



Kingston Educational Trust

STAFF CODE OF CONDUCT July 2024

Date approved: 1 July 2024 (*minor updates relating to the MIS and references*)
Approved by: Buildings, Finance and Resources Committee
Frequency of review: Annual
Last review: July 2023 (with staff consultation)
Next review due: July 2025

1. Introduction and aims	2
2. Legislation, guidance and other policies	2
3. Making a Professional Judgement	3
4. Professional and personal conduct	3
5. Conduct outside of work	4
6. Maintaining professional relationships with pupils	4
7. Communication with pupils and social media	5
8. A Whole School Approach to Safeguarding	6
Concerns about the welfare of a pupil	6
Concerns about the behaviour of a member of staff or other adult working in or on behalf of the school	7
Allegations that may meet the 'harms threshold'	7
Low Level Concerns	7
9. Disclosure of Matters That Would be Revealed by a DBS Check	8
10. Use of mobile phones and other devices	8
11. Photography and Videos	8
12. Home visits	9
13. Physical contact with pupils	9
14. Showers and Changing	10
15. Transporting pupils	10
16. Alcohol	10
17. Workplace Harassment and Bullying	11
18. Confidentiality	11
19. Dress and Appearance	11
20. Private Tuition	12
21. Staff Involved in Setting Public Exam Questions	12
22. School Communications	13
Email	13
Letters	13
Dealing with the media	14
23. Reference requests	14
24. Gifts to staff and bribes	14
25. Actively promoting fundamental British values	15
26. A non-partisan approach to political, ethical and religious issues	15
27. Whistleblowing	15
28. Failure to follow this Code	16
29. Monitoring arrangements	16
30. Links with other policies	16

1. Introduction and aims

This Staff Code of Conduct is designed to ensure a positive, supportive school environment in which all members of our community are safe, happy and treated with respect. It sets out clear, professional expectations and boundaries and encourages trust and open communication.

For the purposes of this Code of Conduct 'staff' includes all employees of the trust and also volunteers, agency/supply staff and contractors working in or on behalf of the trust/a school.

2. Legislation, guidance and other policies

This Code of Conduct has regard to the guidance provided to schools in the Safer Recruitment Consortium's [Safer Working Practice for Adults who Work with Children and Young People in Education Settings](#) and the personal and professional behaviours set out in Part Two of the [Teachers' Standards](#). It also covers the areas as required by the Department for Education's statutory guidance [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)

This Code also reflects the Trust's core values including an expectation of the highest possible standards of ethical behaviour and commitment to the [Framework for Ethical Leadership in Education](#).

3. Making a Professional Judgement

This Code of Conduct is not exhaustive. If situations arise that are not covered by this Code, staff must use their professional judgement and always act in the best interests of pupils.

4. Professional and personal conduct

Staff have an influential position in their school and are responsible for the safeguarding and wellbeing of the children in their care. They must uphold public trust and act as role models for pupils by consistently demonstrating high standards of ethics and behaviour.

We expect that all staff will:

- have regard for the paramount need to safeguard pupils' safety and well-being, following the procedures in the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- act with professional and personal integrity at all times, treating pupils, colleagues and others within our community with dignity and respect;
- uphold the characteristics and virtues that support ethical behaviour and decision making, in particular: kindness, honesty, fairness, openness and acting impartially and without bias;
- have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the Trust and of the school in which they work,
- maintain high standards in their own attendance and punctuality

Staff must **not**:

- use inappropriate or offensive language, be sarcastic, embarrass, humiliate, or make remarks or 'jokes' or engage in 'banter' with pupils or colleagues of a personal, abusive, intimidating, discriminatory, inappropriate or offensive nature;
- discriminate on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, disability, race, religion

- or belief or any other protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010;
- use physical force against a pupil (other than when restraining a pupil in accordance with the school's policies) or threaten to do so;
- allow, encourage or condone pupils to act in an illegal, inappropriate or unsafe manner;
- undermine fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs;
- be a member of an organisation whose goals are in conflict with the values and equality policies of the school or Trust;
- consume or be under the influence of alcohol or any substance whilst responsible for pupils (see section 'Alcohol' below) . This includes any prescribed medication, which may affect the ability to care for pupils;
- undertake any work with pupils when they are not in a fit and proper physical or emotional state to do so.

Staff are expected to take responsibility for their own actions and behaviour and report any difficulties they are experiencing to the Head teacher as soon as possible, so that appropriate actions can be taken at an early stage to provide support, in particular:

- coping with a child presenting particularly challenging behaviour in situations where they anticipate that they may not be sufficiently qualified, trained or experienced to deal with or handle appropriately;
- any personal difficulties or problems that may affect their behaviour or conduct towards pupils or colleagues;
- signs that a pupil may be developing an infatuation (with either themselves or a colleague).

5. Conduct outside of work

All staff have a responsibility to maintain confidence in their ability to safeguard children and are therefore expected to adopt high standards of personal conduct outside school and work (including online). Staff must avoid behaviour or actions in their personal life which would compromise their position in the workplace or bring the trust/school (or teaching profession) into disrepute. Staff should be aware that their behaviour, and the behaviour of those with whom they have a relationship or association in their personal lives may indicate an unsuitability to work with children or young people. This covers a range of conduct, including but not limited to relevant criminal offences, such as violence, sexual misconduct or use of illegal drugs, as well as negative comments about the trust/school on social media.

If staff have found themselves in a situation which could be misinterpreted, or might appear compromising to others, and/or on reflection they believe they may have behaved in such a way that falls below the expected personal and professional standards they should speak to the Head teacher without delay.

6. Maintaining professional relationships with pupils

Staff must maintain professional boundaries and relationships with pupils at all times, including outside school and online. They must avoid conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation, intentions or suitability to work with children or which could be misinterpreted by others.

Staff are expected to:

- use appropriate language and not:
 - use names or terms of endearment which are inappropriate (taking into account the age and stage of development of the child);
 - request any personal information from pupils or offer personal information about themselves beyond that necessary in their professional role,
 - allow inappropriate conversations or enquiries of a sexual nature to occur;
 - comment on a pupil's appearance, including personal flattery or criticism;
 - treat pupils disrespectfully or discriminatorily, based upon their perceived or actual protected characteristics;
 - allow or partake in suggestive humour, banter, jokes or innuendos of a sexual nature;
 - use obscene or inappropriate gestures and language;
- ensure their actions are warranted, proportionate, safe and necessary;
- treat all pupils fairly, without favouring particular pupils or building 'special relationships' (staff should not adopt an ongoing support role beyond the scope of their position);
- avoid one to one working with a pupil (including online), except where this forms part of a plan agreed with their line manager.

Staff must report to the Head teacher any one to one situation in which they have become aware that a pupil has shown signs of becoming uncomfortable or ill at ease.

Pre-arranged meetings with pupils away from the school premises for school related purposes are not permitted unless prior written approval has been obtained from their parent and the Head teacher. See also 'Home Visits' below.

Staff should avoid contact with pupils outside of school hours if possible. There may be exceptional circumstances, for example, where a member of staff has a pre-existing friendship with a parent which means that normal social life will bring the pupil into social contact with them. Staff should use their professional judgement and inform the Head teacher of any relationship with a parent/carer where this extends beyond the usual parent/professional relationship and they have any regular social contact with a pupil which could give rise to concern.

Whilst it is acceptable to offer prizes of small value in certain tasks or competitions, staff must not give personal gifts to pupils. These could be interpreted as a gesture to bribe or groom or indicate favouritism.

If a staff member is concerned at any point that an interaction between themselves and a pupil may be misinterpreted, or if a staff member is concerned at any point about a fellow staff member and a pupil, this should be immediately reported to the Head teacher, see section 8 below.

Under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, it is an 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 to that child, even if the relationship is consensual.

Staff are strongly discouraged from forming personal relationships with former pupils, including on social media. In the event of the school becoming aware of a close relationship between a member of staff and a former pupil which may raise concerns about their suitability to work with children, the Head teacher will contact the LA designated officer (LADO) for advice and guidance.

7. Communication with pupils and social media

Communications with pupils must always be professional in nature and in motivation, open and transparent and made using only school/trust email addresses or telephones. Personal contact details should not be exchanged between staff and pupils. This includes social media and gaming profiles. If pupils locate personal contact details by any other means and attempt to contact or correspond with staff, they should not respond and must report the matter to the Head teacher. Inappropriate messages sent by pupils to staff school email addresses should also be reported to the Head teacher as soon as possible.

If a member of staff needs to contact a pupil by telephone in an emergency and where they do not have access to a school-owned device, they should use their own device and hide (by inputting 141) their own mobile number for confidentiality purposes and then report the incident to the Head teacher.

Staff personal social media profiles should not be available to pupils or parents. Profiles should be set to private and settings regularly checked to ensure full protection at all times, and so that pupils or parents do not have access to personal data or images. Staff should not accept friend requests from or follow pupils or their parents on social media. Where a member of staff has a pre-existing friendship with a parent, see the guidance in Section 6 above.

Online participation can result in comments being permanently and widely available and open to being published in other media. Staff must stay within the legal framework and be aware that libel, defamation, copyright and data protection laws apply. Staff should not:

- disclose confidential information regarding the trust/school online;
- make commitments or engage in activities on behalf of the school unless they are expressly authorised to do so;
- post comments about the school, pupils, parents or colleagues;
- respond to social media comments regarding the trust or its schools, unless expressly authorised to do so. In particular, staff should not respond or retaliate to derogatory or abusive statements about the trust/ school, its staff or pupils, but should report the comments to the Head teacher.

Staff will ensure that they do not post any images or data online in personal social media accounts that identify children who are pupils at the school, staff or anyone directly connected with the school or trust whilst engaged in school/trust activities. If staff wish to share pupils' work on social media for professional purposes pupils should not be identified.

If a member of staff becomes aware of any inappropriate online communication between a pupil and another person a report should be made immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

If a member of staff becomes aware that they are in an online game with a pupil, they should cease to play against that pupil and should not enter any games containing that player as part of the group and should report the circumstances to the Head teacher without delay. Under no circumstances should staff seek out pupils and/or share their own gamer tags/ID with pupils.

Staff are to use full names (Mr/Dr/Ms/Mrs/Mx or other chosen title and Surname) to convey politeness in front of pupils and to avoid generic archaic terms such as Sir and Miss which may imply a lower status for women and which is not consistent with inclusive practice.

8. A Whole School Approach to Safeguarding

Concerns about the welfare of a pupil

Safeguarding pupils and promoting their welfare is everyone's responsibility. Staff must consider at all times what is in the best interests of pupils and provide a safe environment in which they can learn.

All staff must familiarise themselves with the processes set out in the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and have a duty to report any concerns about the wellbeing of a pupil immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or a Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead either face to face or by telephone, following the procedures set out in that policy (a copy is available in the policy folder in the School's SharedDrive or on the Policy page of the school website).

Concerns about the behaviour of a member of staff or other adult working in or on behalf of the school

There is a duty to report (including self-reporting) any incident in which a member of staff or other adult has or may have behaved in a way that is inconsistent with this Code of Conduct including inappropriate behaviours inside, outside of work or online.

ALL concerns, no matter how small and any allegations regarding staff, agency/supply teachers, volunteers and contractors must always be immediately reported to the Head teacher, either face to face or by telephone. In their absence the report should be made to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or to a Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead, who will inform the Head teacher immediately on their return. If the concern relates to the Head teacher it must be reported to the trust's Executive Director, (where at The Kingston Academy the Head teacher is also the Executive Director, concerns must be reported to the Chair of the Trust board).

This includes behaviour which may meet the 'harm test' and any 'low level' concerns as set out in the DfE statutory guidance [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) and described below, staff do not need to determine the nature of their concerns, this will be for the Head teacher. Full details of the school's response to a concern or allegation are set out in the separate Allegations of Abuse and Low Level Concerns Policy (a copy is available in the policy folder in the School's Shared Drive or on the Policy page of the school website).

Allegations that may meet the 'harms threshold'

This is behaviour which may indicate a person poses, or might pose, a risk of harm if they continue to work with children. They may have:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;

- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child;
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children; or
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

The last bullet point captures a broad range of behaviour which may indicate risk where an incident occurs outside of school and did not involve children, but could have an impact on that person's suitability to work with children and will be treated as a potential safeguarding as well as disciplinary matter.

Low Level Concerns

A 'low-level' concern is a behaviour towards a child that does not meet the 'harm threshold' above, but is inconsistent with this Code of Conduct. It 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 their mobile phone, contrary to school policy
- engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door; or
- humiliating children;

Low-level concerns can include inappropriate conduct inside and outside of work (including online).

If staff are not sure whether behaviour would be deemed a low-level concern it is important that they report it to the Head teacher. 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.

Staff are also encouraged to self-refer to the Head teacher if:

- they find themselves in a situation that could be misinterpreted or might appear compromising to others, and/or
- on reflection they believe they have acted in a way that falls below the expected professional standards.

9. Disclosure of Matters That Would be Revealed by a DBS Check

All staff must disclose to the Head teacher without delay any matter that would be revealed by an enhanced DBS check (criminal record check including barred list information). In addition, all staff will be asked to sign a statement annually that they are not aware of any such matter (or have already disclosed full details to the head teacher). Staff should also disclose any name changes that they have not previously declared.

10. Use of mobile phones and other devices

All staff must accept and follow the school's ICT Acceptable Use Agreement (a copy of which can be found on the KET CPD Site (Moodle) which is included in staff Bookmarks).

Personal mobile phones or devices must not be used during teaching periods or when on duty or otherwise in the presence of pupils (during which times they must be stored out of sight and switched off or switched to 'silent' mode), unless they are being used for a work related purpose or permission has been given for personal use by a member of the Senior Leadership Team or in emergency circumstances.

Staff must never use a mobile phone or other personal device to make a call whilst driving pupils in a mini bus or car, regardless of whether the device is hands free, to ensure they are fully in control of the vehicle at all times.

11. Photography and Videos

Staff must not take photographs or videos of pupils on their personal mobile phones, cameras or other devices. If for any reason a photograph or moving image is taken on a personal device or camera this must be reported to the Head teacher without delay and the image must be transferred to a school device and all copies deleted within 24 hours.

All photographs taken of pupils must comply with data protection requirements and the need to safeguard the dignity, safety and wellbeing of pupils. Staff must:

- only photograph pupils for specific, professional purposes;
- ensure pupils are aware that they are being photographed and that they understand why the images are being taken and for what purpose (eg for the school newsletter or twitter) and that they are happy and agree to this;
- remain sensitive to any pupils who, for whatever reason, appear uncomfortable or may have religious, cultural or family/safeguarding reasons for choosing not to be photographed;
- not take images in one-to-one situations, or which show a single pupil with no surrounding context;
- ensure all pupils in images are appropriately dressed;
- only publish images of pupils where their parent/carer has given explicit written consent to do so for that specific purpose (and where they are deemed to be mature enough to exercise their own data rights (usually aged 12 and above) the pupils have also given their written consent (in both cases this information is recorded in the school's MIS);
- not include the full name of any child with a published image;
- before publishing an image consider whether it is appropriate and maintains the dignity of all pupils shown, bearing in mind the potential for it becoming part of a child's public image and how it may affect their long-term wellbeing (for example avoiding images which have the potential to embarrass a child now or later in life);
- only retain images on school systems while there is a clear and agreed purpose for doing so and ensure they are deleted once they are no longer required for that purpose.

12. Home visits

All work with pupils and parents should, wherever possible, be undertaken in school. There may, however, be occasions where the use of one-off or regular home visits to support a family is necessary and they may also be used in response to urgent or specific situations.

Where a member of staff proposes to visit a pupil's home, it is essential that a member of the senior leadership team has approved the visit, or sequence of visits, that the objective or purpose of the visit

is clear and that an appropriate risk assessment is in place to safeguard both the member of staff and pupil. There should also be an agreement that a parent or other suitable adult will remain in the home throughout the visit. A risk assessment should include an evaluation of any known factors regarding the pupil, parents and others living in the household and be approved by a member of the senior leadership team.

13. Physical contact with pupils

There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for staff to have physical contact with pupils (see examples below), but it is crucial that they do so only in ways which are appropriate to their professional role, taking into account the pupil's age and stage of development and their individual needs, feelings and any agreed care plan. Staff should, therefore, use their professional judgement at all times. Staff who provide personal care for pupils should refer to the separate, specific school policy.

Staff should not have unnecessary physical contact with pupils and should be alert to the fact that minor forms of friendly physical contact can be misconstrued by pupils or others. A member of staff can never take the place of a parent in providing physical comfort and should be cautious of any demonstration of affection. Physical contact should never be secretive, or represent a misuse of authority: staff should never touch pupils in a manner which is or may be considered sexual, threatening, gratuitous or intimidating.

It is acknowledged that some staff, for example, those who teach PE, or who offer music tuition, will, on occasions, have to initiate physical contact with pupils in order to support a pupil so they can perform a task safely, to demonstrate the use of a particular piece of equipment/instrument or assist them with an exercise. This should be done with the pupil's agreement, explaining the reason why contact is necessary and what form that contact will take and staff should be sensitive to cultural or religious views about touching.

Contact under these circumstances should be for the minimum time necessary to complete the activity and take place in an open environment. Staff should remain sensitive to any discomfort expressed verbally or non-verbally by the pupil and use their professional judgement at all times.

Physical restraint may on occasion be needed to secure the safety of a pupil or staff member, or where there is a serious breach of school discipline, or to prevent serious damage to property, and as a last resort when all efforts to diffuse the situation have failed. Please refer to the school's relevant policy for more detailed information

If a member of staff believes that an action could be misinterpreted or that it may have been misinterpreted, they should record the incident and circumstances and inform the Head teacher, who will advise on the best course of action in the circumstances.

14. Showers and Changing

Pupils are entitled to respect and privacy when changing clothes or taking a shower. However, there needs to be an appropriate level of supervision in order to safeguard pupils, satisfy health and safety considerations and ensure that bullying does not occur. This supervision should be appropriate to the needs and age of the pupils concerned and sensitive to the potential for embarrassment.

15. Transporting pupils

Staff should never offer to transport pupils in their personal vehicle, other than in an emergency or where not doing so would mean the child may be at risk. In these circumstances, reasonable attempts should be made to contact parents/carers to seek consent, the driver should be accompanied by another adult where possible and the matter should be immediately recorded and reported to both a member of the senior leadership team and the pupil's parent(s)/carer(s) if this has not been done already

16. Alcohol

Staff must not consume or be under the influence of alcohol at any time when they are supervising and responsible for pupils, including whilst on a trip, visit or attending an event.

Pupils and students are never permitted to purchase or consume alcohol during a school trip or at events, regardless of whether they are aged 18, 19 or over the age limit in the destination.

Staff should avoid contact with pupils outside of school. If a member of staff finds themselves in a pub or other meeting place in which current pupils are drinking, the member of staff should not join the pupils or buy them drinks. They may need to draw the attention of bar staff to the age of the pupils, if they are below 18.

For expectations on staff, where a pre-existing friendship with a parent may bring them into contact with pupils outside school, see section 6 above: 'Maintaining professional relationships with pupils.'

17. Workplace Harassment and Bullying

All staff should feel safe and supported at work and we are committed to promoting a positive culture that supports wellbeing and a diverse and inclusive workforce. All staff must be treated with dignity and respect and bullying and harassment will not be tolerated.

The Equality Act 2010 made harassment of a sexual nature and harassment related to protected characteristics unlawful and defines it as: unwanted conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual. Protected characteristics are: age, sex, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation.

18. Confidentiality

In the course of their duties, staff are often privy to confidential information about the school/trust and personal data, including sensitive and confidential information about colleagues, pupils and their families. This must never be shared casually in conversation or passed to any person other than on a strictly need-to-know basis. In circumstances where a person's identity does not need to be disclosed, the information should be used anonymously.

This information should never be:

- used to humiliate, embarrass or blackmail others;

- used for a purpose other than what it was collected and intended for;
- disclosed to anyone unless there is a legal basis on which to share information (including for example the provision of education, meeting contractual obligations in staff contracts, or sharing safeguarding concerns) or with consent from the relevant party or parties.

Confidentiality and data protection do not override the fundamental duty to act in the best interests of pupils and to report safeguarding or welfare concerns. Staff who are unsure should speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

19. Dress and Appearance

Staff should maintain a standard of dress and appearance appropriate to their professional role and be mindful that they are examples to our learners (this also applies to online or virtual teaching). We require pupils to be smart in their uniform and smart and professional appearance is expected at all times for staff (and to a higher standard when meeting with parents and external visitors and when representing the school).

The following items are not appropriate:

- denim
- leggings or jeggings (unless worn underneath other clothing such as a dress)
- flip flops

The dress code may be relaxed as appropriate whilst staff are teaching physical activities, outdoor/adventure visits, training days, charity days as required and determined by the particular activity and hot weather. In these circumstances, common sense should prevail at the Head teacher's discretion.

PE staff should wear appropriate sports clothing and footwear and do not need to change when moving into classroom based teaching.

Facial coverings worn as part of religious beliefs or cultural practice will generally be expected to be removed whilst a member of staff is on duty, to optimise good communication and to help identify individual members of staff.

Staff should ensure their appearance and clothing is not likely to be viewed as offensive, overly revealing or sexually provocative and no aspect of their dress or appearance should be politically motivated, discriminatory or insensitive.

Staff should ensure that they are dressed safely and appropriately for the tasks they undertake and wear clothing appropriate to their work area. If they are supplied with a uniform or protective clothing for their role with the school/trust then they must wear these whilst carrying out their duties. Facilities staff may wear practical clothing as appropriate to their role as determined and provided by the school/trust.

Items of jewellery must usually be removed during PE, other physical activities and some practical lessons where they could present a health and safety risk to the wearer and/or others. Where the

wearing of a religious or cultural item is a requirement of the staff member's religion or belief, the item may be taped or made secure as an alternative to removal, where that would address the risk (as determined by the head teacher on a case by case basis and acting reasonably).

Fingernails should be kept to a reasonable length, taking into account potential health and safety considerations.

All staff must wear their name badges/ID when on school/trust premises.

20. Private Tuition

Staff are not permitted to provide private tuition to pupils at their school (or within the Trust) that results in any financial remuneration or benefit in kind. If a pupil requires additional support, this must be agreed with parents/carers and provided by the school, or parents may seek support for their child that is independent of the school and Trust.

21. Staff Involved in Setting Public Exam Questions

Any member of staff involved in setting any public exam or assessment question must make the Head teacher and the Exam Officer at their school aware of this without delay.

22. School Communications

Effective communication with parents/carers supports positive partnerships and staff are expected to:

- respond to written communication (including email) and telephone enquiries promptly, providing an acknowledgement within 2 school days and a substantive response within 10 school days;
- inform parents/carers as soon as possible if the matter has been passed on to another member of staff and the expected timescale for a response;
- seek to establish friendly but professional relationships. Parents/ carers are to be addressed in a formal manner as Mr, Mrs, Miss, Ms, Mx, Dr etc. The use of a parent, carer or staff member's first name is not appropriate.

Email

Staff must check their email regularly, but are not expected to respond to emails outside school/working hours and should not send non-urgent emails to colleagues before 8am or after 8pm (the 'schedule send' facility can be used so that emails arrive the next morning).

Emails (including those sent to colleagues) should be professional and respectful at all times.

Staff should be aware that any work email may be disclosable on a Subject Access Request made by or on behalf of the person it relates to.

Documents should be linked in emails, rather than attached. This helps to ensure GDPR compliance: if information is shared in error an attachment can be deleted or updated, but an email and its attachment cannot be recalled.

Emails to parents should usually be sent using Arbor (or the school's equivalent system). If emailing a small group of parents, they should all be blind copied so that their email addresses are not shared.

Telephone

All telephone calls to parents/carers must be made from a school telephone and recorded in the communications log in Behaviour Watch (or the equivalent for that school).

Letters

Letters to all parents and carers/whole year cohorts/groups must be processed through the school administration team and approved by a member of the Senior Leadership Team before posting/emailing using Arbor (or the school's equivalent system).

Copies of correspondence with individual parents and carers should be placed on pupil files on Arbor. No letter should go out in the Head teacher's name unless it has first been approved by them.

Meetings and parent behaviour

Staff should call a meeting to a close in the event of parents/ carers becoming angry or abusive. This should be reported immediately to a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

Dealing with the media

All media enquiries must be directed to the member of the Senior Leadership Team responsible for Communications, who must also approve any articles for publication in media outlets.

23. Reference requests

If a member of staff receives a request for a reference in respect of a current/former colleague or pupil, the Head teacher must be notified straight away and the request forwarded to them. The Head teacher may then seek the views of relevant staff and compose the reference themselves, or may ask a member of staff to prepare a draft for their approval. All references must be approved by the Head teacher before they are sent out and staff must not provide references on behalf of the school or Trust without the Head teacher's consent.

All staff references must be drafted using the approved proforma, which is available from the Trust's HR team.

A formal reference reflects on the school/trust and not just on the person providing it and the school may also hold information which individual members of staff are unaware of. There are also legal risks associated with providing references: there is a duty to take reasonable care to ensure references are true, accurate, fair and not misleading. If this is breached either the ex-employee or the new employer may have a potential claim for damages and the ex-employee may also claim defamation or discrimination.

When writing references only statements that can be supported by facts should be used (for example from performance reviews or attendance records) and members of staff must be able to defend all statements included.

Before providing a reference the school/Trust must first have the consent of the person who is the subject of the reference request.

24. Gifts to staff and bribes

There are occasions when pupils or parents wish to pass small tokens of appreciation to staff, for example 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. Staff need to take care that they do not accept any gift that might be construed as a bribe by others, or lead the giver to expect preferential treatment.

As a general guideline, business gifts and hospitality should not be accepted by any member of staff, to ensure that the trust/school can demonstrate that no undue influence has been applied or could be said to have been applied by any supplier or anyone else dealing with the school/trust. Any member of staff concerned about whether they or their colleagues may be at risk of giving or receiving a bribe (financial or otherwise) should contact the Director of Finance.

Any member of staff receiving any gifts or entertainment valued at more than £30 (or that they reasonably believe have a value of more than £30) must disclose this to the Director of Finance and this must be recorded in the Trust's Gifts Register.

25. Actively promoting fundamental British values

In common with all schools, we are required to actively promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and respect and tolerance for others, including those with different faiths and beliefs. We must also be able to demonstrate that we do this.

These values are entirely in keeping with the ethos of The Kingston Academy and should therefore be inherent in everything that we do. Nevertheless, it is important always to bear these in mind and to ensure that they infuse every aspect of our school life, including both in the classroom and enrichment activities.

26. A non-partisan approach to political, ethical and religious issues

A healthy understanding of the world around us is an important part of the educational experience that we want to provide for our pupils. In doing so, the emphasis should always be on open-mindedness, tolerance and critical evaluation – encouraging pupils to appreciate that, where moral, ethical, religious or political questions are concerned, there is always likely to be a multiplicity of viewpoints, and stressing the need to respect the views of others.

When such issues arise, in subject teaching or in the context of enrichment activities staff must always ensure that they offer a balanced presentation of opposing views which precludes the promotion of partisan (ie, one-sided) opinions or dogma. In particular, pupils should not be actively encouraged by teachers or others to support particular political viewpoints.

27. Whistleblowing

Whistle-blowing relates to wrongdoing that it is "in the public interest" to report. Examples 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. Concerns should be reported to the Head teacher. If the concern is about the Head teacher, or it is believed they may be involved in the wrongdoing in some way, the staff member should report their concern to the Trust's Executive Director (or at TKA where the Head teacher is also the Executive Director to the Chair of the Trust Board.

If staff feel unable to raise an issue internally, other whistleblowing channels should be used and guidance can be accessed at www.gov.uk/whistleblowing.

The trust has a separate Whistle Blowing Policy which sets out the process in full and is shared with staff on induction and can be found published on the school website and in the policy folder in the school's Shared Drive.

28. Failure to follow this Code

Staff should be aware that failure to follow this Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action being taken, as set out in the Disciplinary Policy (a copy can be found in the policy folder in the School's shared Drive).

29. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually (or earlier as required) by the Executive Director and a member of the Senior Leadership Team at each school and where material changes are proposed, in consultation with staff. It will be approved by the Buildings, Finance and Resources Committee.

30. Links with other policies

This Code of Conduct links in particular with the following related policies to which staff should refer (copies can be found in the policy folder in the School's Shared Drive):

- Disciplinary Policy, which sets out the processes that may be used if staff breach this Code of Conduct. It also sets out examples of what we will deem as misconduct and gross misconduct
- Allegations of Abuse against Staff and Low Level Concerns Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Intimate Care Policy
- ICT Staff Acceptable Use Agreement
- Whistle Blowing Policy

Next Review due: July 2025

Approved: Buildings Finance and Resources Committee

Date: 1 July 2024