

TCS Staff Code of Conduct

Policy responsible: Headteacher

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Contents

1. Purpose
2. Scope
3. Professional standards at work
4. Safeguarding
5. Appropriate relationships
6. Use of IT including social media
7. Confidentiality and disclosure of information
8. Dress and appearance
9. Conduct outside work
10. Declaration of interests
11. Whistleblowing
12. Health and Safety
13. Gifts and hospitality
14. Use of school resources and funds
15. Associated school policies

1. Purpose

This Code of Conduct aims to establish a set of principles which underpin the expected conduct of staff at Testbourne Community School with the intention of encouraging staff to achieve the highest standards of conduct at work and of minimising the risk of improper conduct occurring.

The school requires that all staff have read and comply with the Code of Conduct. Where clarification is needed on any aspect of this document, this should be sought from the Headteacher.

Breach or failure to observe the provisions of this document may lead to action being taken under the school disciplinary procedure which can be found in the Policies page on the PCP Hub.

This document is available to all staff in the Policies page on the PCP Hub as well as a copy provided on induction to all new members of staff.

The Code of Conduct is not exhaustive in defining acceptable and unacceptable standards of conduct and behaviour. In circumstances where guidance does not exist individuals are expected to use their professional judgement and act in the best interests of the school and its students.

The Code of Conduct is to be read in conjunction with the other policies that it references. These policies should also be fully understood and adhered to.

Within the relevant legal frameworks, the Headteacher and Governors determine the standards of conduct that are appropriate.

2. Scope

The Code of Conduct applies to:

- all members of staff, including teaching and support staff;
- volunteers, including governors;
- casual workers;
- temporary and supply staff, either from agencies or engaged directly;
- student placements, including those undertaking initial teacher training, and apprentices.

References to 'staff' throughout the Code of Conduct refer to all of the above groups.

Any links within this document to other documents are for ease of use and do not form part of this Code of Conduct.

The Code of Conduct exists in addition to Hampshire County Council's Local Government Code of Conduct.

3. Professional standards at work

Staff are expected to demonstrate the highest possible standards of personal and professional conduct and behaviour and consistently act with honesty and integrity. The school expects staff to treat each other, students, parents and the wider school community with dignity and respect at all times.

Furthermore, staff must have regard for the ethos and values of the school as well as its policies and procedures and act in accordance with these at all times, including in their dealings with those who come into contact with the school e.g. visitors.

Staff must act in accordance with their duty of care to students and ensure that the safety and welfare of the children and young people at the school are accorded the highest priority. In this and other ways staff should always maintain standards of conduct and behaviour which sustain their professional standing and that of the school.

4. Safeguarding

All staff have statutory safeguarding duties under the latest version of Keeping Children Safe in Education. Teachers are reminded of, and are expected to uphold, their wider responsibilities as set out in the [Teachers' Standards](#), including an understanding of, and acting within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

Testbourne Community School recognises its statutory and moral duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of students and understands that staff play a vital role in meeting these responsibilities. Staff must be aware of their individual safeguarding responsibilities, including to provide a safe environment in which children can learn, to be aware of the signs of abuse and neglect, to identify children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm and to take appropriate action in such cases to prevent concerns from escalating.

All members of staff must be aware of the school's systems for supporting child safeguarding, including the role of the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and the wider safeguarding team.

The lists of current Designated Safeguarding Leads can be found at reception, are displayed around the school and can be referenced on the website in our safeguarding section.

Staff have a professional duty to report concerns about the welfare of a child. Any such concerns must be raised without delay to the school's DSL in the first instance.

Staff are reminded of their duty to report concerns about staff that relate to the safeguarding of children. Any concerns or allegations must be raised without delay to the Headteacher in the first instance. The only exception to this is if the concern relates to the Headteacher. In this circumstance, contact should be made with the Chair of Governors or the Local Area Designated Officer (LADO) if a colleague feels there may be a conflict of interest. The LADOs are Barbara Piddington, Fiona Armfield and Shona McMinn.

Staff should be familiar with the school's child protection policy, which is available to all staff on PCP Hub in Staff Portal. All staff will receive appropriate child protection training and will be provided with guidance on child safeguarding as part of their induction to the school.

In accordance with the latest statutory guidance published by the Department for Education '[Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)', all staff in Testbourne Community School are required to read and declare their understanding of Part One '[Safeguarding information for all staff](#)' and will be provided with a copy as part of their induction to the school. The full document is available via the above link or from www.gov.uk. Some specific roles require familiarity with the document in its entirety.

Further information is found in the guidance document 'The avoidance of unnecessary contact and allegations' and in 'Guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings' (February 2022) provided by the Safer Recruitment Consortium. These documents can be found in Safeguarding page on the Staff Portal.

5. Appropriate relationships

Students

Individuals who work or volunteer in a school environment are in a position of trust. Staff should be mindful of the need to maintain professional boundaries appropriate to their position and must always consider whether their actions are warranted, proportionate, safe and applied equitably.

Staff should act in an open and transparent way that would not lead any reasonable person to question their actions or intent. Staff should think carefully about their conduct so that misinterpretations are minimised.

Staff should try to de-escalate situations wherever possible. Staff must avoid unnecessary physical contact with children and should never touch a student as a form of behaviour management or punishment. Where physical contact is essential, e.g. for safety reasons, the student's permission must be gained for that contact wherever possible. If physical contact is made to remove a student from a dangerous situation or an object from a student to prevent either harm to themselves or others, then this should be recorded and reported to the Deputy Headteacher, using Physical Intervention Recording form, which can be found on Form Hub in Staff Portal. In cases where accidental physical contact was made, it should be reported to the Deputy Headteacher using Physical Intervention Recording form. In all cases staff should act in accordance with the school's restraint policy, which can be found on PCP Hub in Staff Portal.

Staff should not block a child's exit from a room or situation unless there is an immediate threat to the safety of the child or other individuals in the school.

Staff should not use their power to intimidate, threaten, coerce or undermine students. Staff should not make, or encourage others to make, unprofessional personal comments which scapegoat, demean or humiliate other individuals, or make comments that might be interpreted as such.

Any sexual behaviour by a member of staff with or towards a student, child or young person whether inside or outside of work is unacceptable. Staff are reminded that under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, it is a criminal offence for a person aged 18 or over to have a sexual relationship with a child under 18, where that person is in a position of trust in respect of that child, even if the relationship is consensual. *Keeping Children Safe in Education* defines a child as everyone under the age of 18.

The principles within the Code of Conduct applies to all under the care of the school, irrespective of age.

Low Level Concerns

(The following is an excerpt from the TCS Child Protection and Guidelines policy and refers to conduct and behaviours that, whilst they do not meet the harm threshold for concern or allegation, should be avoided)

This LLC policy is part of the whole school approach to safeguarding. The purpose of the policy is to encourage an open and transparent culture, which enables the school to identify concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour at an early stage.

All reports of LLC should be made to the Headteacher or to the Senior Deputy Headteacher directly.

LLC about the Senior Deputy Headteacher should be made to the Headteacher

LLC about the Headteacher should be discussed directly with the Chair of Governors unless a colleague feels there may be a conflict of interest. In this instance they should contact the LADO directly.

Reports of LLC will be managed independently through our management procedures.

Examples of LLCs 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. It is good practice to avoid these situations wherever possible. This can make staff vulnerable to allegation. There may be times e.g., counselling, pastoral conversations etc when this may have to occur.
- using inappropriate sexualised, intimidating or offensive language.

This LLC policy

- Ensures that staff are clear about what constitutes appropriate behaviour, and are confident in distinguishing expected and appropriate behaviour from concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour, in themselves and others;
- Empowers staff to share any low-level safeguarding concerns.
- Addresses unprofessional behaviour and support the individual to correct this at an early stage.
- Provides a responsive, sensitive and proportionate handling of such concerns when they are raised.
- Helps identify any weakness in the school or colleges safeguarding system.

In line with this LLC policy:

- All LLCs will be shared responsibly with the Headteacher and/or Senior Deputy Headteacher in the first instance, recorded in writing and dealt with in an appropriate and timely manner.
- All LLCs will be reviewed, so that potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified.
- If LLCs are found to be escalating and are reaching the harm threshold, A referral will be made to the LADO.

If there is any doubt about the level at which behaviour needs to be addressed, LADO advice will be taken.

Parents

Staff are expected to interact with parents in a polite and respectful manner and recognise parents' entitlement to express any concerns they may have about their child's learning, safety or wellbeing. Staff should avoid discussing school matters with parents outside school if approached and should instead refer the parent to the appropriate school communication channels.

Staff should report to the Headteacher incidents of parents or carers communicating in a way that breaches the Code of Conduct for Contacting Us, which can be found on our website.

6. Use of IT including social media

Internal e-mail and internet systems must be used only in accordance with the school's Staff IT Acceptable Use Policy which can be found on the PCP Hub in the Staff Portal.

Social networking sites offer the opportunity for communication with children, young people and their parents outside normal professional boundaries. School staff must take care to protect their privacy and protect themselves from risk of allegations in relation to inappropriate relationships and cyberbullying. Staff must not have any unauthorised contact or accept 'friend' requests through social media with any student (including former students and/or those who attend other schools) unless they are family members. Staff must exercise caution when having contact with parents online through the school's social media platforms so as not to compromise the school's reputation or school information. Staff should not engage in private social media or email relationships with parents, unless they are family members.

Staff must not use personal devices to make sound recordings, take photos or record videos of students. School devices can be provided for these purposes. Images and recordings made must not be used in any way without first checking that the appropriate consents exist.

Please refer to the school's acceptable use of ICT policy which can be found and Social Media policy on PCP Hub in Staff Portal for further guidance on acceptable and unacceptable use of IT, social media and mobile phones.

7. Confidentiality and disclosure of information

Staff must ensure that they do not disclose confidential information to anyone who does not have the right to receive it. Where information is disclosed, this should be in line with the principles of the [General Data Protection Regulations \(GDPR\) 2016](#) and the [Data Protection Act 2018](#). Equally staff should not prevent another person from gaining access to information to which that person is entitled by law. If there is doubt about whether or not to share information, advice must be sought from Jonathan Worth, Data Protection Officer.

Information obtained during an individual's work should never be used for personal gain or benefit, nor should it be passed onto others who might use it in such a way.

8. Dress and appearance

An individual's dress and appearance is, to some extent, a matter of personal choice. Staff should ensure, however, that they dress appropriately, decently, safely and in a smart professional manner for a school environment and for the role they undertake, as well as setting a good example to both students and visitors. Casual wear is not appropriate, nor are 'holiday' clothes such as flip-flops, sandals or other informal shoe types, unless specifically required to carry out a role at school.

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

The school recognises the diversity of cultures and religions of its staff and will take a sensitive approach when this affects dress and uniform requirements. However, priority will be given to health and safety, security and other similar considerations of other staff, students and the school.

In addition, staff should present themselves, their appearance, body language, actions and use of language in a way that sets an example to the students. We have the highest expectations of staff and for this reason, when in front of the students, staff should refrain from:

- Chewing gum
- Using mobile phones for personal use in front of students (unless in an emergency)
- Exposing body piercings (except earrings)
- Wearing excessively large or ornate jewellery
- Wearing excessive quantities of jewellery
- Using inappropriate language in any form of communication

In addition to these points, staff should take any reasonable steps to avoid exposure of excessive tattoo art, particularly if its content may be interpreted as offensive.

Staff should take care to present themselves as per the guidelines whenever they are representing the school both on the school premises or away from the school for other reasons.

The Headteacher and Governors continue to be very grateful to colleagues for their support of these professional standards.

9. Conduct outside work

Care must be taken by staff to avoid any conflict of interest between activities undertaken outside school and responsibilities within school. In no case should actions or activities undertaken outside of work (including but not limited to relationships and social media contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults) bring the school into disrepute.

Staff must disclose any misconduct or alleged misconduct made against them, including any incidents arising from alternative or additional employment outside of this school. Disclosure must be made to Jon Beck, Headteacher, without delay, after which consideration will be given to the relevance or otherwise of the misconduct to their role in the school.

Teachers are reminded that the [Teachers' Standards](#), and specifically Part Two: Personal and Professional Conduct, set out their responsibilities in relation to upholding public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school.

Where staff are in doubt as to whether there is a conflict of interest advice must be sought from the Headteacher.

10. Declaration of interests

Staff should consider carefully whether they need to declare to the school any relationship with an individual where this might cause a conflict with the school's activities, for example, a relationship with a Governor, another staff member or a contractor who provides services to the school. Where such a declaration is necessary this should be made to the Headteacher.

Staff may undertake work outside school, either paid or voluntary, provided it does not conflict with the interests of the school nor be at a level which may contravene the [Working Time Regulations](#) or affect an individual's performance at work.

11. Whistleblowing

The [Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998](#) (as amended) gives protection to people who disclose reasonable concerns about serious misconduct or malpractice at work. This is sometimes known as Whistleblowing. The Governing Body of the school will treat all matters of malpractice very seriously and allegations about such matters will be dealt with quickly and with appropriate confidentiality.

Staff should acknowledge their individual responsibilities in bringing matters of concern to the attention of senior leadership in the school, or to the Chair of Governors if misconduct or malpractice involves the Headteacher. This is particularly important where the welfare of children may be at risk. If there are concerns about the Headteacher, in relation to safeguarding and child protection, communication should be direct to the Local Area Designated Officer (LADO).

A clear procedure is provided for staff to raise issues with the purpose of assisting in reducing the risk of serious concerns being mishandled, whether by the individual or by the school. Please refer to the school's Procedure for Protected Disclosures ("Whistleblowing") for further information on PCP Hub in Staff Portal.

12. Health and Safety

Staff must adhere to the school's Health and Safety policy, complete all relevant training and should ensure that they take every action to keep themselves and others in the school environment safe.

Please refer to the school's Health and Safety policy for further information on PCP Hub in Staff Portal.

13. Gifts and hospitality

There may be occasions where children or parents wish to pass small tokens of appreciation to staff, for example as an end of year 'thank-you', and this is acceptable. However, it is unacceptable to receive gifts on a regular basis or of any significant value or to suggest to students that gifts would be appropriate or desired. Money should never be accepted as a gift.

It is not acceptable for staff to give gifts to students and any rewards given to children must be given in agreement with the declared reward and recognition practice of the school. This is described in the Behaviour for Learning policy that can be found on the school website and on the PCP Hub in Staff Portal.

Staff should not solicit or accept any gift, hospitality or other reward from external parties which influences the way in which they carry out their duties or leads the giver to expect preferential treatment.

14. Use of school resources and funds

The use of school resources, property and equipment is for school-related activities only, except where otherwise agreed. Please refer to the Acceptable Usage Policy for further details.

If staff want to publish books, articles, letters, dissertations etc that they have written in connection with their duties and in which they describe themselves as holding an appointment with the school, they should consult the Headteacher.

All members of staff must use any public or school funds entrusted or handled by them in a responsible and lawful manner.

15. Associated school policies

All policies can be found in the Policies Compliance and Procedures (PCP) Hub on the Staff Portal.

- TCS Behaviour for Learning Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Child Protection Policy and Guidelines
- Safeguarding Policy
- Staff IT Acceptable Usage Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy

Additional Safeguarding Documents

- The most current version of *Keeping Children Safe in Education*
- The most current version of *Working together to safeguard children*
- The most current *Prevent Duty Guidance*

Each of these documents is frequently updated as a result of case reviews and other information.