



St James School

Policy: Code of Conduct

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Author of Policy: TMR

Code of Conduct

Rationale

As part of induction and Safer Recruitment processes, it is now an expectation that schools should have a Code of Conduct, incorporating child protection issues amongst others.

The Code of Conduct will form part of our Safer Recruitment procedures.

The Code of Conduct is adapted from the old GTC code of conduct and although some aspects of the Code are appropriate for teachers only, all members of the school staff will be expected to abide by its expectations, particularly regarding issues of child protection, relationships with students, colleagues and parents & carers, and other stakeholders.

This Code of Conduct is in addition to our expectation that all teachers will demonstrate the professional attributes listed in the “Professional Standards for Teachers”.

Staff will be expected to sign that they have read, and agree to be bound by, this Code annually.

Each part of the Code is followed by a commentary and explanatory details (in italics).

Professional Behaviour, Demeanour and Dress

We must maintain the highest professional standards in our conduct towards students, colleagues, parents, carers, other visitors and any external agencies with whom we have dealings.

In addition, all staff are expected to dress in a formal, professional manner, which is appropriate for the kinds of activities undertaken, and with due regard to health and safety issues. We must model to our students that business wear is the appropriate dress, and as our students’ uniform is conservative, staff are asked to reflect this in their dress, and by not wearing facial piercings, multiple ear piercings and/or extreme hairstyles or displaying any tattoos. Drinking alcohol on the school premises is strictly forbidden unless there are social, diarised events e.g. end of term events when the school is officially closed. There is nothing to prevent staff having tattoos but these should not be visible to pupils. Whilst this may sound patronising part of this policy is to safeguard staff from unnecessary attention from pupils e.g. female members of staff need to ensure that skirts are not too short and that other items of clothing are not too revealing.

Professionalism and maintaining trust in the profession

- 1.1 We should have knowledge of and maintain the key principles contained in the Professional Standards and guidance issued by the school
- 1.2 We must maintain appropriate professional boundaries, avoid improper contact or relationships with students and respect our unique position of trust as members of staff in a school
- 1.3 We should avoid situations both within and beyond the classroom which could be in breach of the criminal law, or may call into question our suitability to be teachers
- 1.4 We must uphold standards of personal and professional conduct, honesty and integrity so that the public can have confidence in us as teachers and in teaching as a profession
- 1.5 We should always be honest and accurate when providing professional information about colleagues or ourselves, particularly when applying for posts
- 1.6 We should maintain an awareness that as teachers, and adults in school, we are role models to our students
- 1.7 If we have any concerns about a colleague's behaviour towards students, we must report it to the Child Protection Officer. We must expect that colleagues will report us if they have any such concerns about our behaviour.

Commentary and further details

Children and young people

With regard to inappropriate relationships with students we must:

- *appreciate fully that the onus is upon us as adults to distance ourselves from any potentially inappropriate situation*
- *avoid sexual contact with or remarks towards a student regardless of the age of the student or apparent consent of the student*
- *not attempt to establish an inappropriate relationship with the student by means which might include (but are not limited to):*
 - *communication of a personal nature*
 - *engaging in inappropriate dialogue through the internet with students*
 - *sending emails or text messages to students of an inappropriate or personal nature*
 - *giving gifts to students unless part of the school's rewards system without the express approval of the Head Teacher or CPO*

- inviting students to our home

- *not discuss our own private and personal relationships with students and remain mindful to maintain an appropriate balance between formality and informality when dealing with students*
- *take care to avoid becoming personally involved in students' personal affairs*
- *be aware of the potential dangers of being alone with a student in a private or isolated situation, avoiding circumstances which are or could be perceived to be of an inappropriate nature. This also is the case in connection with social networking websites*
- *avoid physical contact with students, including cuddling or touching unless in the context of the Physical Restraint policy.*
- *not by any means or in any circumstances, make, view or access illegal or inappropriate images of children*
- *only take photographs of students involved in school activities with others, and only after checking that parents/carers have given their permission for photographs to be taken of their child*
- *exercise extreme caution in connection with contact/web cam internet sites (for example chat rooms, message boards and newsgroups) and avoid inappropriate communication with individuals under 18 or with whom you may be in a position of trust **See Appendix 1 for specific use of Facebook and email staff guidelines from the Local Authority.***
- *report any colleague whom we believe to be involved in any form of inappropriate behaviour with students*

School visits

On school visits we must:

- *not overstep professional boundaries on school trips, which are less formal in nature*
- *have a full knowledge of and comply with, the procedures and guidelines laid down for these activities*
- *remain mindful of the need to maintain a healthy and appropriate balance between formality and informality and avoid situations which are or could be perceived to be of an inappropriate nature*

Honesty and integrity

As teachers we must:

- *not engage in criminal behaviour of any kind, especially those related to sex, firearms, misuse of drugs and violence against a person or property or serious public disorder offences*
- *be honest and trustworthy, especially avoiding offences such as theft, dishonesty, extortion, fraud or misuse of drugs*
- *act with integrity when writing references, making declarations or conducting tasks in connection with students' examinations and/or assessments*

- *be conscious that we are role models and that young people may be strongly influenced by things we may do or say both within and beyond the school*

The following extract is taken from the Trips and Visits Policy:

Car Transportation

You may only use your car to transport students if:

- *You have Class 1 business use on your car insurance (either as the policyholder or named driver on a policy). A copy certificate must be provided to the school to keep on file.*
- *Your vehicle has a current MOT certificate in place and it is in good roadworthy condition. A copy certificate must be provided to the school to keep on file.*
- *The vehicle must have road tax currently in force*
- *You have supplied the school with a copy of your driving licence*
- *You have completed an online licence check at least once annually when requested (or you have given written consent for a member of school staff to complete this on your behalf)*
- *You have signed a self-declaration form and the school has a copy on file*
- *The school has received written permission from the student's parent/carer*

Any documentation in relation to the above can be obtained from the Health & Safety Coordinator.

When you are transporting a student in your car, s/he must sit in the back seat.

In the case of a student requiring emergency transport, please speak to a member of the SLT.

Professional responsibilities towards students

2.1 We must treat students equally and with respect, in line with the law and without discrimination

2.2 We should treat sensitive, personal information about students with respect and confidentiality and not disclose it unless required by the law or the Head Teacher/CPO or with the written permission of the student and/or her or his family (see below)

2.3 We should aim to be positive role models to students and motivate and inspire every student to realise her or his full potential

2.4 We must maintain an up to date knowledge and understanding of current child protection procedures, and implement and comply with them

2.5 We must be truthful, honest and fair in relation to information we provide about students

Commentary and further details

We should display a sensitive and positive attitude towards differences among students and identify and respond appropriately to students with difficulties in, or barriers to, learning. When necessary, we should seek advice in relation to their special educational needs

We should identify and respond appropriately to evidence of students' wellbeing and welfare, including bullying, and ensure that students' initiative and independent learning are encouraged and nurtured

We should have high expectations of and provide realistic challenges for students, ensuring that learning tasks are varied in form, differentiated and devised to build confidence in and promote self-worth for all our students

We play a pivotal role in child protection and are well placed to see the symptoms and signs of abuse. We must therefore keep up to date with current procedures

Information about a student's background or history should not be shared with other adults without reference to the CPO and the Child Protection Policy; however any concerns a colleague has about the student should be shared with the Head of Year and/or CPO as outlined in the Child Protection Policy

Professional Competence

As teachers:

3.1 We should maintain and develop our professional practice to ensure we continue to meet the requirements of the Standard for Full Registration of the GTC:

- Professional knowledge and understanding
- Professional skills and abilities
- Professional values and commitment

3.2 We must refresh and develop our knowledge and skills through CPD and maintenance of good practice

Commentary and further details

Professional knowledge and understanding

As teachers we should have a detailed knowledge and understanding of the relevant areas of the secondary school curriculum and also an understanding of curriculum development. This should include a broad, critical understanding of the principal features of the education system, policy and practice and a detailed knowledge of professional responsibilities within these Professional skills and abilities

As teachers we must be able to:

- plan coherent and progressive teaching programmes to match students' needs and abilities and be able to communicate clearly using a variety of media to interact with students,*
- individually and collectively set and maintain the expectations and pace of learning of students*
- use a range of teaching strategies and resources to evaluate the needs and abilities of students*
- manage student behaviour in a fair and consistent manner, and in line with the school's policies*
- understand and apply principles of assessment, recording and reporting*
- use the results of assessment to evaluate and improve our teaching and the learning of our students*
- reflect on and act to improve our own professional practice, contribute to our professional development and engage in the process of curriculum development*

Professional values and commitment

As teachers we should be able to show in our day-to-day practice a commitment to social justice and inclusion, take responsibility for our own professional learning and development and be an active partner in the areas in which we work

Professionalism towards colleagues and parents

As teachers:

4.1 We must work in a collegiate and cooperative manner with colleagues and members of other relevant professions

4.2 We must treat all colleagues fairly and with respect, and without unlawful discrimination

4.3 We must not make malicious or unfounded criticism of or accusations about colleagues that may undermine them professionally or in the professional judgements they make

4.4 We must promote good relationships between home and school, respecting the role of parents and carers in the education of children

Commentary and further details

Colleagues

Our school environment must be free of discrimination and harassment. We should work in a collegiate way, treating all colleagues professionally.

We must:

- *not allow professional relationships with colleagues to be prejudiced by views about their lifestyle, culture, disability, beliefs, colour, gender, language, sexuality or age*
- *avoid undermining a colleague by remarks which are or could be perceived as being malicious, unfounded or unprofessional. This is of particular importance when in contact with parents, carers or students*
- *guard against inappropriate workplace banter or practical jokes, which are or could be perceived as being behaviour of an unprofessional, discriminatory or harassing nature*

Parents and carers

We must:

- *engage and work positively with parents and carers in an open and respectful way, not prejudiced by views about their lifestyle, culture, disability, beliefs, colour, gender, language, sexuality or age*
- *be professional in dealings with parents and carers, and avoid making comments, being drawn into inappropriate discussions or divulging confidential information about other students, colleagues or the school*
- *appreciate that a parental meeting is a two-way process and as such we should listen to and take into account the views expressed*

Unacceptable professional conduct

This is defined as 'conduct which falls short of the standard expected of a registered teacher...and is behaviour which involves a breach of the standards of propriety expected of the profession.' Whether a teacher is guilty of unacceptable conduct is a matter for a hearing committee to decide in relation to the facts of the given case, taking into account the provisions of the GTC Code of Conduct and Practice.

Registered teachers may be found guilty of unacceptable professional conduct where they:

1. Seriously demean or undermine our colleagues, students, their parents or carers, or act towards them in a manner which is discriminatory in relation to gender, marital status, religion, belief, colour, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, disability or age

Where they fail to:

2. Take reasonable care of students under their supervision with the aim of ensuring their safety and welfare

3. Comply with relevant statutory provisions which support the well being and development of students, including where these require cooperation and collaboration with a range of agencies as well as teacher colleagues and other adults

4. Observe confidentiality in a manner consistent with legal requirements

5. Comply with the requirements of statutory bodies relating to the examination, assessment and evaluation of student achievement and attainment

Other conduct

Registered teachers may be found guilty of unacceptable professional conduct where they fail to:

6. Maintain appropriate standards of honesty and integrity in management and administrative duties, including in the use of school property and finance

Where they:

7. Misuse or misrepresent their professional position, qualifications or experience

8. Otherwise bring the reputation and standing of the profession into serious disrepute

Serious professional incompetence

1. Registered teachers may be found guilty of serious professional incompetence where they demonstrate 'a level of competence which falls seriously short of that expected of a registered teacher, taking into account the relevant circumstances'.

2. In assessing whether a registered teacher has demonstrated serious professional incompetence, hearing committees will take into account the extent to which a

registered teacher has failed to maintain a level of professional competence consistent with the standards for QTS and the nature of their professional responsibilities.

3. The determination of serious professional incompetence includes failings relating to leadership and management.

Monitoring and Evaluation

This policy will be regularly evaluated and updated in the changes of legislation, school requirements and statutory policies. There will be a rolling programme of monitoring and review.

For the purposes of this policy, “staff” refers to any member of staff, whether permanent or part-time, teaching or non-teaching, visiting or invited into the school in any capacity where they will be in contact with students, unless a specific group is named.

This policy should be read in conjunction with all others including Health and Safety and the school safeguarding policy and should also be read alongside the NEOST guidance 2002.

Appendix 1

Staff Guidelines for the use of Facebook.com

General Practice and Advice

- Members of staff should not be in contact with current or former pupils under the age of 18 years old via social networking sites such as Facebook.com, in accordance with the School’s Safeguarding and Welfare policy.
- Members of staff with Facebook profiles should set the privacy levels on their accounts to maximum i.e. only people on their friend’s list should be able to view their pictures/private information etc. This can be done by going to **Setting > Profile** and adjusting the parameters accordingly.
- Members of staff with distinctive surnames should be aware that it will be relatively easy for pupils to track them down on Facebook i.e. due to the large number of people named John Smith it is difficult to trace a specific individual.
- Members of staff should note that although these measures will make it harder for pupils to find them on Facebook a determined individual with knowledge of how the website works will eventually be able to trace a person down (given enough time).

Action to be taken if a member of staff is contacted by a pupil.

There are two types of contact through Facebook:

1. A message
2. An invitation to be added to a person's "Friends list"

If a message from a pupil is received the following action should be taken:

1. **Do not reply to the message.** Replying to a message allows the recipient to view your profile in its entirety. This is also a way to circumvent the privacy settings on account.
2. A senior member of pastoral staff (e.g. Headmaster / Assistant Head) should be contacted at the earliest opportunity and informed of the incident.
3. Pastoral staff should then be asked to speak to the pupil on behalf of the member of staff who was contacted. The relevant Facebook correspondence should be made available to the pastoral staff dealing with the situation to aid in any investigation.
4. The pupil should be reminded of the School's ICT Acceptable Use policy and that contacting staff in this manner is inappropriate. A note for file and notification to parents should also be made.

If an invitation to a person's friends list is received the following action should be taken.

1. Immediately reject the invitation.
2. A senior member of staff (e.g. Headteacher / Assistant Head) should be contacted at the earliest opportunity and informed of the incident.
3. Pastoral staff should then be asked to speak to the pupil on behalf of the member of staff who was contacted. The relevant Facebook correspondence should be made available to the pastoral staff dealing with the situation to aid in any investigation.
4. Note that rejection of a "friend request" allows the sender to repeat the action; if this occurs the relevant members of pastoral staff should be made aware of this.
5. The pupil should be reminded of the School's ICT Acceptable Use policy and that contacting staff in this manner is inappropriate. A note for file and notification to parents should also be made.

E-Mail – Good Practice

The nature of the school site and the busy schedules led by all who work here mean that Email can be a vital tool of communication. However, it is not a replacement for fostering positive face to face relationships with colleagues. Email should not be regarded as a replacement for formal meetings or more informal conversations on the telephone or at staff briefings, break or lunch. The aim of this brief guide is to provide some suggestions on the way that email can be used most effectively and to improve the experiences of all those who interact electronically.

Is it necessary?

People are busy. Your message may be one of tens or hundreds for a recipient to deal with depending on how busy they are, how many lessons they have taught that day, how many extra-curricular activities they have been organising. If they are receiving so many messages, what are the chances that they will read your message with great care, particularly if they perceive it to be only tangentially relevant to them? For many people, Email is fast becoming a chore not a vital tool of communication. Do not accelerate this process by contributing messages / information that could be broadcast or communicated in another, often more efficient, way.

Beware of Forwarding

Consider carefully the necessity of forwarding a message and to whom. Take great care with any attachments, even from senders well known to you. When forwarding, include a summary of what you are sending – tell the recipients what it is in a sentence or two. If it is worthwhile to forward, it's worth an extra moment of your time to summarise your reason for forwarding.

Dealing with Emotions

One of the attractions of Email communication is that it can be quick and simple. However, this can also be a weakness. When you are writing letters, the very nature of the activity forces you to think about your choice of language. You may even go through a draft or two – considering carefully the impact of your words on the reader. Emails are often drafted all too rapidly and immediately sent off. Emotions or nuances you may feel were obvious could be missed by the recipient or perhaps they may read into your message and pick up attitudes or meaning that you had no intention of conveying. Humour is notoriously tricky to convey appropriately via Email, even to people that you know well. Therefore, the following suggestions can be useful:

- **Don't Criticise**

Never chastise or criticise someone via an electronic communication. Even well-meaning and constructive criticism can hit home much harder on screen when you are not there to moderate the blow with body language, vocal tone and flexible response to the observed reaction. Even if you do not feel that you are criticising – perception of a message must always be carefully considered.

- **Cool Off**

If you have something to get off your chest, write the Email message then save it. Let it lie for a few hours / a day then re-read it. In the meantime, circumstances may change or you may have an opportunity to talk to the person causing your anxiety. Even if little has changed, it is highly likely that you will edit or re-write your original Email and it will be a more effective message for the greater sense of detachment and objectivity the extra reflection time has provided. Get out of the habit of a quick send then lengthy regret.

- **Take Care**

Before responding to any Email message re-read it to ensure that you fully understand it. Many messages are sent / forwarded without the reader really grasping the point and responding appropriately. Try to get into the habit of proof reading your own messages. This will ensure that your meaning and your requirements are clear and should help to minimise the chance of misunderstanding or frustratingly irrelevant replies.
- **Writing the Email**

Clear entries in the *subject* guides to assist the reader in prioritising their inbox and sharp, concise email messages all play their part in making the process efficient and painless. Avoid putting too much information into one message – your key points may become buried. Email is, by its very nature, designed for short, digestible snippets of information. Readers do not expect tomes and they do not expect additional information beyond the subject guide. If you have lots to say then it may be lost in a long message – consider breaking it down into several messages or communicating your concerns in a different fashion.
- **Urgency and Reliability**

Email feels immediate. It is not. It is subject to both technical system and reader variables. All staff should try to check their Email twice a day but, as we all know, sometimes this is not possible. Even when it does happen it is most likely to occur at 8am, lunchtime or after 4pm. Bear this in mind when you send a message in the hope of a speedy reply by return. Try the phone. If it is urgent, check staff timetables and seek people out.
- **Email Conversations**

If your email exchange on one topic results in two or more “cycles” then it is probably best to stop and talk to each other. Email will simply take too long and the subject is obviously knotty / complex enough to need a proper form of exchange with much more interactive feedback.
- **Email communication to parents**

should always be discussed with your line manager if you have concerns, in advance of any reply and a record of the exchange placed on the pupil’s file. If in doubt about any other external contact – speak to a member of SLT.