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Reading School

Code of conduct for all staff and volunteers

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Headteacher

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Code of conduct for all staff and volunteers

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Code of conduct for all staff and volunteers

Introduction

Reading School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff to share this commitment. This code of conduct has been produced to help staff and volunteers establish the safest possible learning and working environments which safeguard children and reduce the risk of them being falsely accused of improper or unprofessional conduct. The document clarifies what is expected in terms of professional behaviour and what might constitute illegal behaviour or be considered as misconduct.

Staff, managers and volunteers should continually monitor and review practice to ensure this guidance is followed.

This code of conduct should be read in conjunction with the:

- [School's child protection policy and procedures.](#)
- [School's behaviour policy.](#)
- [DFE statutory guidance *Keeping children safe in education* \(September 2016\)](#)

This code of conduct is based upon the non-statutory document *Guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings* dated October 2015 which has been adapted and updated by the Safer Recruitment Consortium from the original 2009 IRSC/DfE document.

This safeguarding code of conduct will be reviewed annually.

If a member of staff does not follow this code of conduct this may lead to disciplinary action being taken.

Underpinning principles

The following principles apply to all members of our school:

- The welfare of the child is paramount.
- Staff should understand their responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils.
- 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.
- Staff should work, and be seen to work, in an open and transparent way.
- Staff should acknowledge that deliberately invented/malicious allegations are extremely rare and that all concerns should be reported and recorded.
- Staff should discuss and/or take advice promptly from their line manager if they have acted in a way which may give rise to concern.
- Staff should apply the same professional standards regardless of culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and sexual orientation.
- Staff should not consume or be under the influence of alcohol or any substance including prescribed medication, which may affect the ability to care for children.



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- Staff should be aware that breaches of the law and other professional guidelines could result in disciplinary action, criminal action and/or other proceedings being taken against them, including barring by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) from working in regulated activity. Acts of serious misconduct could result in prohibition from teaching by the National College of Teaching and Leadership (NCTL).
- Staff and managers should continually monitor and review practice to ensure this guidance is followed.

Responsibilities

Staff are accountable for the way in which they exercise authority, manage risk, use resources and safeguard children. All staff have a responsibility to:

- Keep pupils safe and to protect them from abuse (sexual, physical and emotional), neglect and safeguarding concerns. Pupils have a right to be safe and to be treated with respect and dignity.
- Act and be seen to act in the child's best interests.
- Avoid any contact which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions.
- Take responsibility for their own actions and behaviour.
- Understand the school's child protection policy and arrangements for managing allegations against staff, whistle blowing procedure, staff behaviour policy and their Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) procedures.

The school has a responsibility to:

- Promote a culture of openness and support.
- Ensure that safeguarding procedures are in place and reviewed.
- Ensure that systems are in place for concerns to be raised.
- Ensure that staff are not placed in situations which render them particularly vulnerable.

Making professional judgements

This guidance cannot provide a complete checklist of what is, or is not, appropriate behaviour for staff. It does highlight, however, behaviour which is illegal, inappropriate or inadvisable. There will be rare occasions and circumstances in which staff have to make decisions or take action in the best interests of a pupil, which could contravene this guidance or where no guidance exists. Individuals are expected to make judgements about their behaviour in order to secure the best interests and welfare of the pupils in their charge and, in so doing, will be seen to be acting reasonably. These judgements should always be recorded and shared with management. All staff should always consider whether their actions are warranted, proportionate, safe and applied equitably.



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Power and positions of trust

All those working with children in a school or education setting are in a position of trust in relation to pupils in their care. The relationship between a person working with children is one in which the adult has a position of power or influence. It is vital for staff to understand this power and that the relationship cannot be one between equals, and the responsibility they must exercise as a consequence.

The potential for exploitation and harm of vulnerable pupils means that staff have a responsibility to ensure that an unequal balance of power is not used for personal advantage or gratification.

Staff should always maintain appropriate professional boundaries, avoid behaviour which could be interpreted by others as unprofessional, and report and record any such incident.

Where a person aged 18 or over is in a position of trust with a child under 18, 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.

Staff should not:

- Use their position to gain access to information for their own advantage and/or a pupil's or family's detriment.
- Use their power to intimidate, threaten, coerce or undermine pupils.
- Use their status and standing to form or promote relationships with pupils which are of a sexual nature, or which may become so.

Confidentiality

Staff may have access to confidential information about pupils and their families.

Staff are expected to:

- Keep information about pupils and families in a discreet and confidential manner at all times and only share when legally permissible to do so and in the interests of the child.
- Only share records with those who have a legitimate professional need to see them.
- Never use confidential information or personal information about a pupil or their family for their own, or others advantage (including that of partners, friends, relatives or other organisations).
- Never use information to intimidate, humiliate, or embarrass a child.
- Pass any concerns or allegations to the designated safeguarding lead or a member of the Reading School Safeguarding/Child Protection Team without delay. If a child or their parent/carer makes a disclosure regarding abuse or neglect, staff are expected to follow the school's reporting procedures and should not promise confidentiality to a child or parent, but should give reassurance that the information will be treated sensitively.



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- Seek guidance from the designated safeguarding lead if in any doubt whether or not to share information.

Standards of behaviour

All staff have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of children. All staff should adopt high standards of personal conduct in order to maintain confidence and respect of the general public and those with whom they work.

There may be times when an individual's actions in their personal life come under scrutiny from the community, the media or public authorities, including with regard to their own children, or children or adults in the community. Staff should be aware that their behaviour, either in or out of the workplace, could compromise their position within the work setting in relation to the protection of children, loss of trust and confidence, or bringing the employer into disrepute. Such behaviour may also result in prohibition from teaching by the NCTL, a bar from engaging in regulated activity, or action by another relevant regulatory body.

The Childcare (Disqualifications) Regulations 2009 set out grounds for disqualification under the Childcare Act 2006 where a person, or a person living in the same household or employed in the same household, meets certain criteria set out in the regulations. For example, an individual will be disqualified where they have committed a relevant offence against a child; been subject to a specified order relating to the care of a child; committed certain serious sexual or physical offences against an adult; been included on the DBS children's barred list; been made subject to a disqualification order by the court; previously been refused registration as a childcare provider or provider or manager of a children's home or had such registration cancelled. A disqualified person is prohibited from providing relevant early or later years childcare as defined in the Childcare Act 2006 or being directly concerned in the management of such childcare. Schools and private childcare settings are also prohibited from employing a disqualified person in respect of relevant early or later years childcare.

All staff should not:

- Behave in a manner which would lead any reasonable person to question their suitability to work with children or to act as an appropriate role model.
- Make, or encourage others to make, sexual remarks to, or about, a pupil.
- Use inappropriate language to or in the presence of pupils.
- Discuss their personal or sexual relationships with, or in the presence of, pupils.
- Make or encourage others to make unprofessional personal comments which scapegoat, demean or humiliate or might be interpreted as such.

All staff should:

- Be aware that behaviour by themselves, by those with whom they share a household, or by others in their personal lives, may impact on their work with children.



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- Understand that a person who provides early years education or childcare may be disqualified because of their 'association' with a person living or employed in the same household who is disqualified.

Dress and appearance

A person's dress and appearance are matters of personal choice and self-expression, and some individuals will wish to exercise their own cultural customs. However, staff should select a manner of dress and appearance appropriate to their professional role, and which may be necessarily different to that adopted in their personal life. Staff should ensure they are dressed decently, safely and appropriately for the tasks they undertake. Those who dress or appear in a manner which could be viewed as offensive or inappropriate will render themselves vulnerable to criticism or allegation. All staff should wear clothing which:

- Promotes a positive and professional image.
- Is appropriate to their role.
- Is not likely to be viewed as offensive, revealing, or sexually provocative.
- Does not distract, cause embarrassment or give rise to misunderstanding.
- Is absent of any political or otherwise contentious slogans.
- Is not considered to be discriminatory.
- Is compliant with professional standards.

Gifts, rewards, favouritism and exclusion

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. 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 usually acceptable. However, it is unacceptable to receive gifts on a regular basis or of any significant value. Similarly, it is inadvisable to give such personal gifts to pupils or families. This could be interpreted as a gesture either to bribe or groom. It might also be perceived that a 'favour' of some kind is expected in return.

Staff should:

- Be aware of and understand the school's policy on rewarding positive behaviour.
- Ensure that gifts received or given in situations which may be construed are declared and recorded in accordance with the School's Gifts Policy.
- Only give gifts to pupils as part of an agreed reward system.
- Where giving gifts other than as above, ensure that these are of insignificant value and given to all pupils equally.
- Ensure that all selective processes of pupils are fair and these are undertaken and agreed by more than one member of staff.
- Ensure they do not behave in a manner which is either favourable or unfavourable to individual pupils.



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Infatuations and ‘crushes’

All staff need to recognise that it is not uncommon for pupils to be strongly attracted to a member of staff and/or develop a ‘crush’ or infatuation. Staff should make every effort to ensure that their own behaviour cannot be brought into question and does not appear to encourage this. They should also be aware that such infatuations may carry a risk of their words or actions being misinterpreted. Staff should report any incidents (verbal, written or physical) that suggests a pupil may be infatuated with a member of staff and staff must always maintain professional boundaries.

Social contact outside of the workplace

It is acknowledged that staff may have genuine friendships and social contact with parents of pupils, independent of their professional relationship. Staff should, however, also be aware that professionals who sexually harm children often seek to establish relationships and contact outside of the workplace with both the child and their parents, in order to ‘groom’ the adult and the child and/or create opportunities for sexual abuse.

It is also important to recognise that social contact may provide opportunities for other types of grooming, such as for the purpose of sexual exploitation or radicalisation.

Staff should recognise that some types of social contact with pupils or their families could be perceived as harmful or exerting inappropriate influence on children, and may bring the setting into disrepute (for example, attending a political protest, circulating propaganda).

If a pupil or parent seeks to establish social contact, or if this occurs coincidentally, staff should exercise their professional judgement. This also applies to social contacts made through outside interests or the staff member’s own family.

Some staff may, as part of their professional role, be required to support a parent or carer. If that person comes to depend upon the staff member, or seeks support outside of their professional role, this should be discussed with senior management, and where necessary, referrals made to the appropriate support agency.

All staff should:

- Always approve any planned social contact with pupils or parents with senior colleagues.
- Advise senior management of any regular social contact they have with a pupil which could give rise to concern.
- Refrain from sending personal communications to pupils or parents, unless agreed with senior management.
- Inform senior management of any relationships with a parent where this extends beyond the usual parent/professional relationship.
- Inform senior management of any requests or arrangements where parents wish to use their services outside of the workplace, for example, babysitting or tutoring.



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Communication with children (including the use of technology)

Staff should ensure that they establish safe and responsible online behaviours, working to local and national guidelines and in accordance with the school's acceptable use/ICT policy. This policy applies to the use of all electronic media, including the use of computers, tablets, phones, texts, emails, instant messages, social media such as Facebook and Twitter, chat-rooms, forums, blogs, websites, gaming sites, digital cameras, videos, webcams and other hand-held devices. Please note this list is not exhaustive.

Staff should:

- Not seek to communicate/make contact or respond to contact with pupils outside of the purposes of their work.
- Not give out their personal details.
- Ensure any communications are open and transparent, and avoid any communication which could be interpreted as 'grooming behaviour'.
- Report to senior management any attempt by pupils to contact them and firmly and politely inform the pupil that such contact is not acceptable.
- Use only equipment and internet services provided by the school or setting.
- Ensure their use of technology could not bring their employment into disrepute.

Staff should be mindful and aware of Reading School's Social Media Policy.

Physical contact

There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for staff to have physical contact with pupils. However, it is crucial that they only do so in ways appropriate to their professional role and in relation to the pupil's individual needs and any agreed care plan.

Staff should:

- Be aware that even well-intentioned physical contact may be misconstrued by the pupil, an observer or any person to whom this action is described.
- Never touch a pupil in a way which may be considered indecent.
- Always be prepared to explain actions and accept that all physical contact is open to scrutiny.
- Never indulge in horseplay or fun fights.
- Always allow/encourage pupils, where able, to undertake self-care tasks independently.
- Ensure the way they offer comfort to a distressed pupil is age appropriate.
- Always tell a colleague when and how they offered comfort to a distressed pupil.
- Establish the preferences of pupils.
- Consider alternatives, where it is anticipated that a pupil might misinterpret or be uncomfortable with physical contact.



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- Always explain to the pupil the reason why contact is necessary and what form that contact will take.
- Report and record situations which may give rise to concern.
- Be aware of cultural or religious views about touching and be sensitive to issue of gender.
- Ensure extra caution is taken where it is known a child has suffered previous abuse or neglect.
- Ensure that arrangements in respect of pupils with disabilities are understood and agreed by all concerned.

Other activities that require physical contact

Staff within areas such as PE, drama or music may need to initiate some physical contact with children, for example, to demonstrate a technique in the use of equipment or support a child so they can perform an activity safely or prevent injury. Any physical contact should only take place when it is necessary in relation to a particular activity and in a safe and open environment. In such circumstances staff should:

- Treat pupils with dignity and respect and avoid contact with intimate parts of the body.
- Always explain to a pupil the reason why contact is necessary and what form that contact will take.
- Seek consent of parents where a pupil is unable to give this, for example, because of a disability.
- Consider alternatives, where it is anticipated that a pupil might misinterpret any such contact.
- Be familiar with and follow recommended guidance and protocols.
- Conduct activities where they can be seen by others.
- Be aware of gender, cultural and religious issues that may need to be considered before initiating physical contact.
- Report any incidents of physical contact that cause concern.

Intimate/personal care

Pupils should be encouraged to act as independently as possible and to undertake as much of their own personal care as is possible and practicable. Pupils are entitled to respect and privacy at all times, and especially when in a state of undress, including for example, when changing, toileting and showering. Staff should announce their intention of entering any such vicinity and only remain in the room where a pupil's needs require this.

When assistance is required, this should normally be undertaken by one member of staff, however, they should try to ensure that another appropriate adult is in the vicinity who is aware of the task to be undertaken and that, wherever possible, they are visible and/or audible. Staff should always explain to a pupil what is happening before a care procedure begins.



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Intimate or personal care procedures should not involve more than one member of staff unless the pupil's care plan specifies the reason for this.

A signed record should be kept of all intimate and personal care tasks undertaken and, where these have been carried out in another room, should include times left and returned.

Any vulnerability, including those that may arise from a physical or learning difficulty, should be considered when formulating the individual's care plan. The views of parents, carers and the pupil, regardless of their age and understanding, should be actively sought in formulating the plan in the necessary regular review of these arrangements.

Behaviour management

Where pupils display difficult or challenging behaviour, staff should follow the school's behaviour and discipline policy, using strategies appropriate to the circumstances and situation. In particular staff should:

- Not use force as a form of punishment.
- Try to defuse situations before they escalate, for example, by distraction.
- Keep parents informed of any sanctions or behaviour management techniques used.
- Be mindful of and sensitive to factors both inside and outside of the school or setting which may impact on a pupil's behaviour.
- Behave as a role model.
- Avoid shouting at pupils other than as a warning in an emergency situation/safety situation.
- Refer to national and local policy and guidance regarding restrictive physical intervention (RPI).
- Be aware of the legislation and potential risks associated with the use of isolation and seclusion.
- Comply with legislation and guidance in relation to human rights and restrictions of liberty.

Staff are asked to refer to the school's behaviour and discipline policy for further information on the relevant legislation and guidance referred to above.

The use of control and physical intervention

Care must be exercised in order that staff do not physically intervene in a manner which could be considered unlawful. All staff should adhere to the school's restraint policy. Staff may reasonably intervene to prevent a child from:

- Committing a criminal offence.
- Injuring themselves or others.
- Causing damage to property.
- Engaging in behaviour prejudicial to good order and to maintaining good order and discipline.



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Under no circumstances should physical force be used as a form of punishment. The use of unwarranted or disproportionate physical force is likely to constitute a criminal offence.

Sexual conduct

Any sexual behaviour by a member of staff with or towards a pupil is unacceptable. It is an offence for a member of staff in a position of trust to engage in sexual activity with a pupil under 18 years of age. Sexual activity with a child could be a matter for criminal and/or disciplinary procedures.

Pupils are protected by the same laws as adults in relation to non-consensual sexual behaviour. They are additionally protected by specific legal provisions depending on their age and understanding. This includes the prohibition of sexual activity with children by adults in a position of trust.

Sexual activity involves physical contact including penetrative and non-penetrative acts. However, it also includes non-contact activities, such as causing pupils to engage in or watch sexual activity or the production of pornographic material.

Staff should:

- Not have any form of sexual contact with a pupil from the school or setting.
- Avoid any form of touch or comment which is, or may be considered to be, indecent.
- Avoid any form of communication with a pupil which could be interpreted as sexually suggestive provocation or give rise to speculation, for example, verbal comments, letters, notes, emails, social media, phone calls, texts, physical contact.
- Not make sexual remarks to or about a pupil.
- Not discuss sexual matters with or in the presence of pupils other than within agreed curriculum content or as part of their recognised job role.

One-to-one situations

Staff working in one-to-one situations with pupils at the school can be more vulnerable to allegations or complaints. To safeguard both pupils and staff, staff should:

Ensure that wherever possible there is visual access and/or an open door in one-to-one situations.

Avoid use of 'engaged' or equivalent signs wherever possible.

Always report any situation where a pupil becomes distressed or angry.

Consider the needs and circumstances of the pupil involved.

Not arrange to meet pupils from the school or setting away from the work premises, unless the necessity for this is clear and approval is sought from senior management, the pupil and their parents/carers.



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Ensure any necessary home visits are in accordance with any home visit or lone working policy in place.

Transporting pupils

Staff should not offer lifts to pupils unless the need for this has been agreed by senior management. Wherever possible and practicable, it is advisable that transport is undertaken other than in private vehicles and with at least one adult additional to the driver acting as an escort. It is a legal requirement that all passengers wear seatbelts and the member of staff driving the vehicle should ensure all passengers do so. All staff required to transport pupils must have an appropriate and valid licence/permit and appropriate insurance in place for the vehicle and also ensure they are fit to drive and free from any drugs, alcohol or medicine which is likely to impair judgement and/or the ability to drive.

Educational visits

All staff should:

- Adhere to the school's educational visits guidance.
- Always have another adult present on visits, unless otherwise agreed with senior management.
- Undertake risk assessments.
- Have parental consent to the activity.
- Ensure that their behaviour remains professional at all times.
- Never share bedrooms with students unless it involves a dormitory situation and the arrangements have been previously discussed with senior management, parents and pupils.
- Refer to local and national guidance for educational visits.

First aid and medication

Staff should receive sufficient and suitable training and achieve the necessary level of competency before they take on responsibility to support children with medical conditions.

Staff responsible for administering first aid and medication should do so in accordance with the relevant health and safety policy in place at the school.

Photography, videos and other images

Many educational activities involve recording images. These may be undertaken for displays, publicity, to celebrate achievement and to provide records of evidence of the activity.

Staff should:

- Only publish images of pupils where they and their parent/carer have given explicit written consent to do so.
- Only take images where the pupil is happy for them to do so.



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- Only retain images when there is a clear and agreed purpose for doing so.
- Store images in an appropriate secure place in the school or setting.
- Ensure that a senior member of staff is aware that the photography/image equipment is being used and for what purpose.
- Be able to justify images of pupils in their possession.
- Avoid making images in one-to-one situations.
- Not take images of pupils for personal use.
- Not take images of children which could be considered as indecent or sexual.

Staff should also ensure that pupils are not exposed, through any medium, to inappropriate or indecent images. Further, that any films or material shown to pupils is age appropriate and senior management have authorised the viewing of such material.

Under no circumstances are staff permitted to use any school equipment to access pornography. Personal equipment containing pornography or links to it should never be brought into the school setting. Any equipment found to store such material could raise serious concerns about the suitability of the staff member to continue working with children and young people.

Curriculum

Many areas of the curriculum can include or raise subject matter which is sexually explicit or of a political or 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. This can be supported by developing ground rules with pupils to ensure sensitive topics can be discussed in a safe learning environment. This plan should highlight particular areas of risk and sensitivity and care should especially be taken in those areas of the curriculum where usual boundaries of rules are less rigorously applied, for example, drama.

The curriculum can sometimes include or lead to unplanned discussion about subject matter of a sexually explicit, political or otherwise sensitive nature. Responding to children's questions requires careful judgement and staff should take guidance in these circumstances from the designated safeguarding lead.

Staff should:

- Take care when encouraging pupils to use self-expression, not to overstep personal and professional boundaries.
- Be able to justify all curriculum materials and relate these to clearly identifiable lesson plans as appropriate.

Staff should not:

- Enter into or encourage inappropriate discussions which may offend or harm others.
- Undermine fundamental British values.
- Attempt to influence or impose their personal values, attitudes and beliefs on pupils.



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Whistle blowing

Whistle blowing is the mechanism by which staff can voice their concerns, made in good faith, without fear of repercussion.

Staff should:

- Report any behaviour by colleagues that raises concern.
- Report allegations against staff and volunteers to their manager, or registered provider, or where they have concerns about the manager's response, report these directly to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

Staff should refer to the school's whistle blowing procedure for further information.

Sharing concerns and recording incidents

All staff should:

- Be aware of the school's arrangements for reporting and recording concerns and allegations.
- Know how to contact the LADO and Ofsted/regulatory body directly if required.
- Take responsibility for recording any incident, and passing on that information where they have concerns about any matter pertaining to the welfare of an individual, school or setting.

I have read and understood the above code of conduct and agree to abide by the code in all dealings with children at Reading School.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

