

Signhills Academy

Staff Code of Conduct



Approved by:	Governing Body	Date: Summer 2025
Next review due by:	Summer 2026	

This code of conduct will be reviewed annually by the SLT but can be revised as needed. It will be approved by the governing body. The governing body 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.

This policy aims to set and maintain the standards of conduct that we expect all staff to follow.

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 all staff to also act with personal and professional integrity, respecting the safety and wellbeing of others.

Staff are accountable for the way in which they: exercise authority; manage risk; use resources; and safeguard children. Pupils have a right to be safe and to be treated with respect and dignity. It follows that trusted adults are expected to take reasonable steps to ensure their safety and wellbeing. Failure to do so may be regarded as professional misconduct. Therefore, 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.

General obligations

Staff set an example to pupils. They will:

- Maintain high standards of conduct, attendance and punctuality
- Promote and support the implementation of academy policies and routines
- Ensure that their language is always appropriate for the audience
- Treat pupils and others with dignity and respect
- Promote and support positive relationships with parents and the wider community
- Model 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

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 safeguarding policy and procedures, the Prevent initiative, and other relevant policies (such as the Whistleblowing Policy) to ensure that they are aware of the processes to follow if they have concerns about a child or the behaviour of a member of staff, governor, volunteer or visitor.

Our safeguarding policy and procedures, along with all other academy policies, are available on the academy website. New staff will also be given copies on arrival.

Making professional judgements

There will be rare occasions and circumstances in which staff have to make decisions or take action in the best interest of a pupil where no guidance exists. Individuals are expected to make judgements about their behaviour in order to secure the best interests and welfare of the pupils in their charge and, in so doing, will be seen to be acting reasonably. Staff members should always consider whether their actions are warranted, proportionate, safe and applied equitably.

Where no specific guidance exists staff members must ensure that they;

- discuss the circumstances that informed their action, or their proposed action, with the headteacher or, where appropriate, the school's designated safeguarding lead. This will help to ensure that the safest practices are employed and reduce the risk of actions being misinterpreted
- always discuss any misunderstanding, accidents or threats with the Headteacher or designated safeguarding lead
- always record discussions and actions taken with their justifications on CPOMs

Power and positions of trust and authority

As a result of their knowledge, position and/or the authority invested in their role, all those working with children in our school are in a position of trust in relation to all pupils on the roll. The relationship between an adult and the children they are working with is one in which the adult has a position of power or influence. It is vital for adults to understand this power; that the relationship cannot be one between equals and the responsibility they must exercise as a consequence.

All staff members must ensure that they **do not**;

- use their position to gain access to information for their own advantage and/or a pupil's or family's detriment
- use their power to intimidate, threaten, coerce or undermine pupils
- use their status and standing to form or promote relationships with pupils which are of a sexual nature, or which may become so

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 must not be exchanged between staff and pupils. This includes social media profiles.

Gifts, rewards, favouritism and exclusion

The academy has a policy in place to ensure that staff members do not give or receive gifts or hospitality that might be construed as a bribe by others, or lead the giver to expect preferential treatment. There are occasions when pupils or parents wish to pass small tokens of appreciation to staff; e.g., at Christmas and this is acceptable. Equally, staff may wish to give small gifts to pupils on occasion. However, it is unacceptable to give or receive gifts on a regular basis or of any significant value.

All staff members must ensure that they;

- understand their organisation's relevant policies, eg behaviour policy, gifts & hospitality policy
- inform the headteacher of any gifts or hospitality received or given in situations which may be misconstrued
- only give gifts to a pupil as part of an agreed reward system or,
- when giving gifts other than as above, ensure that these are of insignificant value and given to all pupils in an identifiable group equally (eg a class, club members)
- when selecting children for teams, jobs or privileges, do so in a fair, transparent and justifiable manner
- do not behave in a manner which is either favourable or unfavourable to individual pupils

Infatuations

All staff members need to recognise that it is not uncommon for pupils to develop an infatuation towards adults in school. They should make every effort to ensure that their own behaviour cannot be brought into question, does not appear to encourage this and be aware that such infatuations may carry a risk of their words or actions being misinterpreted. This includes interactions with older children attending on work experience for example.

All staff members must ensure that they;

- report any indications (verbal, written or physical) that suggest a pupil may be infatuated with a member of staff
- always maintain professional boundaries

Social contact outside of the workplace

It is acknowledged that staff members may have genuine friendships and social contact with parents of pupils, wholly independent of their professional relationship.

All staff members must ensure that they;

- are mindful when planning social contact with pupils or parents of how these events may be perceived
- advise the headteacher of any regular social contact they have with a pupil which could give rise to concern
- refrain from sending personal communication related to their work or the work of the school to pupils or parents
- inform the headteacher of any requests or arrangements where parents wish to use their services outside of the workplace e.g., babysitting, tutoring

Communication with children or families (including via technology)

Staff members should ensure that they establish safe and responsible online behaviours. They should not request or respond to any personal information from children other than that which may be necessary in their professional role. They should ensure that their communications are open and transparent and avoid any communication which could be interpreted as 'grooming behaviour'.

All staff members must ensure that they;

- do not seek to communicate/make contact or respond to contact with pupils outside of the purposes of their work
- do not give out their personal details
- follow their school's acceptable use policy and online safety guidance
- do not discuss or share information relating to children/ parents / carers on social media platforms not authorised by the school.
- Inform the headteacher if children attempt to contact or correspond with them online outside of the school's systems.

Confidentiality

Staff members may have access to personal information about pupils and their families which must be kept confidential at all times and only shared when legally permissible to do so and in the interest of the child. Records should only be shared with those who have a legitimate professional need to see them.

All staff members must ensure that they;

- treat information they receive about pupils and families in a discreet and confidential manner
- seek advice from a senior member of staff if they are in any doubt about sharing information they hold or which has been requested of them
- are clear about when information can/ must be shared and in what circumstances
- know the procedures for responding to allegations against staff and to whom any concerns or allegations should be reported
- keep electronic systems and devices where personal information is recorded (or accessed) secure

Conduct outside of work

Staff will not act in a way that would bring the school or, for those employed on School Teachers Pay & Conditions, the teaching profession into disrepute. This covers conduct including but not limited to relevant criminal offences, such as violence or sexual misconduct, potentially illegal behaviour, as well as negative comments about the school on social media.

Standards of behaviour

All staff must maintain high standards of honesty and integrity in their role in order to secure public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of children. They should adopt high standards of personal conduct in order to maintain confidence and respect of the general public and those with whom they work.

All staff members must ensure that they **do not**;

- behave in a manner which would lead any reasonable person to question their suitability to work with children or to act as an appropriate role model
- make, or encourage others to make sexual remarks to, or about, a pupil, member of staff or visitor
- use inappropriate language to, or in the presence of, pupils
- discuss their personal or sexual relationships with, or in the presence of, pupils
- make (or encourage others to make) unprofessional personal comments which scapegoat, demean, discriminate or humiliate, or might be interpreted as such

All staff members must ensure that they;

- inform the headteacher of any cautions, convictions, or relevant orders accrued during their employment, and / or if they are charged with a criminal offence
- be aware that their own behaviour, and the behavior of those with whom they have a relationship or association, or others in their personal lives, may impact on their work with children
- inform the headteacher of any name changes that they have not previously declared

Physical contact

There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for staff to have physical contact with children. Some pupils are more comfortable with touch than others and/or may be more comfortable with touch from some adults than others. Staff should listen, observe and take note of the child's reaction or feelings and, so far as is possible, use a level of contact which is acceptable to the pupil.

All staff members must ensure that they;

- are aware that even well-intentioned physical contact may be misconstrued by the pupil, an observer or any person to whom this action is described
- never touch a pupil in a way which may be considered indecent
- are always prepared to explain actions and accept that all physical contact is open to scrutiny
- never indulge in horseplay or fun fights
- always allow/encourage pupils, where able, to undertake self-care tasks independently
- offer comfort to a distressed pupil in a way that is age appropriate
- establish the preferences of pupils
- consider alternatives, where it is anticipated that a pupil might misinterpret or be uncomfortable with physical contact
- report and record situations which may give rise to concern
- be aware of cultural or religious views about touching and be sensitive to issues of gender

Other activities that require physical contact

In certain subjects, such as PE, drama or music, adults may need to initiate some physical contact with children, for example, to demonstrate a technique or in the use of a piece of equipment, adjust posture, or support a child so they can perform an activity safely or prevent injury. Physical contact should take place only when it is necessary in relation to a particular activity. It should take place in a safe and open environment and last for the minimum time necessary. The extent of the contact should be made clear and undertaken with the permission of the pupil except where urgent contact is required for safety reasons, for example in the use of physical restraint, or to prevent an accident.

Sexual conduct

Any sexual behaviour by a member of staff with or towards a pupil, including pupils from other schools / colleges who are undertaking placements or voluntary work, is unacceptable. It is an offence for a member of staff in a position of trust to engage in sexual activity with a pupil under 18 years of age and sexual activity with a child could be a matter for criminal and/or disciplinary procedures.

All staff members must ensure that they;

- do not have any form of sexual contact with a pupil*
- avoid any form of touch or comment towards pupils* which is, or may be considered to be, indecent
- avoid any form of communication with a pupil* which could be interpreted as sexually suggestive, provocative or give rise to speculation e.g. verbal comments, letters, notes, by email or on social media, phone calls, texts, physical contact
- do not make sexual remarks to or about a pupil*
- do not discuss sexual matters with or in the presence of pupils* other than within agreed curriculum content or as part of their recognised job role

*pupil refers to children or young people from any school or college who is engaged in academy activities.

One to one situations

Staff working in one to one situations with pupils (ie. not in the presence of other children or adults), including visiting staff from external organisations, can be more vulnerable to allegations or complaints. All instances must therefore be transparent and appropriate to the child's needs.

Arranging to meet with pupils from school away from the work premises must not take place unless the necessity for this is clear and approval is obtained from a member of the SLT, the pupil and their parents/carers.

All staff members must ensure that they;

- work one to one with a child only when appropriate (both in person or online) and with the knowledge and consent of senior leaders
- are aware of relevant risk assessments, policies and procedures, including child protection, acceptable use policy and behaviour management
- wherever possible, use a space with visual access and/or an open door in one to one situations
- avoid use of 'engaged' or equivalent signs wherever possible. Such signs may create an opportunity for secrecy or the interpretation of secrecy
- always report any situation where a pupil becomes distressed or angry
- consider the needs and circumstances of the pupil involved
- prior to any online learning, explain that there are clear expectations of behaviour and conduct of all parties that must be agreed in advance.

Dress & Appearance

A person's dress and appearance are matters of personal choice and self-expression and some individuals will wish to exercise their own cultural customs. However, staff should select a manner of dress and appearance appropriate to their professional role and which may be necessarily different to that adopted in their personal life.

All staff members must ensure that they wear clothing which;

- promotes a positive and professional image
- is appropriate to their role
- is not likely to be viewed as offensive, revealing or provocative
- does not distract, cause embarrassment or give rise to misunderstanding
- is absent of any political or otherwise contentious slogans
- is not considered to be discriminatory
- is similar to the clothing they would wear on a normal school day when working online