



Abbey Court School

LOCATION: SCHOOL HANDBOOK, SECTION 2, DOCUMENT 18

EMPLOYEE CODE OF CONDUCT

The Governing Body of Abbey Court School have formally adopted Medway Local Authorities Disciplinary Procedure for its own use.

This policy was last reviewed to ensure appropriateness and relevance in:

August 2023

Model Policy

Employee Code of Conduct

For adoption by School and Academies

Medway's HR Schools team undertakes to check and review this model policy annually, and where necessary, update it to comply with current legislation and good HR practices.

All trade unions and professional associations formally recognised by Medway Council have been consulted in the development of this policy.

An equality impact assessment will be carried out to ensure that no groups or individuals with protected characteristics are disadvantaged by a policy or practice.

Latest revision – **May 2023**

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INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The following Code of Conduct for this school's employees has been negotiated with trade unions and has been adopted by the Governing Body.
- 1.2 For ease the term 'employee' is used throughout this policy however includes workers and volunteers.
- 1.3 In addition to this policy, all staff employed under Teachers' Terms and Conditions of Employment have a statutory obligation to adhere to the '[Teachers' Standards](#)' and in relation to this policy, Part 2 of the Teachers' Standards - Personal and Professional Conduct.
- 1.4 Employees should be aware that a failure to comply with the Code of Conduct, subject to investigation, could result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal, as set out in our disciplinary procedures. A copy of the Disciplinary Policy can be found in the policies section of the school website.
- 1.5 This Code is based on the Seven Principles of Public Life, which are set out below. All employees should have regard to these principles to ensure compliance with the Code of Conduct.
- 1.6 The Seven Principles of Public Life apply to everyone who works as a public officeholder. This includes people who are elected or appointed to public office, nationally and locally, and all people appointed to work in education. Therefore, these seven principles apply to all staff working in schools.

The Seven Principles of Public Life	
Selflessness	Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.
Integrity	Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.
Objectivity	Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.
Accountability	Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.
Openness	Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for doing so.
Honesty	Holders of public office should be truthful.
Leadership	Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly

	support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.
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2 PURPOSE, SCOPE AND PRINCIPLES

- 2.1 This Code of Conduct is designed to give clear guidance on the standards of behaviour that all employees at this school are expected to observe. The school will notify employees of this Code and the expectations therein.
- 2.2 School employees are in a unique position of influence and will act as role models for pupils by consistently demonstrating high standards of behavior, whether inside or outside of working hours. We expect all members this school community to act with personal and professional integrity, **respecting the safety and wellbeing of others.**
- 2.3 Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that the Code is as detailed as possible, situations may arise which are not specifically covered in the Code. Where this happens, employees are expected to use their professional judgement and act in the best interests of the school and its pupils.
- 2.4 This Code of Conduct applies to:
- all employees, workers and volunteers who are engaged by the school, including the Headteacher;
 - all employees in units or bases that are attached to the school, including volunteers.
- 2.5 The Code of Conduct does not apply to:
- employees of external contractors and providers of services (e.g. contract cleaners, school meal providers etc.); [Such employees will be subject to the relevant Code Conduct of their employing body]
 - employees who have transferred to the employment of the school under TUPE regulations with a contractual Employee Code of Conduct.

3 BREACHES OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT

- 3.1 Investigations of alleged breaches of this Code will be dealt with under the school's disciplinary procedure. A copy of the Disciplinary Policy can be found in the policies section of the school website.
- 3.2 Failure to meet these standards of behaviour and conduct, following investigation, may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal. Further information on examples of misconduct and gross misconduct is contained within appendix 1 of the school's disciplinary procedure. These lists are not exhaustive; each disciplinary case will be viewed on its own merits as to whether it constitutes gross or minor misconduct.

- 3.3 If employees are in any doubt whether they may be in breach of this Code they should seek advice from the Headteacher. In the case of the Headteacher, advice should be sought from the Governing Body.

4 WHISTLEBLOWING (PROTECTED DISCLOSURES)

- 4.1 If an employee becomes aware of any conduct that is, or potentially may be, a breach of the Code or that it could bring the school into disrepute, it should be reported to the Headteacher (or Governing Body if it is in regard to the Headteacher) under the school's Whistleblowing Policy.

5 GENERAL CONDUCT GUIDELINES

- 5.1 Employees are expected to treat other colleagues, pupils and external contacts, such as parents, with dignity, fairness, equality and respect.
- 5.2 Employees must not misuse or misrepresent their position, qualifications or experience or act in a way that would bring the reputation of the school, or the teaching profession, into disrepute. Such behaviour may lead to disciplinary action, subject to investigation.
- 5.3 All employees working with children will adopt high standards of personal conduct in order to maintain the confidence and respect of the public and to provide a role model.
- 5.4 Employees are to treat their colleagues and others with dignity and respect at all times. Employees should respect managerial authority and undertake reasonable management instructions.
- 5.5 Any conduct or behaviour which places a child or children at risk of harm, whether at school or in their personal life is unacceptable. This includes:
- behaving in a way that has harmed a child or may have harmed a child and/or;
 - possibly committing a criminal offence against or related to a child and/or;
 - behaving towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she may pose a risk of harm to children and/or;
 - behaving in a manner which would lead others to question their suitability to work with children and/or;
 - putting themselves at risk of allegations of abusive behaviour and/or unprofessional conduct.

Such behaviour will be reported to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) in accordance with KCSIE and will be investigated in accordance with the school's disciplinary policy.

- 5.6 It is impossible to provide a definitive list of what is or is not acceptable conduct or behaviour but, in addition to paragraph 5.5, below are a few examples of what is unacceptable:
- (i) Discriminating against others i.e. treating others differently (especially less favourably) on the grounds of their gender, race, colour, ethnic or national origin,

disability, marital status, family commitments, sexual orientation, age, HIV status, religious or political beliefs, social class, trade union activity.

- (ii) making, or encouraging others to make, unprofessional personal comments which are offensive, derogatory, demeaning or humiliating to others;
- (iii) Acts of fraud or corruption or the use of school resources for personal gain or the gain of others.
- (iv) Disclosing information of a personal nature about another person without their permission.
- (v) Any behaviour that may demean, distress or offend others including behaviour of a sexist or racist nature, or the use of sexual or suggestive remarks.
- (vi) The use of threatening or intimidating behaviour, verbal abuse or use of inappropriate language, or any threat of or act of violence.
- (vii) Any conduct or behaviour which is unethical and/or would bring the school or its employees into disrepute.
- (viii) Covert recording of any meeting or discussion, where prior permission has not been obtained for example, as a reasonable adjustment, is also explicitly prohibited.

Any breach or evidence of any of the above, following investigation, will be grounds for formal disciplinary action.

6 SAFEGUARDING PUPILS/STUDENTS

- 6.1 All employees are responsible for and have a duty to safeguard pupils/students which includes:
- protecting children from maltreatment;
 - preventing the impairment of children's mental and physical health or development;
 - ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and
 - taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes
- 6.2 The duty to safeguard pupils/students is set out in [Keeping Children Safe In Education \(KCSIE\)](#) and includes the duty to report any concerns about a pupil/student's welfare to the school's Designated Senior Person (DSP) for Child Protection often known as the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), or a deputy.
- 6.3 The school's DSL is *Vicky Aspin*.....
- 6.4 Employees should be provided with personal copies of the school's Child Protection/Safeguarding Policy and Whistleblowing Policy and [KCSIE](#), employees should be familiar with these documents and confirm they have read Part One as well as other sections indicated in the statutory guidance.

- 6.5 Employees must not demean or undermine pupils, their parents or carers, or colleagues.
- 6.6 Employees must take reasonable care of pupils/students under their supervision with the aim of ensuring their safety and welfare.
- 6.7 Employees must inform the Headteacher immediately if their family/children are subject to Children's Social Services intervention.
- 6.8 Employees must inform the Headteacher immediately if they, or a close family member or household member, are being investigated, or have been investigated by the police or children's social services in connection with a child protection/ safeguarding allegation outside of the school. In the case of a Headteacher, the matter should be reported immediately to the Governing Body.
- 6.9 Employees are encouraged to report incidents where they may have found themselves in a situation which could be misinterpreted, might appear compromising to others, and/or on reflection they consider they have behaved in such a way that falls below the expected professional standards.
- 6.10 Concerns about behaviours that are inconsistent with the Staff Code of Conduct and those that do not meet the harm threshold, as set out in [KCSIE](#), may be considered 'low level concerns'. Low-level concerns may 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;
 - using inappropriate sexualised, intimidating or offensive language; or-
 - humiliating children.
- Such behaviours are not appropriate.
- 6.11 Employees should report any low-level concerns to the Headteacher. The purpose of low-level concern reporting is to create and embed a culture of openness, trust, and transparency in which the school's values and expected behaviour set out in this Staff Code of Conduct are lived, monitored, and reinforced constantly by all staff.
- 6.12 The school will support employees in correcting unprofessional behaviour, however investigation findings may result in disciplinary action being taken in accordance with the school's disciplinary policy.

7 PUPIL/STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

7.1 Employees must comply with school policies and procedures that support the well-being and development of pupils/students.

Staff Handbook:

- Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy
- Safeguarding
- Bereavement Policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy

Curriculum Handbook:

- Health Education Policy
- Careers Education and Guidance Policy
- Relationships and Sex Education Policy
- Healthy Schools Policy
- Learning Policy
- Single Equality Scheme

- Home School Agreement

7.2 Employees must co-operate and collaborate with colleagues and with external agencies where necessary to support the development of pupils/students.

7.3 Employees must follow reasonable management instructions that support the development of pupils/students.

8 HONESTY, INTEGRITY, EQUALITY AND RESPECT

8.1 Employees 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 Employees are expected to maintain records which are accurate. The deliberate falsification of documents is wholly unacceptable and could constitute gross misconduct. Further information is available within the School's Disciplinary Procedure.

8.3 **Criminal actions** - Any employee who receives or is subject to a conviction, caution, ban, reprimand or final warning resulting from police action or who are arrested or convicted in relation to a criminal offence, or pending prosecution, be it in or outside work, **must** inform the Headteacher (the Governing Body if the Headteacher) immediately.

8.4 In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, show tolerance of and respect for the rights of others. Employees must 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.

9 CONDUCT OUTSIDE WORK

- 9.1 Staff will not act in a way outside work that could bring the school, the teaching profession, or other members of the school community into disrepute.
- 9.2 In particular, relevant criminal offences that involve violence or possession or use of illegal drugs or sexual misconduct are likely to be regarded as unacceptable.
- 9.3 Employees must exercise caution when using information technology and social media and be aware of the risks to themselves and others.
- 9.4 Employees must not engage in inappropriate use of social network sites which may bring themselves, the school/, school community or employer into disrepute.
- 9.5 Employees may only undertake work outside the school, either paid or voluntary, subject to prior approval from the Headteacher, provided that 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. The Headteacher must be notified of any such work being undertaken.

10 CONFIDENTIALITY

- 10.1 Where employees have access to confidential information about pupils/students or their parents or carers, they must not reveal such information except to those colleagues who have a professional role in relation to the pupil/student.
- 10.2 Employees may at some point witness actions which need to be confidential. For example, where a pupil/student is bullied by another pupil/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 pupil/student's parent or carer, nor with colleagues in the school except with a senior member of staff with the appropriate role and authority to deal with the matter.
- 10.3 However, employees have an obligation to share with their line manager or the school's Designated Senior Person any information which gives rise to concern about the safety or welfare of a pupil/student. Employees must **never** promise a pupil/student that they will not act on information that they are told by the pupil/student.

11 APPLICATIONS FOR POSTS AND OTHER EMPLOYMENT MATTERS

- 11.1 Any decisions relating to new appointments or promotion, or any decision that affects someone's employment status (for example pay adjustments, access to training, matters relating to discipline or capability), should be made on merit and not on the basis of any other consideration.
- 11.2 Having a close personal or professional relationship with an applicant (internal or external) or with someone whose employment status is being reviewed could lead to accusations of bias, especially if there is involvement in any discussions relating to their application or review. Employees should make the relationship known to the Headteacher or, in the case of the Headteacher to the Governing Body.

11.3 **Declarations** – Employees should ensure that any information provided is correct and honestly given. When applying for a new post they may be asked to provide specific information about their prior work, personal health and/or criminal convictions and are expected to declare that the information is complete, truthful and accurate.

11.4 **Criminal records** - Having an existing criminal conviction need not affect anyone successfully applying for a post within the school or their promotion prospects. Employees must declare any convictions that are not “spent” as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act, except those which are ‘protected’ under Police Act 1997 – Part V and the amendments to the Exception Order 1975 (2013 and 2020). Some posts are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act in which case all convictions must be declared, and this will be made clear to employees when they apply for the post. Further information can be found in the Employment of Ex-Offenders Policy, which can be found in the Staff Handbook.

12 HEALTH AND SAFETY

12.1 All employees have a statutory duty to maintain a safe working environment and to take reasonable care to ensure the personal health and safety of themselves and any others who may be affected by their work activities. Because the consequences of poor health and safety can potentially be very serious. There is a duty on all employees to abide by Health and Safety regulations, for example following instructions on warning signs or not causing interference with essential safety equipment such as fire alarms and fire extinguishers.

13 USE OF PREMISES, EQUIPMENT & COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS

13.1 School equipment and systems (e.g. phone, email and computers) are available only for school-related activities – **they should not be used for another job/ personal use** unless this has been authorised by the Headteacher. Where Trades Union facility arrangements exist, recognised Trades Unions representatives may use school equipment to discharge their duties.

13.2 **Illegal, inappropriate or unacceptable use of school equipment or communication systems will be investigated and may be dealt with under the Disciplinary Policy. This may result in disciplinary action** and in serious cases could lead to an employee's dismissal. This list of prohibited use is not exhaustive but includes;

- creating/sending/forwarding any message that would be considered inappropriate / unacceptable.
- committing or implying commitment to any contractual arrangements.
- access to or publication of illegal, offensive, unacceptable or inappropriate or
- non-work related material.
- any illegal activities.
- posting confidential information about the school and/or other staff, children or parents.
- gambling or gaming.
- unauthorised use of school facilities (or employee's personal IT equipment), for personal use during the employee's working time.

- Allowing pupils to use school facilities (or employee's own laptop or mobile) to access inappropriate websites and content.

13.3 Employees who are unsure if something they receive or propose to do might breach this policy should seek advice from the Headteacher.

13.4 The school has the right to monitor e-mails, phone-calls, internet activity or document production if there is a legitimate business purpose (e.g. to detect misuse, protect systems from viruses and to investigate suspected fraud and/or child protection offences).

13.5 Personal equipment – employees must not use their own personal equipment such as mobile phones or cameras to make recordings of pupils, parents or other employees.

13.6 This policy should be read in conjunction with the School's E-Safety Policy the Computing Policy, which can be found on the School website.

14 SOCIAL NETWORKING WEBSITES, SOCIAL CONTACT & E-SAFETY

14.1 Employees working in schools **should not seek or establish relationships with children/parents** through social networking sites.

14.2 Internal email systems should only be used in accordance with the school's usage policy. Email communications can be legally binding and should be used in a responsible and professional manner. Employees should not use email to send messages, which are defamatory or divulge confidential information or that could be seen as offensive or obscene.

14.3 Employees are strongly advised, in their own interests, to take steps **to ensure that their personal data is protected** from anybody who does not have permission to access it.

14.4 This means that employees should:

- refrain from identifying themselves as working for the school in a way which has the effect of bringing the school into disrepute.
- not identify other staff or children without their consent.
- not make any defamatory remarks about the school, its staff, children, parents or any other school community members.
- not disclose data or information about the school, employees or, children that could breach the Data Protection Act 2018 for example, posting photographs or images of children or young people.
- not allow pupils to access their personal social networking accounts.
- ensure that personal social networking sites are set as private, and pupils are never listed as approved contacts.
- never access the social networking sites of pupils.

- not give their personal contact details to children including their mobile telephone number.
- not use internet or web-based communication channels to send personal messages to a child/young person.

Note: Employees with children in the school are exempt from the last three bullet points where it directly relates to the parental supervision of their child(ren) or child(ren) with whom an employee has parental responsibility.

14.5 Employees who work with children should not seek to have social contact with the families of children they work with, unless the reason for this contact has been firmly established and agreed with senior leaders.

14.6 Failure to comply with the guidelines on employee use of social networking sites may lead to disciplinary action being initiated, which may include an investigation and may be dealt with under the Disciplinary Policy.

14.7 This policy should be read in conjunction with the School's Safeguarding Policy, E-Safety Policy, Computing Policy and Data Protection Policy.

15 CONTACT WITH THE MEDIA

15.1 Employees should not have contact with the media without the permission of the Headteacher. Any member of staff who receives a request for information or comment from any form of media, must refer the matter to the Headteacher and the Governing Body should be consulted.

15.2 Employees must not leak information to the media either directly or by careless comment. Any such leaks to the media will be considered a disciplinary offence and will be investigated.

16 GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY

16.1 Employees must not accept significant personal gifts from pupils, parents, contractors and outside suppliers, other than insignificant tokens such as pens or diaries or small festive/end of term gifts.

16.2 Personal gifts from individual members of staff to students are inappropriate and could be misinterpreted, so should be avoided.

16.3 Gifts from suppliers or associates of the school must be declared to the Headteacher, with the exception of "one off" token gifts from students or parents.

16.4 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 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. They must be properly authorised and recorded.

16.5 When hospitality has to be declined the person offering it should be courteously but firmly informed of the procedures and standards operating within the school.

16.6 When considering whether or not to accept hospitality, employees must be sensitive to the timing of decisions and the letting of contracts for which a provider may be bidding. Employees must never accept hospitality from a contractor during a tendering period.

16.7 Acceptance by employees of hospitality whilst in attendance at relevant conferences and courses is acceptable if it is clear that:

- the hospitality is for the school rather than personal,
- if the school gives consent in advance, and
- if the school is satisfied that any purchasing decisions are not compromised.

16.8 Where visits are required to inspect equipment etc., employees must ensure that the school meets the cost of such visits to avoid jeopardising the integrity of subsequent purchasing decisions.

Recording offers of gifts or hospitality - To protect the school and individuals from any accusation of bias, and regardless of whether or not a gift or hospitality is accepted, all offers must be recorded in the school's hospitality/gift reporting book.