



## Dame Alice Owen's School

### CODE OF CONDUCT FOR EMPLOYEES

Agreed by the Governing Body Personnel & Remuneration Committee      October 2015  
To be reviewed      Autumn 2017  
*(first approved in January 2009, reviewed every 2 years)*

#### **EXPECTATIONS OF STAFF**

The Governors and Staff at Dame Alice Owen's School are committed to providing a safe and supportive environment both for their colleagues and for students. All staff have a crucial role to play in shaping the lives of young people. They have a unique opportunity to interact with children and young people in ways that are both affirming and inspiring. This code of conduct has been produced to help staff establish the safest possible learning and working environments which safeguard young people and reduce the risk of staff being placed in a vulnerable position and and/or being falsely accused of improper or unprofessional conduct.

This document is a brief summary on what is expected and is considered safe practice by all staff and to help staff understand what is and what is not acceptable.

#### **Underpinning Principles**

- The welfare of the child is paramount (Children Act 1989).
- Staff should be continuous learners and have a creative and constructively critical approach towards innovation in keeping with the national standards for teachers.
- Staff must comply with school policies and procedures that support the well-being and development of students.
- Staff must co-operate and collaborate with colleagues and with external agencies where necessary to support the development of students.
- Staff must follow reasonable instructions that support the development of students.
- 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.
- All staff must, therefore, demonstrate high standards of behaviour and conduct in order to encourage our students to do the same.
- Staff should work, and be seen to work, in an open and transparent way, while still respecting necessary confidentiality and data protection.
- All staff must also avoid putting themselves at risk of allegations of abusive or unprofessional conduct.

- The school's DSP is Pam Perrett, all staff should be aware of this and be familiar with the school's child protection arrangements and understand their responsibilities to safeguard and protect children and young people.
- Staff have an obligation to share with their manager or the school's Designated Senior Person any information which gives rise to concern about the safety or welfare of a student.
- Records should be made of any incident which causes concern, and/or decisions made/further actions agreed. Records to be stored confidentially in the personnel files.
- Staff should apply the same professional standards to all members of the School community in keeping with the Single Equality Policy.
- All staff are provided with personal copies of the school's Child Protection Policy and Whistleblowing Procedure and staff must be familiar with these.
- Staff should be aware that breaches of the law and other professional guidelines could result in criminal and/or disciplinary action being taken against them, including dismissal.

#### **Duty of Care and Power and Positions of Trust**

- All staff whether paid or voluntary, working with young people are accountable for the way in which they exercise authority; manage risk; use resources; and protect students from discrimination and avoidable harm.
- All staff whether paid or voluntary, have a duty to keep young people safe and protect them from sexual, physical, emotional harm and neglect. (*Working Together to Safeguard Children DCSF 2006*). Students have a right to be safe and treated with respect and dignity. It follows that trusted adults are expected to ensure the safety and well-being of students. Failure to do so may be regarded as professional neglect.
- The duty of care is, in part, exercised through the development of respectful, caring and professional relationships between staff, parents or carers and students and behaviour by staff that demonstrates integrity, maturity and good judgement. Staff must not seriously demean or undermine pupils, their parents or carers, or colleagues. Schools and parents have legitimate expectations about the professional involvement in the lives of students. When individuals accept a role that involves working with children and young people, they need to understand and acknowledge the responsibilities and trust inherent in that role. All staff working with young people are in positions of trust, a relationship between a member of staff and a student cannot be a relationship of equals.
- Dame Alice Owen's School have a duty of care towards their employees under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 which requires them to provide a safe working environment for staff and guidance about safe working practices. Thus Dame Alice Owen's School have a duty of care for the wellbeing of employees and to ensure that employees are treated fairly and reasonably in all circumstances. Staff who are subject to an allegation should therefore be supported and the principles of natural justice applied.

## Confidentiality

1. Staff may have access to confidential information about students in order to undertake their everyday responsibilities – in some circumstances they may be given additional highly sensitive or private information. All such information should only be shared on a “need to know” basis and never used casually in conversation. Where staff have access to confidential information about students or their parents or carers, staff must not reveal such information except to those colleagues who have a professional role in relation to the student and then only when necessary.
2. All staff are likely at some point to witness actions which need to be confidential. For example, where a student is bullied by another student this needs to be reported and dealt with in accordance with the appropriate school procedure. It must **not** be discussed outside the school, and only with the student’s parent or carer if staff have the clear responsibility and authority to deal with the matter.
3. In situations where a student has shared information that may indicate that child or another child is at risk or harm, this information should be shared immediately with those staff with designated child protection responsibilities. If in doubt about whether to share the information seek guidance from a member of SLT. **Staff must NEVER promise to a student that they will not act on information that they are told by the student.**
4. To protect confidential information stored on the school’s management system (SIMS) staff should regularly change their password and never allow anybody access to their password or system. This also applies to use of the SIMs system offsite where SIMs should never be left open on a computer offsite. When staff finish working they must close down immediately.

## Honesty, Propriety & Behaviour

1. All staff have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of students and young people. They should adopt high standards of personal conduct in order to maintain the confidence and respect of their peers, students and the public in general.
2. Staff must maintain high standards of honesty and integrity in their work. This includes the handling and claiming of money and the use of school property and facilities. Following established procedures for handling money is an important safeguard for staff.
3. An individual’s behaviour, either **in** or **out** of the workplace, should not compromise her/his position within the work setting. Staff must not engage in conduct outside work which could reasonably be expected to significantly damage the reputation and standing of the school or the employee’s own reputation or the reputation of other members of the school community.

4. While recognising the legitimate right of staff to a private life outside school, staff should be particularly careful when socialising in public areas or on social networking sites where students and / or parents may be present or view. For example, being seen intoxicated by alcohol, socialising in the company of students or being overheard discussing students or staff can lead to accusations of unprofessional conduct. There is also the risk that inappropriate images of staff could be placed on the internet.
5. 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 the individual's work performance. The Head must be consulted and his/her permission sought before any such work is undertaken in order to assess whether this might adversely affect the staff member's role in school.
6. All criminal offences, but in particular those that involve violence or possession or misuse of drugs or sexual misconduct are likely to be regarded as unacceptable and will lead to disciplinary action.
7. You must notify the Headteacher immediately, in writing, if you have been involved in:
  - i. any activity outside employment that might result in a police caution, charge or conviction; or
  - ii. any incident that might adversely impact on your personal reputation or the school's reputation.

All staff need to recognise that failure to meet appropriate standards of behaviour and conduct may result in disciplinary action, including dismissal.

### **Alcohol and Drugs**

1. All employees are expected to ensure that their personal consumption of alcohol or other substances does not interfere with their ability to perform their duties safely and competently.
2. To ensure the safety of all students and staff, all school employees including those who have direct or indirect contact with students are forbidden from consuming alcohol during the time when the school is in session or when directly responsible for students or the site, including breaks. Any breach of this condition is likely to be investigated under the schools disciplinary procedure.
3. Where suspected consumption of alcohol or drugs is judged to affect work performance or conduct, the Headteacher or designated person will take immediate action. This may include sending the employee home so that they and others are

removed from potential risks. Consideration would be taken of their ability to return home safely, e.g. for them not to drive themselves home.

4. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher to identify occasions where alcohol is to be officially served as part of a school function, and where staff may therefore legitimately consume alcohol in moderation. This dispensation may also apply when staff are working away from school and not likely to need to exercise responsibility for the students or the site. On all occasions where consumption of alcohol is approved, staff are reminded of the need to act responsibly, and specifically not to drive a vehicle in contravention of road traffic law. In the case of residential overseas visits, there will be occasions where the visit leader will nominate staff who are officially on duty and required to avoid alcohol, while other staff are only on call and therefore may consume alcohol in moderation.
5. The use of illegal drugs or the misuse of other drugs is forbidden at any time during the working day, including breaks and if alleged is likely to be investigated under the schools disciplinary procedures. The police will be involved in any situation where a member of staff is suspected of possession or supply of an illegal drug whilst on duty.
6. Exceptions apply to drugs prescribed for the individual or over-the-counter medicines used for their intended purpose (in accordance with the instructions given by the prescriber, pharmacist or manufacturer) and where the safety of the individual or others with whom they come into contact is not compromised. Employees must notify the Headteacher or the relevant designated person should they be prescribed medication or plan to take medication that may cause side effects and impair their ability to undertake their duties safely and effectively in which case the employee may need to have reasonable adjustments made to enable them to continue working or be certified sick as appropriate. An exception also applies where a member of staff has had to take possession of an illegal drug or suspected illegal drug when seized in the course of their duties e.g. confiscated from a student.
7. Where employees who are required to drive as part of their conditions of employment but are disqualified from driving as a result of an alcohol or drugs related offence the Headteacher may consider redeployment, if appropriate within school. If redeployment within school is not an option then the employee's continuing employment may be at risk.
8. Any employee suffering from drug or alcohol dependency should declare such dependency to the Headteacher or another member of SLT, and the school will subsequently provide reasonable assistance, treating absences for treatment and/or rehabilitation as any other sickness absence.
9. The school will, where appropriate to do so, adopt a constructive and supportive approach when dealing with employees who may be experiencing drug or alcohol dependency/addiction. This means that employees seeking assistance for a substance misuse problem will not have their employment terminated simply

because of their dependence/addiction. Employees who are identified as possibly experiencing alcohol/drug related problems whether by observation, poor performance, conduct or by their own voluntary admission, will be given assistance.

10. If the Headteacher has concerns that an employee may have a drug or alcohol problem, he/she would first arrange an informal meeting to discuss his/her concerns with that employee. The employee may be accompanied by a Union or Professional Association representative or a work colleague.
11. During the initial meeting, the Headteacher will suggest to the employee that support is provided by way of a referral to the Occupational Health Unit or Employee Assistance Programme. The employee will be made aware that his/her co-operation is required during the referral process in order for the Occupational Health Unit to be able to provide full support and advice.
12. Reasonable time off will be granted for treatment/ support.
13. The employee will return, as far as possible, to their normal duties during and after treatment. This will depend on their ability to perform those duties or on the consequent risk of relapse due to a return to those duties. If a return to normal duties is not considered to be appropriate, redeployment or other suitable options may be considered by the governing body.
14. Notwithstanding the above, there will be circumstances where breaches of the policy, whether dependency-related or not, will be treated as a disciplinary matter and may result in the summary dismissal of the employee. Examples of issues that will be subject to disciplinary action, including the possibility of dismissal, are:
  - being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs on duty, unless one of the specified exceptions above applies
  - incapacity through alcohol or being under the influence of illegal drugs;
  - being convicted of any criminal offence connected with alcohol or drugs, regardless of whether the offence took place inside or outside the workplace;
  - evidence on the strong balance of probabilities that a member of staff has been involved in activities such as possession, consumption, dealing/trafficking, selling, storage of controlled drugs, either on work premises or engaging in such activities outside of work.
15. This list is not exclusive or exhaustive. Disciplinary action will in all cases be proportionate to the circumstances of the breach of this policy.
16. Failure to accept help or continue with treatment or a serious breach as detailed above may render the employee liable to normal disciplinary procedures.
17. Intoxicating substances such as alcohol may remain in the system for some time and even small amounts can impair performance and jeopardise safety. Employees are

responsible for allowing sufficient time for the intoxicating substance to leave their system before reporting for work; this can apply to reporting for work the next day.

### **Gambling**

1. Just as with alcohol and drug addiction, gambling is also an addiction and line managers will offer support to any employees suspected of having a problem resulting from regular gambling which affects their performance.
2. Employees who use school computers for online gambling will usually be subject to disciplinary action.

### **Staff badges, Dress and Appearance**

1. Staff are required to wear the required I.D. at all times when on duty.
2. A person's dress and appearance are matters of personal choice and self expression. However, staff should consider the manner of dress and appearance appropriate to their professional role and that it is commensurate with the high standards the school has set. Staff dress should be professional, smart and conventional.
3. The Headteacher is the arbiter of what is reasonable and appropriate.

### **Gifts, Rewards, Selection of Students**

1. All gifts from suppliers or associates of the school need to be declared to the Headteacher, with the exception of "one off" small token gifts from students or parents. Personal gifts to students could be misinterpreted if they are not well-founded, transparently given, and rare. Staff should be aware that conferring special attention and favour upon a child might be construed as being part of a grooming process which is an offence.
2. Staff should exercise care when selecting students for school teams, productions, trips, and specific work tasks in order to avoid perceptions of favouritism and injustice. Similar care should be taken when a student is not selected for an activity. Methods of selection and non-selection should always be well-founded and publicised in advance.

### **Infatuations**

Staff should be aware that it is not uncommon for students to be strongly attracted to a member of staff and/or develop an infatuation. A member of staff who becomes aware that a student may be infatuated with themselves or a colleague should discuss this at the earliest opportunity with a member of SLT.

## **Social Contact**

1. Staff should not establish or seek to establish social contact with students for the purpose of securing a friendship or to pursue or strengthen a relationship. Where staff need to make an arrangement for an appropriate social occasion for a group of students which will be attended by staff, such as a team social, end of A-level course departmental event, this should be approved by a member of SLT; guidance offered must be observed, and particular care will be necessary where any event is to be hosted at a member of staff's home.
2. Staff should not give their personal details such as home or private email or social networking address to students.
3. They must only give students their home/mobile phone number in exceptional circumstances and for a clearly necessary reason.

## **Physical Contact**

1. Staff should be aware that even well-intentioned physical contact may be misconstrued by the child, an observer or by anyone to whom the action is described.
2. Staff must never touch a child in a way which a reasonable person might consider indecent. Always be prepared to explain actions and accept that all physical contact be open to scrutiny. When physical contact is made with students this should be in response to their needs at the time, of limited duration, and appropriate to their age, state of development, ethnicity, gender, religion and background. Staff should use professional judgement at all times. Extra caution will be required where the member of staff knows that a child has suffered previous abuse or neglect.
3. If staff believe they have been involved in physical contact that could be misinterpreted, it needs to be reported to a member of SLT at the earliest convenience.

## **Restraint**

1. Staff may legitimately intervene to prevent a student from committing a criminal offence, injuring themselves or others. Under **no** circumstance should physical restraint be used as a form of punishment.
2. In all incidences where physical restraint is deemed necessary the incident and subsequent actions should be documented and reported. Wherever possible a witness statement should also be attached.



## **PE and other activities which require physical contact, showers & changing**

1. Those who teach PE or who offer music tuition for example, will on occasions have to initiate physical contact with students in order to support a child so they can perform a task safely, demonstrate the use of a particular piece of equipment/instrument, etc. This should be done with the student's consent, for the minimum time necessary and take place in an open environment. Staff should remain sensitive to any discomfort expressed verbally or non-verbally by the student.
2. Young people are entitled to respect and privacy when changing clothes or taking a shower. There needs, however, to be an appropriate level of supervision. The supervision should be appropriate to the needs and age of the young people concerned and sensitive to the potential for embarrassment.

## **Students in Distress**

Staff should always consider the way in which they offer comfort to a distressed student and always tell a colleague when and how they offered comfort. Staff should report and record any situations which may give rise to concern to a member of SLT.

## **Sexual Contact with Young People**

1. Staff must not pursue sexual relationships with students and young people either in or out of school. Where a person aged 18 or over is in a position of trust with a young person (any student whatever their age), it is an offence for that person to engage in sexual activity with or in the presence of that child, or to cause or incite that child to engage in or watch sexual activity.
2. Staff must avoid any form of communication with a child or young person which could be interpreted as sexually suggestive or provocative – including verbal comments, letters, notes, email, phone calls, texts, physical contact, watching inappropriate material.

## **One to One Situations**

Staff should avoid meetings with students in remote secluded areas of the school. They should ensure there is visual access and/or an open door in one to one situations. Avoid use of "Engaged" or equivalent signs wherever possible. Special arrangements are made for language oral exams. Always report any situation where a child becomes distressed or angry to a senior colleague. Prearranged meetings with students away from the school are not permitted without the approval of a member of the SLT.

## **Transporting Students**

Wherever practical when transporting an individual child in a private vehicle there should be an additional adult acting as an escort. The vehicle should meet all legal requirements, be roadworthy and appropriately insured. The student must wear their seat belt; if space allows, they should sit in the rear seats.

## **Educational Visits**

Staff should take particular care when supervising students in the less formal atmosphere. Staff are reminded they are in a position of trust and need to ensure that their behaviour cannot be interpreted as seeking to establish an inappropriate relationship or friendship. Staff should read the school visits procedures and guidelines before embarking on any school visit.

## **First Aid and Administering Medication**

Staff should only administer first aid or medication appropriate to their level of training and mindful of the availability of more expert care. When administering first aid wherever possible staff should ensure that another adult is present or aware of the action being taken.

## **Curriculum**

Many areas of the curriculum can include or raise subject matter which is sexually explicit or of an otherwise sensitive nature. Care should be taken to ensure that resource materials cannot be misinterpreted and clearly relate to the learning outcomes identified by the lesson plan. Responding to student questions can require careful judgement and staff may wish to take guidance in these circumstances from a specialist member of staff.

## **Photography, Videos and other Creative Arts**

1. Staff should be mindful of having a clear purpose for the activity and think through what will happen to the photographs when the lesson/activity is concluded. Staff should avoid taking images in one-to-one situations.
2. Do not take, display or distribute images of students beyond the limited permission granted by parents and recorded by Mandy English. This allows images to be shown around the site and in school publications.
3. DVDs or other videos / films shown to students should be age appropriate and deemed suitable within an educational environment. If viewing a complete film staff must follow the Censor's guidelines i.e. "15" film should only be shown to a class where every student is over 15 years old: if staff show an edited segment to an audience below the certified age of the film, they must be very careful to ensure the

segment shown does not contain the features which would have merited the whole film being given a higher certification.

### **Internet / Electronic Communication (i.e. text messages, etc.)**

1. Staff must exercise caution when using information technology and be aware of the risks to themselves and others. This should include any references to students or students. The ICT policy sets expectations which must be observed by all staff.
2. Staff should not make contact with students on social networking sites unless this is through a specifically agreed site used only for the provision of academic information to groups of students – any email contact should always be conducted through the member of staff's school email address. If staff have to text a student or call their mobile phone, this should be in exceptional circumstances and with a clear and demonstrable school reason: this might include pastoral staff calling during the study leave period, and PE staff contacting team captains.

### **Sharing Concerns and Recording Incidents**

All staff should be aware of the child protection procedures at Dame Alice Owen's School, and, as a minimum, attend "in house" Child Protection training as required by their role. All staff have a duty to report any child protection concerns to the senior designated person. This can include concerns about the behaviour of a colleague.

### **Whistle blowing**

Whistle blowing is a further mechanism by which staff can voice their concerns, made in good faith, without fear of repercussion. It is a member of staff's responsibility to report any behaviour by colleagues that raises concern, and the Whistle blowing policy makes clear how to go about this, and is on the VLE under staff policies.

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