

Gorse Hall Primary & Nursery School



Staff Code of Conduct

Statement of intent

Gorse Hall Primary and Nursery School expects all of its pupils to receive the highest possible quality of teaching and learning within a positive and respectful environment.

Employees at the school should understand that their own behaviour and the manner in which they conduct themselves with their colleagues, pupils, parents and other stakeholders, sets an example.

The Governing Board of Gorse Hall Primary and Nursery School recognises that the majority of staff members act appropriately and treat each other with dignity and respect; however, we consider it important to clarify the expected standards. Many of the principles in this code of conduct are based on the Teachers' Standards.

This document forms part of a staff member's contract of employment and failure to comply with it, and with the associated school policies, may result in disciplinary action being taken, including legal action where this is warranted.

This document applies to all staff members who are:

- Employed by the school, including the headteacher.
- Employed in units or bases that are attached to the school.

This document does not apply to:

- Peripatetic staff members who are centrally employed by the LA.
- School catering staff.
- Employees of external contractors.

Legislation and guidance

We are required to set out a staff code of conduct under regulation 7 of The School Staffing (England) Regulations 2009. In line with the statutory safeguarding guidance **Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024**, we should have a staff code of conduct, which should cover low-level concerns, allegations against staff and whistle-blowing, as well as acceptable use of technologies (including the use of mobile devices), staff/pupil relationships and communications, including the use of social media. Staff should read the above guidance as well as 'Guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings' 2018.

These employees are governed by their employment contracts and any relevant laws pertaining to their activities within the school, for example, the Data Protection Act 2018.

Signed by Headteacher:  **November 2024**

Signed by Chair of Governing Board:  **November 2024**

Reviewed annually

Next review date: November 2025

Other policies

This Code of Conduct should be read and adhered to in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Equality Information and Objectives Policy
- Special Leave Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Home Visits Policy
- Acceptable Use Agreement
- Online Safety Policy
- Remote Learning Policy
- Photography Policy

Appearance and dress

A person's dress and appearance are matters of personal choice and self-expression. However, staff and volunteers should recognise that they are role models to the children and that their choice of dress should uphold the school's expectations for the children. Those who dress or appear in a manner which could be considered as inappropriate could render themselves vulnerable to criticism or allegations of misconduct.

- Staff must ensure that their appearance is clean, neat and professional when at work or representing the school.
- Dress decently, safely and appropriately for the tasks they undertake.
- All staff to dress in a manner that is appropriate to their role. The wearing of casual items such as jeans, sports clothing, or items of clothing that could be deemed by others as too revealing, should be avoided.
- Where possible, tattoos and other body art should be covered up whilst in school due to the impressionable nature of young children.
- Jewellery should be minimal and safe.
- When teaching PE, ensure suitable footwear is worn.

Safeguarding children

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 child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures, and the Prevent initiative, and ensure they are aware of the processes to follow if they have concerns about a child.

- Staff should act in an open and transparent way that does not lead to any suspicion about their actions or intent.

- Respect their duty to protect children and young people from harm and to maintain professional boundaries.
- All staff read and understand school policies on child protection and safeguarding, including their obligations to undertake a Disclosure and Barring Service check.
- All interactions between an adult and pupil takes place in a room that others can see into and access. Leave the door open when possible. Let a colleague or manager know this is happening.
- When transporting pupils there must be two adults in the vehicle.
- Computers must be locked when unattended.
- Staff should avoid contact with pupils outside of school hours, unless there is an arranged meeting that forms part of the pupil's education plan. Personal contact details should not be exchanged between staff and pupils. This includes social media profiles.
- Confidential pupil or parent information must not be left visible.
- Staff should not conduct remote video meetings with individual pupils via teams, Zoom or other online platforms. If a meeting is conducted remotely online, another member of staff should be present. The parent(s) /guardian of pupil should be present.

Allegations that may meet the harm threshold

This section applies to all cases in which it is alleged that anyone working in the school, including a supply teacher, volunteer or contractor, has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child, and/or
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, and/or
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children, and/or
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children – this includes behaviour taking place inside or outside of school

We will deal with any such allegation quickly and in a fair and consistent way that provides effective child protection while also supporting the individual who is the subject of the allegation.

A designated person will lead any investigation. This will be the headteacher, or the chair of governors where the headteacher is the subject of the allegation.

Low-level concerns about members of staff

A low-level concern is a behaviour towards a child by a member of staff that does not meet the harm threshold, is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, and may be as simple as causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt'. For example, this may include:

- Being over-friendly with children
- Having favourites

- Taking photographs of children on a personal device unless there is a valid and agreed use of this for a school activity (This agreement must be sought from the Headteacher/DSL).
- Engaging in 1-to-1 activities where they can't easily be seen
- Humiliating pupils

Low-level concerns can include inappropriate conduct inside and outside of work.

All staff should share any low-level concerns they have using the reporting procedures set out in our child protection and safeguarding policy. We also encourage staff to self-refer if they find themselves in a situation that could be misinterpreted. If staff are not sure whether behaviour would be deemed a low-level concern, we encourage staff to report it.

All reports will be handled in a responsive, sensitive and proportionate way.

Unprofessional behaviour will be addressed, and the staff member supported to correct it, at an early stage.

Our procedures for dealing with allegations will be applied with common sense and judgement.

Whistle-blowing

Whistle-blowing reports wrongdoing that it is "in the public interest" to report. Examples linked to safeguarding include:

- Pupils' or staff's health and safety being put in danger
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation or statutory requirement
- Attempts to cover up the above, or any other wrongdoing in the public interest

Staff are encouraged to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible. Their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated, and their confidentiality will be respected.

Staff should consider the examples above when deciding whether their concern is of a whistle-blowing nature. Consider whether the incident(s) was illegal, breached statutory or school procedures, put people in danger or was an attempt to cover any such activity up.

Staff should report their concern to the headteacher. If the concern is about the headteacher, or it is believed they may be involved in the wrongdoing in some way, the staff member should report their concern to the chair of the governing board.

Concerns should be made in writing wherever possible. They should include names of those committing wrongdoing, dates, places and as much evidence and context as possible. Staff raising a concern should also include details of any personal interest in the matter.

For our school's detailed whistle-blowing process, please refer to our whistle-blowing policy.

Professional behaviour and conduct

With other adults:

- Staff members are expected to treat other colleagues, pupils, parents, and external contacts with dignity and respect.
- Discrimination, bullying, harassment or intimidation, including physical and verbal abuse, will not be tolerated at the school.

- Staff members must not misuse or misrepresent their position, qualifications or experience, or bring the school into disrepute.
- Staff members must inform their line manager if they are subject to a criminal conviction, caution, ban, police enquiry, investigation or pending prosecution.
- Being approachable, polite, friendly and welcoming to other adults in school both staff members and visitors.
- Being flexible and understanding of unexpected changes within the school day.
- Communicating clearly and honestly, addressing concerns openly with the person to whom the concern is addressed.
- Taking responsibility for our actions and are prepared to apologise when we have made mistakes and undertake to learn from those errors.
- Not deliberately discriminating, ostracizing, negatively criticizing or undermining members of staff.
- Support the professional development of all colleagues.
- Staff should not put themselves in a comprising position with parents of pupils who attend Gorse Hall School if it could potentially cause upset to the pupil or pupil's family or bring the school into disrepute.
- Staff have a duty to report any safeguarding concerns in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding policy, including low level concerns.
- All staff are aware that children can abuse other children, and are skilled to challenge inappropriate behaviours including; sexual harassment/violence, physical violence, bullying, and abuse in the virtual world.

With pupils:

All pupils have a right to be treated with respect and dignity. Staff and volunteers must not:

- Use any form of degrading treatment to punish or undermine a pupil.
- The use of sarcasm, humiliating or insensitive comments towards pupils is not acceptable in any situation.
- When speaking to pupils, we always consider how we would expect to be spoken to ourselves. Shouting aggressively is not acceptable in any situation.

Conduct outside of school

All staff have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of all pupils. They should adopt high standards of personal conduct in order to maintain the confidence and respect of their peers, pupils and the public in general.

- An individual's behaviour, either in or out of the workplace, should not compromise her/his position within the work setting or bring the school into disrepute.
- All staff who work in schools provide a role model for behaviour and conduct which can be copied by pupils. All staff must, therefore, demonstrate high standards of conduct in order to encourage our pupils to do the same.
- Staff may undertake work outside school, either paid or voluntary, 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.

Social networking sites

Social networking sites and blogging are extremely popular. Staff must not post material which damages the reputation of the school or which causes concern about their suitability to work with children and young people. Those who post material which could be considered as inappropriate could render themselves vulnerable to criticism or allegations of misconduct or disciplinary action.

- Employees must not access social networking sites for personal use during classes.
- Access to some journals, blogs and social networking sites is permitted during classes for the purposes of undertaking job related duties only.
- Employees must act in the best interests of the school and not disclose personal data or information about any individual, including staff members, children and young people.
- Staff members should not 'friend' pupils on social networking websites.
- Staff members should consider the risks when accepting parents as a friend on social Networking sites.
- Access may be withdrawn and disciplinary action taken if there is a breach of confidentiality or defamatory remarks are made against any individual at the school.

Attendance

The school's expectations are that staff members:

- Attend work in accordance with their contract of employment and associated terms and conditions in relation to hours, days of work and holidays.
- Make routine medical and dental appointments outside of their working hours or during holidays, where possible.
- Refer to the school's policy on special leave if they need time off for any reason other than personal illness.
- Follow the school's absence reporting procedure when they are absent from work due to illness or injury.

Physical contact

There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for staff to have physical contact with pupils, but it is crucial that they only do so in ways appropriate to their professional role. When physical contact is made with pupils this should be in response to their needs at the time, of limited duration and appropriate given their age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity and background. It is not possible to be specific about the appropriateness of each physical contact, since an action that is appropriate with one pupil in one set of circumstances may be inappropriate in another, or with a different pupil.

- Physical contact should never be secretive or casual, or for the gratification of the adult, or represent a misuse of authority.
- If a member of staff or volunteer believes that an action could be misinterpreted, the incident and circumstances should be reported.

Pupil/adult relationships

Any sexual behaviour, whether homosexual or heterosexual, by a member of staff, volunteer or governor with or towards a child or young person is illegal. Children and young people are protected by the same laws as adults in relation to non-consensual sexual behaviour. They are additionally protected by specific legal provisions regardless of whether there is consent or not. All adults working in the school who have contact with pupils are in positions of trust.

The Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 2000 specifically established a criminal offence of the abuse of trust in relation to teachers and others who are in relationship of trust with 16 - 18 year olds.

There are occasions when adults embark on a course of behaviour known as 'grooming' where the sole purpose is to gain the trust of a child or young person, and manipulate that relationship so that sexual abuse can take place. Staff and volunteers should be aware that conferring special attention without good reason or favouring a pupil has the potential to be construed as being part of a 'grooming' process, which is a criminal offence.

- Staff in school should not establish or seek to establish social contact with pupils for the purpose of securing a friendship or to pursue or strengthen a relationship. This includes social networking and blogging.
- If a pupil seeks to establish social contact, or if this occurs coincidentally, the member of staff should exercise her/his professional judgment in making a response and be aware that such social contact in person, by phone or on the internet could be misconstrued and may place the member of staff in a very vulnerable position.
- Staff and volunteers must not give their personal details such as home/mobile phone number or home address.

Declaration of interests

- Staff members are required to declare their interests where the group or organisation they are affiliated with would be considered to be in conflict with the ethos of the school. Membership to a trade union or staff representative group does not need to be declared.

- Staff members should also carefully consider whether they need to declare their relationship with any individual where this might cause a conflict with school activities.
- Failure to make a relevant declaration of interests is a very serious breach of trust and, therefore, if employees are in doubt about a declaration, they are advised to contact the school or trade union.
- All declarations, including nil returns, should be submitted in writing to the Headteacher on the Register of Business Interests.

Probity of records

- The deliberate falsification of documents is not acceptable. Where a staff member falsifies records or other documents, including those held electronically, this will be regarded as a serious disciplinary matter and potentially a criminal offence.
- Where a staff member has claimed any benefit, either directly or indirectly, or has failed to disclose their full earnings, this will be treated as gross misconduct and the employee may be dismissed and referred to the police.

Financial inducements

- Staff members familiarise themselves and comply with the school's financial regulations.
- Staff declare to the Governing Board, in writing, any gifts received, with the exception of:
 - Low cost, functional items suitable for business rather than personal use and displaying the supplier's logo. These items may be accepted.
 - Gifts offered by parents or pupils to school staff to express their gratitude, although staff members should always refuse gifts of money. There are occasions when pupils or parents wish to pass small tokens of appreciation to staff e.g. at Christmas or as a thank-you and this is acceptable. However, it is unacceptable to receive gifts on a regular basis or of any significant value.
 - Hospitality in the shape of meals and drinks where it forms part of a normal business meeting.
 - Authorised visits to exhibitions, demonstrations, conferences, business meals and social functions in connection with the school's business, which shall be at the school's expense.
- Not accept a personal gift, payment, or other incentive from a business contact. Any such gifts should be returned.
- Only accept offers to specific events after authorisation from the governing body. Staff need to take care that they do not accept any gift that might be construed by others as a bribe, or lead the giver to expect preferential treatment.

- Declare any gift that cannot be returned, to the Governing Board, who will decide how it will be used.
- Not give personal gifts to pupils. This could be misinterpreted as a gesture either to bribe, or single out the young person. It might be perceived that a 'favour' of some kind is expected in return.
- Any reward given to a pupil should be consistent with school policy.
- Staff members shall not use school business contacts for acquiring materials or services at trade/discount prices for non-school activities, unless participating in concessionary schemes arranged by trade unions or other such groups.

Health and safety

- Be familiar with and adhere to the school's Health and Safety Policy.
- Comply with health and safety regulations and use any safety equipment and protective clothing which is supplied to them.
- Comply with hygiene requirements.
- Comply with accident reporting requirements.
- Inform their line manager of any paid work which is undertaken elsewhere, for compliance with Working Time Regulations.
- No hot drinks to be carried without a covering lid.

Alcohol and illegal drugs

- The taking of illegal drugs or alcohol during working hours is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Staff members must never attend work under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.
- If alcohol or drug usage impacts on a staff member's performance, the school has the right to discuss the matter with the employee and take appropriate action, including referral to the police.

Premises, equipment and communication

- Memory sticks and laptops to be encrypted.
- Laptops, tablets and computers must be locked when unattended.
- Taking photographs of children on a personal device unless there is a valid and agreed use of this for a school activity (This agreement must be sought from the Headteacher/DSL).
- School equipment and systems are available only for school-related activities and should not be used for the fulfilment of another job or for personal use, unless specifically authorised by the Headteacher.

- Illegal, inappropriate or unacceptable use of school equipment or communication systems may result in disciplinary action and, in serious cases, could lead to an employee's dismissal.
- Employees receiving inappropriate communication or material, or who are unsure about whether something he/she proposes to do might breach this policy, should seek advice from the Headteacher.
- The school reserves the right to monitor emails, phone calls, internet activity or document production, principally in order to avoid offensive or nuisance material and to protect systems from viruses, but also to ensure proper and effective use of systems.
- Communication systems may be accessed when the school suspects that the employee has been misusing systems or facilities, or for the investigation of suspected fraud or other irregularity.
- Passwords should not be shared and access to computer systems must be kept confidential except on the express request of the Headteacher or systems manager. Breach of this confidentiality may be subject to disciplinary action.
- School equipment that is used outside school premises, for example laptops, should be returned to the school when the employee leaves employment, or if requested to do so by the Headteacher.
- Staff should ensure that laptops are not left in their vehicle overnight.

Data protection and confidentiality

- Staff members are required, under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the GDPR rules and regulations, to collect, maintain and dispose of sensitive or personal data in a responsible manner.
- Staff members should not disclose sensitive information about the school, its employees, or the LA, to other parties.
- The only exception whereby it is acceptable for a staff member to disclose information which would otherwise be considered confidential is when the confidential information gives rise to concerns about the safety or welfare of a pupil.
- Staff members have the right to request access to data that is held about them and such requests should be made to the Headteacher.