



# The White Hills Park Trust

*A Culture of Excellence*

## Employee Code of Conduct

### Version control

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# The White Hills Park Trust – Employee Code of Conduct

## Introduction

- 1.0 The Trustees of The White Hills Park Trust adopted this code of conduct on **15<sup>th</sup> December 2021**. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) will review and monitor the impact of the code annually and report to Trustees.
- 1.1 The Trustees have adopted the policy set out in this document to provide a clear framework for the exercise of its powers and discretions in relation to all staff employed in the Trust and paid from within the Trust budget.
- 1.2 This Code of Conduct should be read in conjunction with the Induction of school staff policy and the Disciplinary Procedure for school staff.
- 1.3 In accordance with the current DFE 'Keeping Children Safe in Education, **2023** guidance (KCSiE) this Code has been adopted by the Trust in order for all school staff to be fully aware of the standards of personal and professional conduct in relation to various aspects of their work. The Code gives a clear framework for staff to know their responsibilities and will be discussed during the course of their employment, for example in team meetings as queries arise - to ensure the Code is mutually monitored, positively promoted in school and understood by everyone.
- 1.4 **Every member of school staff will be asked to read this Code of Conduct and date and sign the Checklist of Safeguarding Procedures in The White Hills Park Trust that they have read and understood the document.** This Code will be reviewed annually and updated ~~by the CEO~~ as and when necessary, and staff will be informed of any amendments. If staff have any questions about the requirements of this Code then advice should be sought from their line manager, **Head Teacher** or the HR Director.
- 1.5 There is an expectation that all employees in this Trust will conduct themselves in a manner commensurate with the highest standard in order to maintain public trust and confidence and be beyond reproach in the performance of their duties.
- 1.6 Each member of school staff has a duty to ensure that the appropriate standards of conduct are upheld both by themselves and by colleagues.
- 1.7 This policy has been consulted on with the following Nottinghamshire recognised trade unions via the schools' Joint Consultation Committee: NEU; NASUWT; ASCL, NAHT, UNISON and GMB and UNITE. (**19<sup>th</sup> October 2023**)

## **Underlying principles**

- 2.0 All school staff must act within the law whilst undertaking their official duties. Staff must not undermine fundamental values, including democracy, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
- 2.1 Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities. Where staff are members of professional bodies, they must also comply with any standards of conduct which are set by that body. The conduct of all teachers must always be in line with the Teacher's Standards and where appropriate the Leadership Standards.
- 2.2 Staff must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the Trust, and maintain high standards in their own conduct, performance, attendance and punctuality. Staff should ensure that personal beliefs are not expressed in ways which exploit pupils' vulnerability or might lead them to break the law or the policies and procedures of the school. Staff should always show respect for the rights of others.
- 2.3 Staff must be aware that the Trust have a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination in any form. Staff must not exhibit discriminatory behaviour towards any member of staff or pupils, on the grounds of any protected characteristics (age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation) or Trade Union membership.
- 2.4 Staff are expected to provide the highest possible standards of service. Where staff are aware of any contraventions of this Code, illegality, misconduct or breach of procedure they should notify the Head Teacher/ CEO or HR Director.
- 2.5 In line with the current Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2023, staff must be aware of the expectation that they will conduct themselves appropriately at all times, including outside of work. Where there is any information to indicate a person may not be suitable to work with children, then the matter will be considered under Part 2 of the School's Disciplinary procedure (Managing Allegations & Low Level Concerns).
- 2.6 Supply staff should be aware that this Code also applies to them. Where an allegation is made against a member of supply staff, the school will take the lead on investigating allegations, in conjunction with the agency, who will also be expected to fully cooperate with the school's processes for managing allegations.
- 2.7 The Code does not seek to address every possible circumstance, and simply because a particular action may not be addressed within the Code, this does not condone that action by omission.

## **Safeguarding**

- 3.0 Staff must safeguard pupil's well-being, in accordance with the statutory provisions of the current KCSIE document, the Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children partnership (<https://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/nscp>) procedures and their school's child protection policy. Staff must report any safeguarding concerns immediately to the designated safeguarding lead person in school and ensure the Head Teacher/~~CEO~~ is also informed. All staff have a responsibility to take appropriate action and work with other services as needed. There are statutory duties on staff to report to the police any cases of Female Genital Mutilation discovered regarding a girl under the age of 18. Such cases should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and to Social Care. All staff must also protect pupils from the risk of radicalisation and report any concerns they have to the DSL and the Head Teacher. ~~CEO~~.
- 3.1 All staff must be fully aware of the school policies and procedures relating to safeguarding and given their position of trust, must ensure that they do not put themselves in any situation where their conduct or behaviour with any pupil could be misconstrued. All staff must be aware that they are in a position of power and it is their responsibility to ensure that their actions cannot be misinterpreted. Staff must not use their position for any personal gain. Any allegations of inappropriate contact with pupils will be investigated according to the Schools Disciplinary Procedure.
- 3.2 If a pupil reports any safeguarding concerns to any member of staff, this must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Staff must not promise confidentiality to a pupil and always ensure that any actions they take are in the interests of a pupil.
- 3.3 Where any staff (including agency and volunteers) have any safeguarding concerns about another member of staff these concerns must be reported immediately to the DSL and Head Teacher. Serious case reviews from past cases in the media have highlighted the concerns about school staff not sharing their knowledge with the leadership of the school.
- 3.4 All staff must be aware that it is a criminal offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (as amended) for anyone to engage in a sexual relationship or grooming for such a relationship with a pupil aged under 18 with whom they are in a position of trust. It is vital that staff work within appropriate professional boundaries at all times with children and young people with whom they are in a position of trust. If staff are unsure about what action to take or how they should respond to any situation, they must immediately contact the designated safeguarding lead. Any concerns about an inappropriate relationship between a member of staff and a pupil (irrespective of their age) will be fully investigated under the Disciplinary Procedure for school staff as a potential issue of gross misconduct. Alternatively, the member of staff can contact the LADO directly, as identified within the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

## **Low Level Concerns**

- 4.0 All staff must be aware of the importance of appropriately reporting concerns which may be of a lower level than those which clearly meet the “allegation” threshold. Research has shown that having a clear policy regarding the management of low-level concerns can help to create a safer environment for children, provide a more complete picture and help to avoid the risk of missed opportunities to identify effectively intervene in concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour.
- 4.1 A low level concern is any concern, no matter how small - for example it could be something that creates a sense of unease or “nagging doubt” that a member of staff (including supply staff, contractors or volunteers) has acted in a way that:
- is inconsistent with the Code of Conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work
  - May not meet the “allegation” threshold but may merit consulting with and seeking advice from the LADO (on a no names basis if necessary).
- 4.2 Examples of low-level concerns could include (but are not limited to):
- Being over friendly with children
  - Having favourites
  - Taking photos on their mobile phone
  - Engaging with a child on a 1-1 basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door
  - Using inappropriate sexualised, intimidating or offensive language
  - Humiliating pupils
- 4.3 Any member of staff who has such a concern regarding their own, or another member of staff’s behaviour (including supply staff, contractors or volunteers), must share their concerns with the Head Teacher immediately. If the concern relates to the Head Teacher, the member of staff should report it to the Chair of Governors.
- 4.4 Staff do not need to be able to determine whether their concern is low level or meets the allegations threshold. This determination will be made by the Head Teacher once the individual has shared it.
- 4.5 It is important that any such concerns are shared without delay and within 24 hours. However, staff should be aware that it is never too late to share concerns, and those which have existed longer than this, should also be reported.
- 4.6 If the staff member raising the concern wishes to remain anonymous, their wishes will be respected as far as possible. However, there may be some circumstances where this will not be possible, for example where it is necessary to carry out a fair disciplinary process.
- 4.6 If a low-level concern is shared, the Head Teacher will need to speak to the individual that the concern is about, as soon as practical (unless otherwise precluded, for example where advised not to do so by the LADO, if they have been contacted). In many cases, it may be enough to carry out a coaching conversation where guidance is offered regarding how to bring behaviour up to

the correct standards. In other cases, there may be a need to refer the matter through other appropriate employment processes. LADO and HR advice will be taken as appropriate. ***For full details and guidance, please refer to Disciplinary Part 2 - Managing Allegations and Low-Level Concerns against School Staff policy.***

### **Equality issues**

- 5.0 Staff must ensure that equality policies in relation to employment and their duties and responsibilities are adhered to. The Trust believes in equality and will not tolerate any harassment, intimidation, discrimination or victimisation, by school staff against pupils, colleagues, parents, Trustees and other visitors. Staff should not by their manner or speech be discriminatory with regards to a person's age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, or sexual orientation.

### **Health and safety**

- 6.0 It is the responsibility of all staff, Trustees and visitors to the school to take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and others and to assist in the creation of a safe work environment.
- 6.1 Staff have a responsibility to inform the Head Teacher/~~CEO~~ of any medical condition/illness they have during the course of their employment which may impact on their fitness to undertake their duties or on the health and safety of themselves, pupils, other staff, Governors and Trustees of the school, and for where a reasonable adjustment may need to be considered.
- 6.2 The Trust are aware that it is important to foster a culture within its schools where staff are encouraged to look after both their physical and mental well being. Health and wellbeing support and advice can be obtained from the HR Director.

### **Relationships and contact between school staff - the public, parents and pupils**

#### **Contact with Staff**

- 7.0 When dealing with colleagues, staff should act with respect and courtesy, and have regard for the feelings and sensibilities of others. Staff should always endeavour to act in a way that does not leave colleagues feeling uncomfortable or embarrassed or puts them in a position where they feel vulnerable or pressurised.
- 7.1 Particular care should be taken to ensure that light-hearted or irreverent comments, or 'banter' or over-familiar language or actions, do not cause distress or create situations that are difficult for people to deal with. Concerns will normally be addressed through the relevant line manager. However, in

situations where this is not appropriate because of the nature of the concern, staff can request a private meeting with any member of the school's Senior Leadership Team, the Trust SLT, or with a Trustee.

### **Contact with Pupils**

- 7.2 All staff should always act in a courteous, efficient and impartial manner towards all individual pupils or groups of pupils. Staff must always treat pupils with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, observing proper boundaries appropriate to their position.
- 7.3 It is the policy of the Trust that there will be no personal contact, other than in certain exempted circumstances, between staff and current/former pupils of school age outside the normal school work environment. Guidance on safer working practice is explicit that staff should not seek to establish contact with pupils for the purpose of securing friendship or strengthening a relationship. Any proposed work-related contact, outside of the normal working environment, must be agreed in advance by the Head Teacher and be recorded and monitored. Unexpected contact with pupils should be kept to a minimum. e.g. brief greeting. Any transport of pupils must be agreed in line with the school policy and always agreed with the Head Teacher.
- 7.4 Correspondence received by a member of staff from current or former pupils, should always be discussed with their line manager / Head Teacher and filed with any response in the appropriate school records system. The school internal email system shall be the sole means of email contact between staff and pupils.
- 7.5 Staff should be extremely cautious when using social networking sites outside of work and avoid publishing, or allowing to be published, any material, including comments or images that could damage their professional reputation and/or bring the school into disrepute. Where staff do use social networking sites it is strongly advised that profiles should be set as 'private' and under no circumstances should staff allow access to pupils, their families or carers. Staff are reminded that requirements to maintain confidentiality applies to all forms of communications including social networking sites. **See Appendix 1 re use of Social Networking Sites.**
- 7.6 Staff should not give their personal details such as home/mobile phone number; home or email address to pupils unless the need to do so is agreed with their Head Teacher. Where this is the case, correspondence should be kept to a minimum and be professional at all times in accordance with the ethos of this code. Where this is necessary for example during school trips, or in an emergency situation, the school/Trust will make every effort to provide a school mobile telephone which will be to use on school business only.
- 7.7 If a pupil or former pupil obtains a member of staff's personal contact details via some other means, then the member of staff should not respond and should report the attempted contact to their Head Teacher immediately.



- 7.8 Where former pupils who are under the age of 18 and still in receipt of education in whatever educational setting make contact with a member of staff, staff must discuss with their Head Teacher and seek advice on how to manage an appropriate response and any future contact. The sole means of any email contact must be via the schools email system, and not using the staff personal email address. If the former pupil requires assistance, they can be signposted to the relevant services. If any further contact is deemed appropriate by the Head Teacher, all contact must be recorded and the member of staff should be provided with adequate support and supervision and a clear plan for an outcome and timescales for any such support.
- 7.9 Staff are reminded that it is not uncommon for pupils to develop an infatuation with a member of staff. Staff must be vigilant that their own behaviour cannot be called into question or misinterpreted in this regard. In practice, this means that staff must take care not to develop inappropriate personal relationships with pupils and must not appear to show favouritism or allow opportunities for contact to arise which could be misinterpreted. If a member of staff believes or suspects that this situation is arising with themselves or another member of staff, this must be reported without delay to the Head Teacher, so that appropriate actions can be taken to avoid the situation escalating.
- 7.10 Any concerns arising in this context, regarding the suitability of a member of staff to work with pupils must be discussed by the Head Teacher with the LADO and staff should be aware that any such safeguarding concerns could lead to disciplinary action under the school's disciplinary procedure.

### **Contact with the Public, Parents & other stakeholders**

- 7.11 All staff must act in a courteous, efficient and impartial manner towards all parents, members of the public and governors or other visitors to the school.

### **Confidentiality**

- 8.0 Staff and Trustees should also be mindful that they have individual responsibility in relation to managing, maintaining and protecting the confidentiality of pupils, their families, colleagues and any matters relating to the school itself apply to all forms of communication, including social networking sites. This responsibility is detailed in the Trust's General Data Protection Regulations Policy and the Management and Retention of Records Policy.
- 8.1 There are some circumstances when a member of staff is expected to share information about a pupil – e.g., where abuse is alleged or suspected. Staff must understand their responsibility to pass on such information without delay to the DSL or LADO as appropriate. The sharing of this information is not prevented under the Data Protection Act 2018 where it is for the purposes of safeguarding the pupil. However, care should be taken to avoid any unnecessary publicity whilst such allegations are being investigated.

### **Use of personal mobile phones, laptops and tablets**

- 9.0 All staff are normally required to place any personal equipment capable of photographing children in a locked drawer/locker and such items should not be taken into the classroom. Such personal equipment is not to be used at any time, unless agreed by the Head Teacher, during contact with pupils.
- 9.1 Individual schools should set out in writing their own expectations of the use of this equipment by staff and should review this in line with the agreed procedures.
- 9.2 If there is a requirement in the teacher's role to take photographs of children for the Trust's purposes this must be carried out using school equipment that will be provided and with the agreement of the Head Teacher and in line with the agreed school procedures.

### **Use of school premises or facilities for work not connected with the school**

- 10.0 Trust staff must not use the school's premises or facilities for activities which are not connected with their employment at the school, without agreement from the Head Teacher ~~or governing body~~. This includes the personal use of the school email, telephones, computers, photocopiers, or other equipment.
- 10.1 Internal email systems and school computer equipment should always be used in accordance with the appropriate school policies.

### **Disclosure of information**

- 11.0 Staff must not disclose information given to them in confidence without consent except for that relating to safeguarding of a pupil which must be passed on. Advice should always be sought from their line manager or Head Teacher as appropriate on the appropriate use of school data and disclosure of school information.
- 11.1 Any actions taken by the school must always be in line with the requirements of the General Data Protection Act 2018 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000. School staff should not use confidential information obtained in the course of their employment with the school for personal use, nor should they pass it on to others who might use it for unauthorised purposes.

### **School staff ~~under police investigation~~ or facing criminal charges**

- 12.0 Any member of staff, volunteer or governor who, during the course of their employment or duties with the school, ~~is arrested and released on police or court bail~~, or faces criminal charges or who receives a new caution or conviction must inform their line manager/~~Head Teacher~~, or in the case of the CEO, the Chair of Trustees. Failure to do so may invoke action under the school's Disciplinary procedure.

## **Conflict of interest**

- 13.0 Staff should declare any personal interest that could bring about conflict with the Trust's interests. Trust staff must declare to their Head Teacher, CEO or Chair of Trustees any financial interests or non-financial interests which could or could be perceived to conflict with their role within the school.
- 13.1 Staff are required not to take outside employment which conflicts with the Trust's interests, any staff intending to work for outside organisations should seek permission from their Head Teacher, CEO or Chair of Trustees, as appropriate.

## **Acceptance of gifts**

- 14.0 It is reasonable for a member of staff to accept modest gifts from pupils, especially at the end of a school year or at Christmas. In accordance with the Gifts and Hospitality Policy, all gifts of a value exceeding £25 must be reported to Audit and Risk Committee – reference should be made to the Gifts and Hospitality Policy.
- 14.2 The giving of awards/small prizes to pupils should be in line with the agreed school policy.
- 14.3 Staff must be aware that it is inappropriate for them to give personal gifts to pupils. Such behaviour is open to misinterpretation and staff must avoid any behaviour which could be open to allegations of inappropriate conduct or "grooming" activities.

## **Dress Code**

- 15.0 It is recognised that dress and appearance are a matter of personal choice and that some staff will want to observe their own cultural customs. The Trust will not discriminate against staff on grounds of any protected characteristic. The Trust will be mindful of any protected characteristics when applying and interpreting this dress code and wish to avoid any stereotypes, so staff are advised to adopt suitable dress in accordance with their own identities.
- 15.1 All staff hold a responsibility to ensure their choice of clothing is appropriate for the professional position they hold. Staff are expected to dress in a professional manner, appropriate to their role, which may be different, depending on the setting i.e. whether that be nursery, primary or secondary, or special school setting. It is also accepted that this will be different depending on role, for example a technician, site officer or canteen staff will need to take into account specific aspects of health and safety, due to the nature of their roles.
- 15.2 Standards of dress should:
- Be professional and demonstrate the high regard we hold for the teaching profession
  - Be appropriate to the role/setting

- Be unlikely to be viewed as offensive
- Be absent of any political or otherwise contentious slogans
- Not be considered discriminatory and should be culturally sensitive
- Not place themselves or others at risk and must comply with any health and safety requirements.

If you have any further questions regarding dress code, please refer to your head teacher.

- 15.3 There will be occasions when casual dress is appropriate i.e. on Inset days/ non-uniform days or on school trips.
- 15.4 The Trust will give reasonable consideration to any health issues which may have an effect on the suitability and comfort of formal attire for staff, including menopause symptoms. Please refer to the Trust's menopause policy.
- 15.5 Any concerns or issues regarding non-adherence to dress code should be raised with the member of staff by their line manager/Head Teacher or if a member of staff is unsure about dress code, they should seek clarification from their line manager/ Head Teacher.

## APPENDIX 1

### THE STAFF RULES FOR THE USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

These rules form Appendix 1 to clause 7.5 of the Staff Code of Conduct.

Members of staff should not be in contact with current or former Trust pupils via social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, **Tiktok** or any other social media platform. This is in accordance with current safeguarding practice. (The only exception to this would be if a former pupil becomes a colleague or is a family member).

Members of staff with Facebook or other social networking profiles are strongly requested to set the privacy levels on their accounts to maximum i.e. only people on their friend's list should be able to view their pictures/private information, status etc. and it is strongly advised that staff do not reveal their place of employment on their accounts.

Please be aware that if you share information with "friends of friends" there is a potential for literally thousands of people to view your profile, information, pictures and status, most of whom you will not know. This leaves the potential for current pupils to then still be able to access your profile.

Failure to set the appropriate security options **this** may result in pupils or parents seeing private photographs or reading comments that could potentially compromise your position as a role model and a responsible member of staff and in the worst case and possibly bring yourself, others or the School/Trust into disrepute.

#### **Action to be taken if a member of staff is contacted by a pupil or former pupil:**

If a message from a pupil or former pupil is received, the following action should be taken:

1. Do not reply to the message. Replying to a message could allow the recipient to view your profile in its entirety and may circumvent other privacy settings on your account.
- 2. Do not delete the message.**
3. A senior member of pastoral staff should be contacted at the earliest opportunity and informed of the contact made.
4. If the content or language used in the pupils contact to the member of staff is inappropriate the senior member of pastoral staff should follow this up. At this point a **print out** of the communication should be provided to the member of pastoral staff dealing with the incident.

If an invitation to a person's friends list is received the following action should be taken:

1. Reject the request and consider blocking that person or hiding your profile to avoid searching by people not on your friends list.
2. If the pupil has made several attempts to "be your friend" please inform a senior member of the pastoral team who should then speak to the pupil, if in school, on your behalf, about the reasons that this contact is inappropriate.
3. The senior member of the pastoral team will report the incident to the Head Teacher or CEO at the earliest opportunity.

**If you are already friends with any current or former Trust pupils these should be reported to the Head Teacher/CEO immediately and then removed.**

If you are unsure how to set privacy settings on your social networking accounts please speak with the IT Services team who will be able to point you towards the appropriate guide.

IT can be contacted via [IThelpdesk@whptrust.org](mailto:IThelpdesk@whptrust.org)