MOOR PARK

AD DEUM QUI LAETIFICAT JUVENTUTEM MEAM

CODE OF CONDUCT & PROFESSIONAL EXPECTATIONS

Introduction

A good boarding preparatory school is dependent upon good staff. The warm, caring atmosphere of Moor Park is very much due to the commitment, dedication and involvement of staff and their rapport with the children. As adults and teachers, we are role models and as such need to understand the responsibility that brings with it to conduct ourselves in the highest possible manner.

The Staff Code of Conduct serves as a reminder of how we must demonstrate high professional standards as representatives of the school. It is hoped that staff will be reassured by this Code. It will, in the vast majority of cases, simply confirm good professional practice. Its purpose is to promote the highest standards of care towards pupils and to protect staff and others from the potentially devastating consequences of false allegations, without compromising school activities.

Although this Code of Conduct gives advice and instruction on how to deal with specific situations, it should not replace professional common sense and good judgement. In all matters relating to conduct, staff must bear in mind how an action might reasonably be regarded by a third party.

The following policies should also be read as part of understanding the Code of Conduct. They can all be found alongside the Staff Handbook on the staff server:

1 Safeguarding Policy & Child Protection Policy
2 Reasonable Use of Force Policy
3 Behaviour Policy
4 Whistleblowing Policy

Staff are also required to read the Staff Handbook which gives further details of expectations and the requirements of their role. Staff are advised to speak to their line manager if they have any questions or concerns about this Code of Conduct.

Relationships with Pupils

- Staff are expected to demonstrate the highest possible standards of personal and professional conduct and behaviour and consistently act with honesty and integrity. Staff must ensure that their behaviour does not inadvertently lay them open to allegations of abuse.
- Staff must treat all pupils, each other, parents and the wider community with respect and dignity at all times.
- Staff must act in accordance with their duty of care to pupils and ensure that the safety and welfare of pupils are accorded the highest priority.
- Staff should show fairness in their treatment of pupils and avoid behaviours such as embarrassing or humiliating them, making jokes at their expense, using sarcasm, discriminating against or favouring pupils.
- Staff should exercise caution when pupils visit their home environments as 'friends' of their own children and remember their primary role as a person in a position of trust.
- Staff must be aware that it is a criminal offence for a person aged 18 years or over, to have a sexual relationship with a child under the age of 18 where that person is in a position of trust in respect of that child, even if, in the case of those over the age of 16, the relationship is consensual.

Communication with Pupils and Parents

- Staff should not give their personal mobile phone numbers or email address to pupils, nor should they communicate with them by text message, personal e-mail or via personal social media accounts
- Communication should be via official Moor Park e-mails and telephones.
- Staff leading trips and visits should ensure they have a school mobile phone with them which should be used for any contact with pupils that may be necessary. Staff may ask pupils for their mobile phone numbers before allowing them out in small unsupervised groups.
- Staff are permitted to use their personal mobile phones to communicate with other members of staff as required. For example, sports matches.
- Staff should not use their personal mobile phones to make or receive calls or to message whilst they are responsible for pupils, except in the case of an emergency. If a member of staff needs to take an urgent call during school hours, they should advise their line manager.
- School staff are likely to have significant and increasing contact with parents and the staff are expected to be courteous and helpful. As a school, we welcome contact with parents and see them as essential partners in the education of their children. They should be informed about any concerns regarding their children and it is important that we are honest and open in our dealings with them.

Concerns of a safeguarding nature however, must be referred to the DSL, who will decide on the appropriate response. In a very few cases, it may not be appropriate to inform the parents of our concerns immediately as that action could prejudice any investigation, or place the child at further risk. In such cases, the DSL will seek advice from the Local Authority's Designated Officer.

Social Media

- Staff must keep their personal social media accounts private and must not accept pupils as friends or followers or follow any pupils' personal social media accounts.

- Staff are advised to be careful about what they post on social media and must make sure that they do not post anything derogatory that could damage the interests or reputation of the school either directly, or indirectly.
- Staff should not mention any pupil on their social media accounts unless they are family members.
- Staff must not publish photos of pupils on their social media accounts, unless they are family members or the photo is taken out of school context, for example a birthday party involving children from the school.
- Staff should check their digital footprint on a regular basis to ensure that it remains secure and conducive to their professional role.

Physical Contact with Pupils (see also Reasonable Use of Force Policy)

- There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for staff to have physical contact with pupils, but it is crucial that they only do so in ways appropriate to their professional role. A 'no touch' approach is impractical for most staff and may in some circumstances be inappropriate.
- When physical contact is made with pupils it should be in response to their needs at that time, of limited duration and appropriate to their age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity, and background.
- Where feasible, staff should seek the pupil's permission before initiating contact. Staff should listen, observe and take note of the pupil's reaction or feelings and, so far as is possible, use a level of contact which is acceptable to the pupil for the minimum time necessary.
- Staff should be aware that even well-intentioned physical contact may be misconstrued by the pupil, an observer or by anyone to whom this action is described. Staff should never touch a learner in a way which may be considered indecent.
- Staff should always be prepared to explain actions and accept that all physical contact be open to scrutiny.
- Staff must not engage in rough play, tickling or fun fights with pupils.
- Extra caution should be exercised where a learner is known to have suffered previous abuse or neglect. Such experiences may sometimes make a learner exceptionally needy and demanding of physical contact and staff should respond sensitively by deterring the learner through helping them to understand the importance of personal boundaries.
- Physical contact must never be secretive, for the gratification of the adult or represent a misuse of authority.
- If a member of staff believes that an action could be misinterpreted, the incident and circumstances should be reported to the DSL as soon as possible.
- The incident should be recorded and, if appropriate, a copy placed on the pupil file.

Working in Isolation and 1:1 Situations

- Staff should avoid meeting with pupils on their own behind ‘locked or closed’ doors. If staff need to speak to a child on a sensitive matter, the Headmaster or Houseparent during Boarding time should be informed and the ‘interview’ should take place in a public area, with the child offered the support of another child. The interview must be recorded and the Headmaster or Houseparent kept ‘up-to-date’ on the matter.
- If a teacher is alone with a pupil, they should ensure that any such meeting is as visible as possible. As such they should ensure that the door to the room has a glass panel or is left open or has ground floor windows with curtains/blinds open. If this is not possible then another adult must be made aware and be close by.

- Staff should not meet individual children in private accommodation under any circumstances with the exception of the House Parents and Matrons for compassionate reasons when a child is distressed or for other reasons, detailed in the section entitled Staff Accommodation in this document. The school nurse or Matrons may see a pupil on their own for medical reasons.

Respecting Pupils' Privacy

- Staff should afford the appropriate level of privacy for pupils in bathing areas, changing rooms and dormitory areas.
- Staff are asked to respect the sensitivities of older boys and girls in such areas.
- The same applies in the Pre-Prep School when children get changed in classrooms before games for example, ensuring there are no visitors coming into the room at that time.

Staff Accommodation

- Staff are not permitted to invite pupils into their private accommodation unless there is a valid reason to do so.
- Staff may supervise children in their private accommodation where it is for their safety and well being, for example, whilst waiting to be taken to the airport at the end of term. In such cases, where possible, another member of staff should be present and staff should always make sure that the parents and Headmaster are informed.
- The Headmaster may grant permission for staff to meet three or more children in their private accommodation where there is a valid reason. In such cases, the visit must be logged and at least one other member of staff should be present.

Duty to Report

- Staff are reminded of their duty to report all concerns to the DSL and/or Headmaster.
- Staff must not promise pupils that they will keep information secret and must reassure them that they will only share information with the relevant people in order to keep them safe.
- If staff have a safeguarding concern or an allegation of harming or posing a risk of harm to children is made about another member of staff (including supply staff, volunteers, and contractors), they must report this concern to the DSL and/or Headmaster as soon as possible.
- If a staff member feels that their actions may have been misinterpreted or that they may have breached this Code of Conduct, they must declare this to the DSL and/or Headmaster as soon as possible.
- Staff will be expected to complete an annual self-declaration to disclose any convictions, cautions, court orders, reprimands and warnings that may affect their suitability to work with children (whether received before or during their employment at the setting).
- Staff are responsible for informing the school if there are any changes in their self-declaration during their employment at the setting.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

- All staff have a duty to maintain the highest standards of confidentiality in their work. Information about pupils, families, and colleagues must be handled sensitively and shared only on a need-to-know basis in line with the school's Safeguarding and Data Protection Policies.
- Staff must ensure that any personal data is processed lawfully, fairly, and securely in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.
- Confidential records should be stored securely, and digital information must be accessed using password-protected systems.
- Staff must not discuss confidential matters in public areas or use personal devices to store or transmit sensitive information.
- Any data breaches must be reported immediately to the Data Protection Officer or Headmaster.

Transporting Pupils

- Staff are not permitted to give lifts to pupils in their own vehicle unless there is a valid reason for doing so.
- Staff should not transport an individual pupil by car for any reason other than a medical appointment, medical emergency, taking a child to the airport, an arranged school visit or to protect their health, safety and wellbeing.
- All such circumstances should be reported to the parents and the Headmaster and logged.
- The appropriate level of insurance must be held by the member of staff for the vehicle being used to transport the pupil.
- The Matrons may convey an individual pupil in order to purchase uniform items such as shoes or to have a haircut.

Personal Appearance

- The school recognises that dress and appearance are matters of personal choice and self-expression. However, all staff must dress in a manner that is appropriate to a professional role and that promotes a professional image.
- As role models, staff should uphold the dress standards required of the children and as such set an example.
- Staff should dress in a manner that is not offensive, revealing or sexually provocative and in a manner that is absent from political or contentious slogans.
- Staff should dress safely and appropriately for the tasks they undertake and remember that the school regularly receives visits from parents, prospective parents and other professionals and naturally wish to convey professional standards in all areas.

Smoking, Alcohol and Illegal Drugs

- All school buildings are designated no smoking areas and smoking and vaping are discouraged in the school grounds
- Staff should only smoke or vape in the designated area, currently, the old boathouse.

- Consumption of alcohol is not permitted on school premises with the exception of organised school functions where modest amounts of alcohol may be consumed.
- Employees' conduct and performance must not be adversely impacted by alcohol when undertaking their duties.
- Staff that reside on site may consume modest quantities of alcohol in private accommodation when they are not on call/duty.
- Consumption of illegal drugs is not permitted and would be treated as a disciplinary offence.

Gifts and Gratuities

- Staff need to take care that they do not accept any gift/offer of hospitality that might be construed as a bribe by others or lead the giver to expect preferential treatment. However, there may be occasions where pupils or their parents wish to give a small token of appreciation to staff, for example at religious festivities or at the end of the year.
- It is unacceptable to receive gifts on a regular basis or to suggest to pupils that gifts are appropriate or desired.
- Money must not be accepted as a gift.
- Staff must not accept significant gifts or hospitality from pupils or their parents. All such gifts/offers of hospitality should be reported to the Headmaster and recorded.
- Personal gifts must not be given by staff to pupils.

Staff Relationships

- Whilst the school permits close personal relationships between colleagues, where this may cause a conflict of interest or impact on the school negatively, staff concerned are required to disclose the relationship to the Headmaster.
- The Headmaster will ensure that professional levels of line management are maintained and may make adjustments where this is deemed necessary.
- Staff will be expected to maintain professional boundaries, avoiding any conduct that could be perceived as favouritism or bias or that may have a negative impact on the pupils.
- In all cases, the reputation of the school will be of the utmost importance.

More General Expectations

- Reliable, consistent attendance is a requirement and essential function of all staff positions. Persistent absenteeism has a negative impact on pupils and as such employees are expected to be punctual and dependable in order to meet the needs of their department and the school.
- When staff are absent or late, work and service are interrupted, and an additional burden is placed on colleagues. Attendance and reliability are important factors in evaluating individual performance and continued employment.
- If a member of staff expects to be absent or late for any reason, they should notify the Deputy Head or Bursar as far in advance as possible. If this is not possible, such as in the case of illness, they should contact the school office by 07.30hrs on the first day of absence in accordance with the Staff Handbook.

- Due to the demands and nature of the school, employees should expect to provide cover for colleagues and be prepared to transfer upon request within departments either temporarily or permanently, to undertake work of a different nature, providing it is reasonable and safe to do so and the employee is adequately trained.
- Food should be consumed in the designated eating areas only and not in classrooms or common areas except for specific occasions.
- Staff are required to eat with the children whenever possible.
- Drinks are permitted in the common rooms and social areas and staff may take water bottles to classrooms (except the IT and Science Labs and Study Centre where food or drink is not allowed) If hot drinks are taken out of the common rooms they should be in sealed cups to minimize the risk of accidents (scalding).

Consequences of a Breach of the Code of Conduct

Breaches of the Staff Code of Conduct are treated seriously and may result in disciplinary action in accordance with the school's policies and relevant employment laws. Depending on the nature and severity of the breach, consequences may include informal or formal written warnings, suspension, formal investigation, termination of employment, and, where appropriate, referral to external regulatory or legal authorities. The school is committed to ensuring that all investigations are conducted fairly, transparently, and with due process.

Staff Declaration

I, _____ (Full Name),

confirm that I have read, understood, and agree to comply with the School Staff Code of Conduct. I understand that it is my responsibility to uphold the standards of professional behaviour outlined in this document and to seek clarification if there is any part I do not understand.

I acknowledge that failure to adhere to the code may result in disciplinary action in accordance with the school's policies and procedures.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Position: _____