Willow Vale
School

Staff Code of Conduct

(including Dress Code)

Policy date: September 2026

Approved by: Management Committee

Review date: September 2027

Be Safe – Be Kind - Belong

Introduction

This Code of Conduct is designed to give clear guidance on the standards of behaviour all staff at Willow Vale are expected to observe. It recognises that staff in school are in a unique position of influence and must maintain behaviour that sets a good example and acts as a role model to all of the pupils within the school.

Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that the guidance provided is as detailed as possible, situations may arise which are not specifically covered in the code. Where this happens, employees are expected to use their professional judgement and act in the best interests of the school and its pupils.

Compliance with the Code of Conduct

Failure to comply with the code of conduct, and with the associated policies and required reading, may result in disciplinary action being taken. Where clarification is needed on any aspect of this document, this should be sought from the Head teacher.

Professional responsibilities and conduct

It is expected that all people working in school will carry out their role in line with the requirements outlines in their job descriptions, professional standards and conditions of service, school policy statements and agreed practice. If an employee has a concern or discontent with work practices and work business they must refer this to their direct line manager in the first instance.

All staff are responsible for the safeguarding and well-being of children.

Staff should familiarise themselves with the safeguarding policy and be aware of the signs of physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect. Basic procedures for safeguarding and reporting concerns are displayed around the school including in the Head teachers' office. Employees should maintain appropriate professional boundaries at all times.

- School employees will act in an open and transparent way that does not lead any reasonable person to suspect actions or intent.

- Staff should avoid behaviour that might be misinterpreted by others in order to protect both young people and themselves.

- Where an employee is in a specified position of trust with a child or young person, it is an offence for that person to engage in sexual activity with or in the presence of that child or young person, or incite that child or young person to engage in or watch sexual activity.

This means that adults should not:

- Use their position to gain access to information about children for their own or others' advantage.

- Use their position to intimidate, bully, humiliate, threaten, coerce or undermine children or young people.

- Use their status and standing to form or promote relationships which are of a sexual nature, or which may become so.

- Personal association with safeguarding matters – employees must inform the Head teacher immediately if they, or a close family member, are being investigated in connection with a child protection/ safeguarding allegation out of school.

- If you have a concern about a member of staff or you feel uncomfortable about something a member of staff has done, you MUST report this to the Head teacher. If the concern is about the Head teacher, you MUST report this to the Chair of Governors.

All staff should have ID badge issued by the school visible at ALL times during working hours, including when leading or supporting Educational Visits.

Treating other people with dignity and respect

All employees are expected to treat other colleagues, pupils and external contacts, such as parents, carers, with dignity, fairness, equality and respect.

- Unacceptable behaviour such as discrimination, bullying, harassment or intimidation will not be tolerated in school. This includes physical and verbal abuse and the use of inappropriate language or unprofessional behaviour with colleagues, pupils and parents/carers.

- There are occasions, however, 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.
- Physical contact should never be secretive or casual, or for the gratification of the adult or for the purposes of punishment.

- Physical interventions should be in line with the Relationships Policy and positive handling training (e.g. Price, Team Teach). Where the need to use such actions is foreseen, a risk assessment should be prepared in advance and agreed with parents/carers.

Professional Behaviour and Appearance

- Employees must not misuse or misrepresent their position, qualifications or experience or bring the reputation of the school into disrepute. Such behaviour may lead to disciplinary action.

- All employees are expected to be open and honest at all times.

- All adults working with children and young people will adopt high standards of personal conduct in order to maintain the confidence and respect of the public and to provide a role model. Employees should not:

    - Behave in a manner which would lead others to question their suitability to work with children.

    - Make, or encourage others to make, unprofessional personal comments which scapegoat, demean or humiliate others.

    - CRIMINAL ACTIONS – School employees must inform the Head teacher (Governing Body if the employee is the Head teacher) immediately if they are subject to a criminal conviction, caution, ban, police enquiry, investigation or pending prosecution.

Dress Code

- What is worn for work is a matter of choice for individual staff members, but the choice of clothes should ensure that staff appearance is professional at all times. Staff polo shirts and Fleeces will be available to purchase if desired.

- Staff leading sports sessions can wear sports-wear; there is an expectation that professional appearance is maintained. If staff are supporting students in the swimming pool, they must wear a staff swim shirt and shorts over their swimming attire.

- Footwear must ensure that if a member of staff needs to proceed at haste to ensure the safety of pupils that it remains on the foot, therefore a full heel coverage is required, heels should be no more than 1 inch and toes must be covered at all times. Stiletto shoes and sandals/flip flops/crocs are not permitted to be worn into work.

- Clothing must not be viewed as offensive, revealing or sexually provocative; therefore, underwear must be covered at all times. Political, insensitive or otherwise contentious slogans/images must be avoided. Strappy tops, crop tops and leggings are not permitted.

- Clothing must allow an individual to move at haste and be able to safely be involved in physical intervention where required, therefore short skirts and dresses should be avoided, if skirts and dresses are worn, these should be no shorter than knee length.

- Clothing worn for school must be tidy and clean and look presentable at all times. Denim of all colours is not allowed, clothes with rips and tears are to be avoided.

- Jewellery MUST be kept at a minimum and worn in consideration of the activities you are likely to undertake. One pair of stud earrings is allowed in the ears and no other facial piercings, due to health and safety risks when working in a Pupil Referral Unit. Necklaces must not be worn.

- If visible, tattoos must not cause offence to others; if tattoos are likely to cause offence, they must be covered up.

- Outside clothing should be taken off when inside the building including coats, hats and gloves. Scarves are not permitted at all when working with children and young people for safety reasons.

- Long hair should be tied back wherever possible, please consider hair styles and colours to ensure that you look professional and able to represent the school.

The dress code may be relaxed in circumstances such as, outdoor/adventurous visits, training days, charity days and hot weather – in these circumstances, common sense should prevail at the Head teacher's discretion.

Please read the following policies in line with this code of conduct.

- Safeguarding Policy
- Keeping children safe in education
- Relationships policy
- Job description appropriate to your role and conditions of service
- Professional standards
- Staff handbook
- Health and Safety Policy
- Staff absence Policy
- Pupil Attendance Policy

Declaration of Interests

An employee is required to declare any associations with a group or an organisation which could be considered to conflict with the ethos of the school.

Employees should also consider carefully whether they need to declare to the schools' any relationship with any individual(s) which might cause a conflict with school activities (e.g. a relationship with a Governor, another staff member or a contractor who provides services to the school.)

- Failure to make a relevant declaration of interests is a breach of trust – if in doubt seek advice.

- All declarations should be submitted on a school Register of Business Interests form.

Probity of records

Staff are expected to maintain pupil tracking and progress records which are accurate. The deliberate falsification of documents is not acceptable. When storing and working with pupils' records, adherence to data protection procedures is crucial.

Financial Matters

Financial regulations for schools – all employees must comply with the schools/local authority's financial regulations.

Financial expenditure on behalf of the school should always be agreed in advance and is subject to monitoring. Misuse of school finances will be considered as a matter for disciplinary/ criminal action.

Any gifts that are received other than the exceptions, should be declared in writing to the Governing Body, exceptions would be:

- A gift offered by parents/ children to express their thanks and gratitude.
- A low-cost gift given to the school for the purpose of advertising a service or company e.g., diaries, pens, these do not have to be declared.

Other employment

Employees are permitted to take up secondary employment outside the school, as long as the activity does not constitute a conflict of interest, adversely affect their primary employment at the school or exceed the legal working limit of 48 hours per week as defined by the Working Time regulations.

Health and Safety

- Employees MUST adhere to the school's Health and Safety Policy, procedures and guidance – each employee must ensure that they take every action to keep themselves and everyone in the school environment safe and well.

- If a member of staff has a health issue i.e. asthma, it is their responsibility to alert the senior leadership team of this to ensure a risk assessment is devised where appropriate.

- Personal medication should be stored safely and securely and not accessible to children and young people.

The use of alcohol, illegal and socially unacceptable drugs during working hours is unacceptable. All employees are expected to arrive for work in a fit state for work.

All school premises both internal and external are no smoking areas and therefore smoking is not permitted anywhere, this includes vapes/ e-cigarettes.

Use of school premises, equipment and communication systems.

- School equipment and systems (e.g. phones, iPads, computers, emails) are available only for school-related activities. They should not be used for another job/personal use unless this has been authorised by the Head teacher.

- Illegal, inappropriate or unacceptable use of school equipment and communication systems may result in disciplinary action and in serious cases could lead to an employee's dismissal. This list of prohibited use is not exhaustive but includes:

    - Creating/ sending/ forwarding any message/email that would be considered inappropriate/ unacceptable.

    - Committing or implying commitment to any contractual arrangements.

    - Access to or publication of illegal, offensive, unacceptable or inappropriate or non-work-related material.

    - Any illegal activities.

    - Posting or sharing confidential information about the school' and/or other employees, children or parents.

- Gambling, gaming or streaming.

- Unauthorised use of school facilities (or employee's personal IT equipment), for personal use during working time.

Employees who are unsure if something he/she receives or proposes to do might breach this policy should seek advice from the Head teacher.

The school has the right to monitor emails, phone-calls, internet activity or document production (e.g. to detect misuse, protect systems from viruses and to investigate suspected fraud and/ or child protection offences.)

(Please ensure you have read the Online safety Policy, Social Media Policy and Acceptable Use Agreement)

Social networking websites, social contact and internet safety.

- Adults must ensure they are familiar with, and promote, the Online Safety Policy.

- Adults working in schools should not seek or establish relationships and/or contact with pupils/parents and carers through social networking sites. With a high mobility cohort, all staff are expected to alert the Headteacher and the Designated Safeguarding Lead if a pupil starts in the provision, whose family is known to the staff member.

- Internal email systems should only be used in accordance with the school's Acceptable Use Policy Agreement. This is for school emails that may contain sensitive data.

- Adults who work in school should adhere to the Council's guidelines regarding their personal use of social networking sites, this is within the school's Online Safety Policy.

- Adults are strongly advised, in their own interests to take steps to ensure that their personal data is protected from anybody who does not have permission to access it.

- This means that adults should:

    - Refrain from identifying themselves as working for the school in a way which has the effect of bringing the school into disrepute.

    - Not identify other employees or children without their consent.

- Not make any defamatory remarks about the school, its employees, children, parents or any other school community members.

- Not disclose data or information about the school, employees or children that could breach the Data Protection Act 1998 for example, posting photographs or images of children or young people.

- Not allow pupils to access their personal social networking accounts.

- Ensure that personal social networking sites are set as private and pupils are never listed as approved contacts.

- Never access the social networking sites of pupils. Unless at the specific request of SLT for curriculum or administration purposes.

- Not give their personal contact details to children including their mobile telephone number and not use internet or web-based communication channels to send personal messages to children/young people.

- When using a work mobile telephone, staff are reminded that most communication will be with parents/carers. Where a parent/carer has consented to their child communicated with a staff member on their work mobile phone, this is limited to the hours of 9 am to 3 pm and only for discussion with regards their attendance at school and wellbeing. All communication direct with children is to be done in consultation with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the Site Lead.

- Adults who work with children and young people should not seek to have social contact with the families of children they work with, unless the reason for the contact has been firmly established and agreed with senior leaders.

- Failure to comply with the guidelines on staff use of social networking sites may lead to disciplinary action being initiated.

Use of social networking by staff in a professional capacity

The school has its own Twitter and Facebook pages for the School. Staff are of course welcomed to support this by commenting, sharing and re-tweeting to raise the profile of the school in a positive light.

- All staff need to be mindful of professional boundaries and ensure that they are following the guidance issued in the Social Media Policy

- Staff should not make any comment that could bring the school into disrepute or question their suitability to work with children

- Staff should not add any comments that could cause offense

- Staff should not make any comments that could be seen as extremist views

- Teachers to follow the guidance set out in part 2 of teacher's standards relating to personal and professional conduct

- TAs to follow the expectation set out in TA standards

- All staff to follow the staff code of conduct

Personal equipment

Employees must not use their own personal equipment such as mobile phones, tablets or cameras to make recordings or take pictures of pupils, parents or other employees.

Confidentiality

- All employees at the school and the Governing Body come into contact with a significant volume of data and information in relation to pupils, staff, school activities and many other matters. **There is an obligation to observe the requirements of the Data protection Act 1998.**

- Under the Data Protection Act 1998, staff are required to collect, maintain and dispose of sensitive or personal data in a responsible manner. Use must be made of the schools' shredder and disposal systems.

- Staff should not disclose sensitive information about the School, its employees, pupils, parents, carers or the local authority to third parties.

    - Exceptions would be the necessary disclosure of suspected/alleged abuse of a pupil to Child Protection officers; discussion with a person accompanying or representing an employee in a formal meeting or disclosure under the Whistleblowing Policy.

- Where employees are asked for school information outside the school environment, this request should be referred back to the school and/ or a meeting arranged in school to discuss the matter.

- All media communication must be directed to the Head teacher.

- Staff must provide data to parents seeking information about pupil's progress or other colleagues in the school/ transfer destinations.

Copyright

Employees are required to adhere to the guidance on copyright. This refers to copyright of published materials and music.