have a right to be treated with respect and dignity. When speaking to pupils, we should always consider how we would expect to be spoken to ourselves. Staff must not use any form of degrading treatment to punish or undermine a pupil. The use of sarcasm, demeaning or insensitive comments or shouting aggressively is not acceptable in any situation.

With other members of staff:

Staff are expected to act in a professional manner towards colleagues, irrespective of their relative position or status within the school.

This means:

- Speaking politely to one another
- Being approachable, friendly and welcoming to other adults in school – both staff members and visitors
- Being flexible and understanding of unexpected changes within the school day;
- Communicating clearly and honestly
- Addressing concerns openly and honestly with the person to whom the concern is addressed, whenever possible, without publicly criticising anyone
- Never publicly undermining a colleague

- Taking responsibility for our actions and being prepared to apologise when we have made mistakes
- Not deliberately discriminating or ostracising certain members of staff
- Avoiding the establishment of 'cliques' within the staff.

Appropriate dress

An individual's dress and appearance is a matter of personal choice; however, staff should ensure that they dress appropriately for a school environment and for the role they undertake, as well as setting a good example to both pupils and visitors. Any outfit worn should be smart and one that is based on safety, comfort and practicality.

Whilst it is not possible to list every possible clothing option here, it is expected that staff will dress in a way that reflects a professional appearance. The wearing of items such as sports clothing, football team clothing or items that could be deemed by others as too revealing such as short skirts, low cut tops, shorts etc should be avoided.

Staff should have particular regard to the health and safety risks involved with certain lessons i.e. P.E. / cooking and the need to dress appropriately and safely when undertaking these activities, such as wearing appropriate footwear, removing jewellery etc.

The school is committed to promoting diversity and will therefore respect individual preference in terms of customs, culture, religion and tradition.

Confidentiality and Disclosure of information

Employees should not communicate to the public, press, television or any outside agency the contents of any documents relating to the school/Ark or the proceedings of any committee meeting that is confidential information unless required by law or authorised by an appropriate manager to do so. The only exception is in the case of elected Trade Union officials acting in their official capacity. However, Trade Union representatives would be expected to raise any issues through the normal channels through the school and/or the Trust in the first instance.

Employees should not use any information obtained in the course of their employment for personal gain or benefit, nor should they pass it on to others who might use it in such a way, for example, passing dates for review of contracts for services before they are public knowledge.

Staff or Volunteers in schools must not use confidential or sensitive information about a child or their family for their own benefit or to humiliate or embarrass a child. Confidential information about pupils or the School should not be shared casually. However, information that might suggest a child is in need or at risk of significant harm must be shared with the designated person, in accordance with the safeguarding / child protection procedures.

Social contact

Staff should not establish or seek to establish any social contact with a pupil or their parents/carers (unless they are the parents of your child's classmates). Unplanned or other social contact that happens outside of the school setting should be reported to the Head Teacher. Staff should not give their personal telephone numbers or email addresses to pupils or their parents. No member of staff will enter into extra or private tuition or childcare arrangements with parents without the permission of the Headteacher. Staff should notify their line manager of any existing or previous family or social relationship with a pupil or their parents/carers.

Physical contact

When physical contact is made with pupils, it should be in response to their needs at that time, of limited duration and appropriate to their age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity and background. Physical contact should never be secretive, for the gratuity of the adult or represent a misuse of authority. Extra caution should be exercised where a child is known to have suffered previous abuse or neglect. Such experiences may sometimes make a child exceptionally needy and demanding of physical contact and staff should respond sensitively by deterring the child through helping them to understand the importance

of personal boundaries. Any extreme attention-seeking or behaviour by pupils that makes staff feel uncomfortable should be reported to a line manager. Staff supervising PE and games or providing music tuition may be required to initiate physical contact with pupils. In such cases, the principle of “limited touch” should be applied, with understanding of pupils’ sensitivities and with the pupil’s agreement. Children are entitled to respect and privacy whilst they are changing or showering after games or swimming.

All adults should clearly understand the need to maintain appropriate boundaries in their contact with pupils. Intimate relationships between children/young people and the adults who work with them will be regarded as a grave breach of trust. Allowing or encouraging a relationship to develop in a way which might lead to an inappropriate relationship is also unacceptable. Staff must understand that any breaches in the law or professional expectations might lead to criminal or disciplinary action and barring. Employees should make themselves aware of the safeguarding and behaviour management policies adopted by the school.

Infatuations

It is not unusual for pupils or, sometimes, their parents to develop infatuations or “crushes” towards trusted staff. All such situations must be responded to sensitively in order to maintain the dignity of those concerned. Any indications that this might be happening must be reported to the Headteacher. In cases where the object of such affections is unaware of the situation, this must be brought to their attention by peers/colleagues and be reported to the Headteacher at the earliest instance.

Pupils in distress

On those occasions when a pupil may be in distress and in need of comfort and reassurance, staff should ensure that they remain self-aware at all times and that their contact with the pupil is not open to misunderstanding. Such incidents must always be recorded and shared with a line manager.

Care, control and physical intervention

The school is committed to the use of positive behaviour management and staff will not use any form of physical punishment, threats, sarcasm or demeaning comments to deal with unacceptable behaviour. When children need to be restrained for their own protection or the protection of others, this must only be undertaken in accordance with the training and policy sanctioned by the Leadership Team and Governing Body. Any such incidents and physical interventions will be recorded and reported.

One to one situations

Staff working individually with children should recognise the potential vulnerability of pupils and adults in such situations and ensure that they manage these situations with regard for the safety of both the child and themselves. Individual work with pupils should not be undertaken in isolated areas or rooms where there is no external visual access. Where it is necessary to close doors for reasons of confidentiality, a colleague should be made aware of this and asked to remain vigilant.

Home Visits

All work with pupils and parents should, wherever possible, be undertaken in the school or other recognised workplace, there are however occasions, in response to urgent or specific situations where it is necessary to make one-off or regular home visits.

A risk assessment should include an evaluation of any known factors regarding the child/young person, parents and others living in the household. Following an assessment, appropriate risk management measures should be put in place before visits are agreed. Where little or no information is available, visits should not be made alone.

No child or young person should be in or invited into, the home of an adult who works with them.

Educational Visits and After-School Activities

Adults remain in a position of trust and need to ensure that their behaviour remains professional at all times and stays within clearly defined professional boundaries.

Where out of school activities include overnight stays, careful consideration needs to be given to sleeping arrangements. Children, young people, adults and parents should be informed of these prior to the start of the trip. In all circumstances, those organising trips and outings must pay careful attention to ensuring safe staff/child ratios and to the gender mix of staff especially on overnight stays.

Transporting or accompanying pupils off-site

In general, staff will not be expected to transport or accompany pupils off-site on their own. However, in the event of an emergency situation (accompanying to a hospital), this may be appropriate. If staff use their own cars for transporting pupils, they will ensure appropriate escort arrangements and that they have business use motor insurance in place.

First Aid

All first aid will be administered only by suitably trained and accredited staff except in an emergency where the illness or injury is such that to delay assistance might cause harm to the child. Children who require any form of intimate care are entitled to privacy, dignity and safety. Pupils with ongoing health problems will be treated in accordance with any Medical Plan that has been agreed with the parent and the Health Authority and only by those who have been authorised to do so by the Head Teacher. Lone members of staff should not be placed in a position where they are expected to provide any form of intimate care without the safeguard of having another colleague in the same room or area.

Curriculum

Care should be taken to abide by the School's policy on sex and relationships education and the wishes of parents. The curriculum can include or raise a subject matter, which is sexually explicit or otherwise of a sensitive nature. Care should be exercised to ensure that resource materials cannot be misinterpreted and clearly relate to the lesson plan. The curriculum can sometimes lead to unplanned discussion of sensitive subject matters. Responding to pupils' questions requires careful judgments and guidance should be sought from members of the Leadership Team, as appropriate.

Photography, videos and other creative arts

Written permission from pupils and their parents/carers must be obtained before taking photographs or films. This should be done on the standard school form. All images and films must be stored appropriately and securely only used by those authorised to do so. Staff should be able to give account of the rationale behind any images of pupils that are in their possession.

Photographs and films taken for official school use may be covered by the Data Protection Act, e.g. if the images are going to be stored with other personal data. If the photograph is taken of groups of pupils during lessons and will be used in the school prospectus then the Data Protection Act does not apply. Names of children must not be published with photographs or films.

Whilst photographic and video images can play a valuable role within the curriculum, after-school activities and to celebrate achievement, there is potential for such images and opportunities to be misused by adults with ulterior motives. Staff should be sensitive to the needs of pupils who may have been abused in this way or who appear uncomfortable when asked to participate in photography or filming.

Staff should ensure that a member of the Leadership Team is aware of the proposed use of photographic/video equipment and that this is recorded in lesson plans. Permission from pupils and their parents/carers must be obtained for the use of images of pupils for publicity purposes and, in general, names of pupils will not be published.

Safeguarding

Staff must be aware of the name of the designated person with responsibility for safeguarding pupils (and their deputy) and understand their responsibilities under the safeguarding / child protection policy. All staff have a responsibility to raise concerns about the inappropriate or worrying behaviour of a colleague: in good faith and without fear of repercussions. Staff must accept responsibility for their own actions and behaviour and avoid any conduct that might lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions. They must make a record of any incident and promptly consult their line manager. All staff are obliged to support the statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare and well-being of all pupils.

Where allegations are made about the mistreatment of a pupil by a member of staff or volunteer, the Head Teacher will follow the procedures adopted by the London Safeguarding Children Board, in consultation with relevant designated LA officers. In the case where an allegation is made against the Head Teacher, the Regional Director, will follow the above procedures.

Staff and volunteers working in schools must understand that any breaches in the law or professional expectations might lead to criminal or disciplinary action and barring.

Under the Hammersmith and Fulham Safeguarding Board requirements, staff are asked to complete a new CRB application every 3 years. Staff should in the interim period declare to the Head Teacher any caution, conviction or if bound over as soon as possible.

Whistleblowing

If employees have concerns about something that is happening at work which they believe could be unlawful conduct, financial malpractice, a concern for the welfare or safeguarding of a child or be dangerous to the public or the environment, it is important that you bring it to the school's attention. Further details can be found in the Whistleblowing policy.

Political neutrality

All employees should be politically neutral in public facing communication. Employees must not allow personal or political opinions to interfere with work or to influence school-based decisions.

Appointment and other employment matters

All employees involved in appointments should ensure that these are made on the basis of merit. It would be unlawful for an employee to make an appointment that was based on anything other than the ability of the candidate to undertake the duties of the post. The school's recruitment and selection procedure must be strictly observed. In order to avoid any possible accusation of bias, employees should not be involved in an appointment where they are related to an applicant or have a close personal relationship outside work with him or her.

Staff should make the Head Teacher aware of any personal relations with other staff members or Governors that might lead to a conflict of interests or cast doubt on the integrity of the school/trust; especially where one or other of the parties holds a management or leadership role. Similarly, employees should not be involved in decisions relating to discipline, capability, promotion or pay adjustments for any employee who is a relative, partner, close friend etc.

Relationships with the local community

Employees should always remember their responsibilities to the community they serve and ensure courteous, efficient and impartial service delivery to all groups and individuals within that community as defined by the policies of Ark.

Relationships with contractors

All relationships of a business or private nature with external contractors, or potential contractors, must be made known to the Head Teacher and properly recorded. All employees who engage or supervise contractors or who have any other official relationship with contractors and have previously had or

currently have a relationship in a private or domestic capacity with contractors, must also declare that relationship. A Declaration of Interest pro-forma is available for such notification.

Orders and contracts must be awarded on merit, by fair competition against other tenderers and no special favour should be shown to businesses or consultancies run by, for example, friends, partners or relatives, in the tendering process.

Outside commitments

Employees' off-duty hours are their own personal concern. However, employees should not take up any outside activities or employment, whether paid or unpaid, which conflicts with or reacts detrimentally to, or has such potential, to the school's/trust's interests, or which exposes themselves to a significant health risk. Some employees have contracts of employment that require them to obtain written consent from an appropriate manager to take up any outside employment. All employees should be clear about their contractual obligations and should not take up outside employment that conflicts with the school's interests or exposes themselves to a significant health risk.

Employees should follow Ark's rules on the ownership of intellectual property or copyright created during their employment. All patents, trademarks and other rights in inventions or concepts that are created or developed by employees during and arising from or related to their employment belongs to Ark, subject to any rights acquired by employees under the Patents Act 1977. Ark also owns the copyright in all work produced by employees during their employment.

Personal interests

Employees must declare to an appropriate manager any financial or non-financial interests they consider could bring about a conflict with the school's interests.

Head Teachers, Members of LGBs, Teachers and Senior managers are required to declare membership of any organisation not open to the public without formal membership and commitment of allegiance and which has secrecy about rules or membership or conduct. A Declaration of Interests pro-forma is available for such notification. All other staff are encouraged to declare such membership to an appropriate manager.

Separation of roles during tendering

Employees involved in the tendering process and dealing with contractors should be clear on the separation of client and contractor roles within the school. Head Teachers or Senior managers who have both a client and contractor responsibility must be aware of the need for accountability and openness. Employees in contractor or client units must exercise fairness and impartiality when dealing with all customers, suppliers, other contractors and sub-contractors.

Employees who are privy to confidential information on tenders or costs for either internal or external contractors, should not disclose that information to any unauthorised party or organisation.

Employees should ensure that no special favour is shown to current or recent former employees or their partners, close relatives or associates in awarding contracts to businesses or consultancies run by them or employing them in a senior or relevant managerial capacity.

Gifts and Corruption

Employees must be aware that it is a serious criminal offence for them corruptly to receive or give any gift, loan, fee, reward or advantage for doing, or not doing, anything or showing favour, or disfavour, to any person, including members of the public, in their official capacity. If an allegation is made, under the Prevention of Corruption Act 1916 an employee is deemed to have received the reward, etc, corruptly it is for the employee to demonstrate that any such rewards have not been corruptly obtained.

However, it is acknowledged that a teacher may, owing to a long-standing tradition, often be given small tokens by pupils, parents and or carers at certain times of the year.

Personal gifts should not be given by staff to pupils and any reward to a child should be consistent with the school's behaviour policy, recorded and not based upon favouritism.

Employees should not accept significant personal gifts from contractors and external suppliers, although the school does allow employees to keep items of token value such as pens, diaries, etc.

Employees must ensure that they use public funds entrusted to them in a responsible and lawful manner. They should strive to ensure value for money to the local community and to avoid legal challenge to the school. All employees should ensure that they have an appropriate awareness of the school's financial regulations and that their actions fully comply with those regulations.

Hospitality

Employees should only accept offers of hospitality if there is a genuine need to impart information or represent the school in the community. Offers to attend purely social, entertainment or sporting functions should be accepted only when these are part of the life of the community or where the school should be seen to be represented. All such offers of hospitality should be properly authorised and recorded by the relevant manager.

When hospitality has to be declined those making the offer should be courteously but firmly informed of the procedures and standards operating within the school.

When receiving authorised hospitality, employees should be particularly sensitive as to its timing in relation to decisions which the School may be taking affecting or potentially affecting those providing the hospitality.

Acceptance by employees of hospitality through attendance at relevant conferences and courses is acceptable where it is clear the hospitality is corporate rather than personal, where the Head Teacher gives consent in advance and where the Head Teacher is satisfied that any purchasing decisions are not compromised. Where visits to inspect equipment, etc, are required, employees should ensure that the school meets the cost of such visits to avoid jeopardising the integrity of subsequent purchasing decisions.

Sponsorship – giving and receiving

Where an outside organisation wishes to sponsor or is seeking to sponsor a school activity, whether by invitation, tender, negotiation or voluntarily, the basic conventions concerning acceptance of gifts or hospitality apply. Particular care must be taken when dealing with contractors or potential contractors.

Where the school wishes to sponsor an event or service neither an employee nor any partner, spouse or relative must benefit from such sponsorship in a direct way without there being full disclosure to the Head Teacher of any such interest. Similarly, where the school through sponsorship, grant aid, financial or other means, gives support in the community, employees should ensure that impartial advice is given and that there is no conflict of interest involved.

Equality issues

The Trust has a duty to promote community cohesion and members of that local community, customers and other employees have a right to be treated with fairness. All employees should ensure that they are aware of the School's policies relating to equality issues and managing diversity and that all such policies are complied with fully, both in letter and spirit.

It is a personal responsibility of all employees to take all necessary steps to ensure that they do not discriminate against members of the local community, customers or other employees on the grounds of race, colour, ethnic and national origins, sex, marital status, domestic circumstances, sexual orientation, disability, age, class, ethical beliefs, basic skills or trade union activity. All employees must also do whatever is reasonable and appropriate to promote equality of opportunity in whatever way and whenever they can.

Use of IT including Social Media

Staff must not use social networking sites to post material which damages the reputation of the school or which causes concern about their suitability to work with children and young people. Those who post

material which could be considered as inappropriate could render themselves vulnerable to criticism or allegations of misconduct or disciplinary action.

When using social networking sites staff must take care to protect their privacy and protect themselves from risk of allegations in relation to inappropriate relationships.

Staff must not develop or maintain online relationships with parents or pupils through social networking sites, instant messaging or other media, whether this is through school or personal IT facilities.

Staff must only use their school email account when communicating electronically for work purposes. Staff must not give their personal details such as home/mobile phone number, home e-mail address to parents or pupils.

Staff should not use personal phones and cameras to photograph pupils.

Under no circumstances should adults in school access inappropriate images. Deliberately accessing pornography on school equipment will be treated as gross misconduct and may be considered a criminal offence. Accessing indecent images of children on the internet, and making, storing or disseminating such material, is illegal and is likely lead to criminal prosecution and may result in barring from work with children and young people. The school has a separate policy on the on the acceptable use of the internet, electronic communication and security. Please refer to this document for further information and guidance.

Further Information

This Code of Conduct cannot cover every eventuality. Its purpose is to alert staff to some of the matters about which queries are received. It does not replace the general requirements of the law, common sense and good conduct.

If staff are uncertain about what to do in a particular situation or require further information or guidance on the appropriate course of action to take in any situation, they must seek advice from the Headteacher before taking any action.

Appendix

TEACHERS' STANDARDS 2012

Part Two: 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.