

Staff Code of Conduct Policy 2026-2027

Approved by: Greg Holden (Principal)

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STAFF CODE OF CONDUCT POLICY

Milverton Education seeks to provide a safe and supportive environment, which promotes the well being of all members of the community and secures the very best outcomes for pupils, in line with its Pastoral, Academic and Co-Curricular Aims with a clear focus on flourishing..

This guidance has been produced to help all staff establish the safest possible learning and working environments. The aims are to establish a positive working environment, to safeguard young people and reduce the risk of staff being falsely accused of improper or unprofessional conduct.

This Code of Conduct seeks to fulfil the requirement set out in the DfE document Keeping Children Safe in Education: Statutory Guidance for Schools and schools (September 2023) and sits alongside the School's Safeguarding Policy in its intention to aid staff in fulfilling the School's Duty of Care towards all its pupils.

If a member of staff does not follow this Code of Conduct, they run the risk that their actions may constitute professional misconduct; this may lead to disciplinary action being taken against them.

For the avoidance of doubt 'staff' means, full time or part time, teachers, support staff, line managers, members of Council, Tutors, temporary staff, casual staff, zero hours staff and

contractors. 'Volunteer' means anyone working in an unpaid capacity of any nature. The reference to staff throughout this document also includes volunteers.

Background Principles

- The safety and welfare of all pupils is paramount.
- It is the responsibility of all staff to share the duty of care to "safeguard and promote the welfare" of the school's pupils.
- 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.
- Staff should work, and be seen to work in an open and transparent way.
- Staff behaviour towards pupils and towards all other members of staff, regardless of role or responsibility, should be based on courtesy and respect at all times.
- Staff behaviour should demonstrate self-awareness, particularly in respect of the effect of one's actions, words and manner on other people.
- Staff should discuss and/or take advice promptly from their line manager or another senior member of staff (e.g. SMT) in the case of any course of action where they are unsure about whether their behaviour falls under the scope of this Code, or any incident, which they think may give rise to concern.
- Records should be made by the senior member of staff (e.g. SMT) of any incident, copied to the Principal and any decisions made/further actions agreed, which arise as a result of this Code being breached. These records will be held in the relevant staff files.
- Staff should know the name of their Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and the Deputy DSL, be familiar with the school's Child Protection procedures and understand their responsibilities to safeguard and protect pupils.
- Staff should be aware that breaches of the law and other professional guidelines bring the school into disrepute and will result in criminal or disciplinary action being taken against them.
- Whistleblowing: Staff should feel able to report concerns about professional conduct, in the knowledge that immunity from disciplinary action for "whistle blowing" in good faith is assured (for more detail refer to Managing Allegations Against Staff policy).

1 Positions of Trust

ALL staff employed by the school are placed in a position of trust with respect to the welfare of the school's pupils; regardless of the age of the pupils or the position held by the member of staff have a responsibility to ensure that an unequal balance of power is not used for personal advantage or gratification and need to accept the responsibilities and trust inherent in such a relationship.

1.1 Members of staff should not form or promote a relationship with a pupil, or with a recent ex-pupil (defined as a pupil still within full-time education, or under the age of 21), which is of an emotional or sexual nature.

1.2 Members of staff should understand that it is an offence for a person aged 18 or over in a position of trust, to engage in sexual activity with or in the presence of a child, or incite that child to engage in or watch sexual activity. Where a pupil has recently left the school (see above), any such relationship will be a cause for concern and will be treated as a breach of trust established in that prior relationship.

1.3 Grooming is the name given to behaviour where the purpose is to gain the trust of a child, and manipulate a relationship so that sexual abuse can take place. Staff should be aware that conferring special attention and favour on a pupil might be construed as part of a grooming process, which is an offence.

2 Confidentiality / Access to Information

2.1 Staff must not place themselves in the position of promising complete confidentiality when, for example, in circumstances of child abuse, bullying, substance abuse and life threatening situations, to do so would be totally inappropriate.

2.2 Staff should know the circumstances in which they are obliged to pass on information without delay, and to whom to pass on information.

2.3 Staff may have access to confidential information about pupils, and indeed colleagues, in order to help them fulfil their roles and responsibilities. Such information should always be used sensitively and with respect to its confidential status. If in doubt, seek advice from Line Managers or a senior member of staff. The content of the Special Circumstances and Medical Lists should be used within a professional and confidential context only; information should only be shared outside of the school when it pertains directly to the welfare and safety of pupils and in no other circumstances.

2.4 Staff should have regard to CONTEXT: confidential information should not be discussed casually in places or at times where confidentiality could be compromised. Confidential information should never be discussed outside of the school or beyond a professional context.

2.5 Confidential information should not be shared other than on a need to know basis and should not be passed on without the explicit permission of the originator. Care must be taken in forwarding Emails to make sure no inappropriate content is accidentally forwarded on.

2.6 Any contact from the press/media via any means to a member of staff on any pupil matter, or indeed any other matter should be referred immediately to the Principal. Passing on as much information to the Principal as possible will enable an appropriate response to be made.

2.7 Members of staff who wish to deal with the press/media in a private capacity (e.g. correspondence, publications, and debate) shall request permission from the Principal. Staff should be conscious about the possibility for the views of individuals to be inadvertently linked to the reputation and image of the school.

3 Propriety and Behaviour

All staff have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils. Staff should be aware that they model responsible adult behaviour for our pupils.

- 3.1 Staff should be circumspect about drinking alcohol with current pupils in public or in private, in situations beyond school business.
- 3.2 Staff should not purchase alcohol for pupils in social situations. Generally, if a member of staff finds themselves, while not on school business, in a pub or bar in which current pupils are drinking, they should not join the pupils and may need to draw the attention of bar staff to the age of the pupils.
- 3.3 Staff should not drink alcohol while solely and directly supervising pupils. Members of staff should bear in mind that they may be called upon to act if an emergency occurs.
- 3.4 Staff should exercise caution and moderation in respect of their consumption of alcohol on off-site school trips, bearing in mind their accountability for the welfare of the pupils in their care.
- 3.5 Staff should avoid appearing inebriated, or giving the impression to pupils that any deliberate self-induced impairment of mental or physical capacity, for whatever reason, is acceptable.
- 3.6 Staff should not engage in irresponsible risk-taking behaviour with respect to alcohol, drugs or sexual conduct, nor discuss the same with pupils in such a way as to appear to condone such behaviour. Staff must respect the law of the land at all times.
- 3.7 Staff should not smoke in the presence of pupils. Staff conduct with pupils should promote healthy and responsible lifestyle choices.
- 3.8 Staff should avoid discussion of their private and personal relationships, including sexual relationships with, or in the presence of pupils, or via any means. Nor should they discuss a pupil's private, personal or sexual relationships in inappropriate settings or contexts.
- 3.9 Staff should choose language that is appropriate in vocabulary, register and tone for their professional role, and bear in mind that what is said at school is often overheard by a wider audience than the intended recipient(s). Swearing at or in front of pupils is not acceptable; crude, aggressive or offensive language or comments are not acceptable in the school context.
- 3.10 Staff should avoid the use of nicknames for pupils; these can inadvertently cause offence or be taken out of context and misconstrued as favouritism or lack of favour.
- 3.11 Staff who need to discipline pupils should do so in accordance with the Behaviour Expectations Policy & Rewards and Sanctions. Use of individualised, private or "local" punishments outside of the central systems for reporting and recording is forbidden. Corporal punishment, and treatment designed to humiliate or degrade pupils is not acceptable in any circumstances; nor is the use of sarcastic, demeaning or insensitive comments towards pupils in order to manage behaviour.
- 3.12 At all times staff should remember that they are looked up to by pupils as role models and sources of wise counsel; outcomes which promote the safety and welfare of pupils are of paramount importance.
- 3.13 Membership of organisations whose goals are in conflict with the values and ethos of Milverton Education has the potential to cause a conflict of interests for a member of staff, and should thus be avoided.

4 Dress and Appearance

4.1 Staff should seek to promote a positive and professional image in their dress and appearance.

4.2 Staff should avoid an appearance or clothing that is likely to be viewed as offensive, revealing or sexually provocative, or which contains political or otherwise contentious slogans.

5 Gifts

The nature of a school community is such that it is normal for pupils and parents to wish to give small tokens of appreciation to staff, for example at Christmas or as a thank-you. It is acceptable for staff to receive such tokens, as long as others cannot misconstrue the context as a bribe or lead the giver to expect preferential treatment. This includes gifts received from school suppliers and those contracted for services.

5.1 Staff should not receive gifts, including entertainment or hospitality, on a regular basis or of significant value.

5.2 In general, staff should NOT give personal gifts to pupils. An exception may be small gifts e.g. at Christmas or birthdays, given by Tutors to Tutees. These should be of insignificant value and given to Tutees equally and without preference.

5.3 Where staff are given gifts or hospitality of a value of £50 or above, details must be sent to the Principal for inclusion in the Gift Register.

6 Communication with pupils (including the use of technology)

Conversation is one of the foundations upon which the Milverton community is based, and any guidance here should be seen in the context of promoting positive and transparent communication within clear professional boundaries, rather than seeking to inhibit the vital and supportive interchange that happens daily throughout the community.

6.1 Emails from staff to pupils should only take place from designated school email addresses, and be received from pupils from their designated email address. Staff should be aware that the school network is open to scrutiny, with the permission of the Principal.

6.2 Phone calls or texts to pupils should normally be made from school phones. Staff and pupils should only share mobile phone numbers for professional reasons and with the knowledge of line managers. It should not be necessary to store pupil mobile numbers.

6.3 Care should be taken regarding appropriate timing of digital or electronic communication with pupils. In general, the end of the school day should be regarded as the latest time by which digital or electronic contact from a member of staff to a pupil can be reasonably sent.

6.4 Staff should not share personal information with pupils via digital means and should not request, or respond to, any personal information from the pupil, other than that which might be appropriate as part of their professional role.

6.5 Staff should not befriend pupils on social networking sites or gaming sites. Staff that use social networking sites for personal use should ensure their profiles and photos are locked down as private, so that pupils or parents do not have access to personal data or images. Staff should be aware that to give access to their online profile to current or recent pupils, places them in a potentially vulnerable professional position.

6.6 Staff should be aware that they leave themselves open to disciplinary action if compromising images or views which bring their own or the school's reputation into disrepute are made available on a public profile by anyone.

6.7 Care should be taken in online communication with pupils through Google Meet, Skype, Zoom etc.

6.8 Any screening of film content by whatever means to pupils must be appropriate to the age group, following BBFC guidelines where they exist, with particular attention to an 18 film rating. Screening of any footage or image must be from legal sources.

6.9 Many school activities involve recording images of pupils, e.g. as part of the curriculum, recording activities, celebrating achievement or for publicity. Staff should not have images of pupils stored on mobile phones, personal cameras, devices or computers for any longer than necessary, unless it can be clearly shown that the storage of images forms part of the specific role of the member of staff (e.g. management of or contribution to school website, twitter feed or publications; school archive). In all cases, only school owned devices should be used; images should not be held on privately owned devices. Staff should make clear to pupils how images will be used.

6.10 Under no circumstances should staff use the school network to access inappropriate sites or images, including sites related to pornography, self-harm and suicide, political extremism and violence. Any justification for accessing such sites (e.g. for purposes of academic research) should be made IN ADVANCE to their line manager or a member of the SMT, and explicit permission be given through the IT Dept. Accessing indecent images of children, and making, storing or disseminating such material is illegal and if proven, will lead to the individual being barred from work with children and young people as well as disciplinary action which could result in dismissal.

7 Physical Contact

Although we are an online school. There may be occasions, such as physical meetups, where physical contact may happen.

Staff should be aware, however, that even well intentioned and appropriate physical contact may be misconstrued by pupils, observers or by anyone to whom this action is described.

7.1 Staff must never touch a pupil in a way that may be considered indecent or aggressive.

7.2 Staff must always be prepared to explain actions and accept that all physical contact with pupils, whether one-off or regular (for example as part of training or coaching in a particular skill) may be open to scrutiny.

7.3 Staff who need to initiate physical contact with a pupil, e.g. in order to support a pupil to perform a task safely or to demonstrate or teach a particular skill, should place the needs of the pupil first at all times. Staff should be sensitive to any discomfort expressed verbally or non-verbally by the pupil. Contact should only be with the pupil's agreement, the reason for and form of the contact should be clear to the pupil, the context should be an open and relevant one

(e.g. lesson, coaching session, rehearsal), and contact should last for the minimum time necessary. Staff should consider alternatives to achieve the same ends without physical contact.

7.4 Staff must avoid the use of shared toilet/changing facilities at the same time as pupils, and should never shower or change with pupils. It is expected that staff will use designated staff facilities where available.

Policy details:

Policy written by: Greg Holden (Principal / DSL)

Policy reviewed by: Cathy Arnold (DDSL)

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