

# Pears Family School London.

(Keeping a child's mind in mind)

## Staff Code of Conduct

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Review Date	By Sept 2024
Headteacher	Matthew Hillman
Headteacher Signature	<i>M.Hillman</i>
Named Governor	<i>J.Cape</i>

### At the heart of all policies at The Pears Family School are the following principles:

- Every young person in our school, whatever his or her personal circumstances can learn and achieve
- Every young person in our school, whatever his or her self-perception and previous experiences, has academic and creative potential to become a valuable member of society
- The key to learning at The Pears Family School lies within the quality of the relationships between pupils, family members, staff and the intermediate agencies with whom we work
- The success of our school is based on high expectations, mutual trust, caring for each other and taking responsibility
- Every young person in our school is capable of becoming an agent for change in his or her local community
- Under the Equality Act 2010 we have a duty not to discriminate against people on the basis of their age, disability, gender, gender identity, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation
- We have carefully considered the impact of this policy on equality and the possible implications for pupils with protected characteristics, as part of our commitment to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations

Our vision is to provide our pupils with the confidence, academic progress, and ambition to take the next steps towards a successful and productive life and to be able to contribute positively within their local community and wider society.



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## Introduction

The governors of The Family School have a legal duty under section 175 of the Education Act 2002 to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by creating and maintaining a safe learning environment. In this regard, school staff have a duty to keep pupils safe and protect them from harm. Staff at the school need to behave in a way that does not put themselves in situations in which allegations of abuse of inappropriate behaviour could be made.

Colleges and the public are also entitled to expect the highest standard of conduct from school staff, governors and volunteers and to have trust and confidence in their ability.

All adults working at Pears Family School must therefore act with the utmost good faith with regard to the business of the school and not do anything which may adversely affect its reputation.

The following Code has been drawn up with a view to

- Making the school a happy and safe environment to work for all
- reduce the risk of staff being accused of improper or unprofessional conduct in all aspects of their work. It aims to help staff work safely and professionally
- clarify what behaviours constitutes both safe and or professional practice including what is unacceptable and/or illegal.
- This Code is to be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding Policy and the Child Protection Policy.

## 1. Aims, scope and principles

- This policy aims to set and maintain standards of conduct that we expect all staff to follow. All conduct should be based around maintain professional standards and have the school core values of (Reliability, Challenge, Curiosity, Warmth and Trust) at the heart of all we do at PFS
- By creating this policy, we aim to ensure our school is an environment where everyone is safe, happy and treated with respect.
- Many of the principles in this code of conduct are based on the Teachers' and TA's Standards.
- School staff have an influential position in the school, and will act as role models for pupils by consistently demonstrating high standards of behaviour.
- We expect that all teachers will act in accordance with the personal and professional behaviours set out in the Teachers' Standards.
- We expect all support staff, governors and volunteers to also act with personal and professional integrity, respecting the safety and wellbeing of others.

Failure to follow the code of conduct may result in disciplinary action being taken.

Please note that this code of conduct is not exhaustive. If situations arise that are not covered by this code, staff will use their professional judgement and act in the best interests of the school and its pupils.

## 2. Legislation and guidance

In line with the statutory safeguarding guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023, The PFS staff code of conduct, covers acceptable use of technologies (including the use of mobile devices), staff/pupil relationships and communications, including the use of social media.

In addition, all staff are required to Read and sign the acceptable use of ICT policy at the start of each new academic year.

This policy also complies with PFS's funding agreement and articles of association.

## 3. General obligations and expectations of PFS staff

At PFS it is important that ALL staff set an example to pupils and families. They will:

- › Understand the unique ethos and associated values of the school and live these on a daily basis
- › Maintain high standards in their attendance and punctuality
- › Not to use inappropriate or offensive language in school
- › Treat pupils, families and others with dignity and respect
- › Show tolerance and respect for the rights of others
- › Not undermine fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs
- › Not express personal beliefs in a way that exploits pupils' vulnerability or might lead them to break the law
- › Understand the statutory frameworks they must act within

- › Adhere to the Teachers' and other professional Standards
- › Show kindness and tolerance

## 4. Safeguarding

Staff have a duty to safeguard pupils from harm, and to report any concerns they have. This includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse, and neglect.

Staff will familiarise themselves with our child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures, and the Prevent initiative, and ensure they are aware of the processes to follow if they have concerns about a child.

Our child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures are available from the school website. All staff are given regular training and are required to sign off that they have read and understand the most up to date version of Keeping Children Safe in Education part 1.

### 4.1 Low-level concerns about members of staff

A low-level concern is a behaviour towards a child by a member of staff that does not meet the harms threshold, is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, and 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
- › Engaging in one-to-one activities where they can't easily be seen
- › Using inappropriate language

Low-level concerns can include inappropriate conduct inside and outside of work.

All staff should share any low-level concerns they have using the reporting procedures set out in our child protection and safeguarding policy. We also encourage staff to self-refer if they find themselves in a situation that could be misinterpreted. If staff are not sure whether behaviour would be deemed a low-level concern, we encourage staff to report it.

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.

This creates and embeds a culture of openness, trust and transparency in which our values and expected behaviour are constantly lived, monitored and reinforced by all staff, while minimising the risk of abuse.

Reporting and responding to low-level concerns is covered in more detail in our child protection and safeguarding policy.

## 5. Staff-pupil relationships

All staff should clearly understand the need to maintain appropriate boundaries in their dealings with pupils. It is a criminal offence for a teacher or other persons who works with young children to abuse their position of trust. The offence is punishable on conviction by a fine of up to the statutory maximum and / or a term of imprisonment of up to 5 years. This code is intended to help staff reduce further the risk of any vulnerability to false or malicious allegations of misconduct or abuse towards pupils and pupils with whom they work. This code does not replace or take priority over The Family School's Child Protection Procedures.

Staff at PFS should take care that their relationships with pupils reflect the age, gender and maturity of the pupils. Gaining as much information about a pupils past is a critical step in this process.

### Physical Contact

It is important to be aware that Physical contact may be misconstrued by a pupil, parent or observer. Touching pupils, including well-intentioned informal and formal gestures such as putting a hand on the shoulder or arm,

can lead to questions being raised. There will be occasions when physical contact will be acceptable. In general these will fall into one of three categories:

**1. Action to prevent harm or injury to the pupil or to others.**

If it is necessary to prevent a pupil causing injury to him/herself or to others the use of minimum force and contact necessary to prevent harm or injury is acceptable and defensible. Such incidents must always be reported. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 does provide the legal power for school staff to use reasonable force to prevent pupils from committing a crime or causing injury, damage or disruption. Further advice is contained in the DfE document 'Guidance on Physical Intervention for Teachers and Other Employees Working with Young People'.

**2. Reassuring and Comforting a pupil in distress.** There is no easy definition of what is acceptable since much will depend on the circumstances, the age of the pupil, the extent and cause of the distress and the alternative means of providing comfort. Employees will need to use their professional judgment and discretion in relation to these factors. Employees should consider how others might perceive the action.

**3. Unavoidable contact.** This is a particularly sensitive issue in subjects such as Physical Education, and Drama, and in some forms of skills coaching. All teachers must be alert to the possibilities of misinterpreting any contact. It may be, for example, that alternative methods involving demonstrations of particular techniques by the teacher or a particularly competent pupil may be more appropriate than modifying a pupil's technique by physical contact. It will generally not be acceptable for physical contact to take place between adolescent pupils and teachers. In cases of doubt or uncertainty, staff should seek advice.

There are other occasions when physical contact may be questioned even if innocent or unintentional. Employees should therefore ensure that their actions recognise the possibility of misinterpretation and are open to the scrutiny of colleagues. Individual professional judgments will be required about the level of physical contact with individual children, which will take account of their age, circumstances and background. Extra caution may be required where it is known that a child has suffered previous abuse or neglect. Many such children may seek out inappropriate contact, thereby leading staff to be vulnerable to allegations of abuse.

Any formally agreed plan for children with SEN or physical disabilities should be understood and agreed by all concerned and staff should be provided with relevant information about vulnerable children in their care where it is relevant for this to be provided in order for staff to be able to undertake tasks appropriately.

### **Private meetings**

Private meetings, by their very nature, provide opportunities for pupils to make malicious allegations. Teachers and others must therefore recognise this possibility and plan such meetings accordingly. It is advisable to ensure that **wherever possible** the doors are left open or visual contact with others is maintained. Under no circumstances should meetings with individual pupils be arranged off School premises without the prior approval of the Head teacher or a senior leader with delegated authority to approve such meetings. This includes the transporting of individual children in private cars. Where it is not possible to meet in the circumstances referred to above another member of staff should be told of the meeting beforehand

Due to the nature of the work carried out at PFS there will be times that staff will need to work on a one-to-one basis with a pupil or family, staff will ensure that:

- This takes place in a public place that others can access
- Others can see into the room
- A colleague or line manager knows this is taking place

Staff should avoid contact with pupils outside of school hours if possible.

Personal contact details should not be exchanged between staff and pupils. This includes social media profiles.

While we are aware many pupils and their parents may wish to give gifts to staff, for example, at the end of the school year, gifts from staff to pupils that fall outside the reward structures of the school are not allowed and this might be misinterpreted by the pupil.

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 reported in line with the procedures set out in our child protection and safeguarding policy.

### **Comments and Discussions with Pupils**

Employees must avoid comments to or about pupils which could be taken as derogatory or as having sexual overtones. It is equally unacceptable for employees to encourage debate and discussion between groups of pupils, which could be interpreted as having sexual overtones, which are not justified in the context of the lesson. It will be especially helpful if Schemes of Work highlight particular areas of risk and sensitivity. Specific guidance may be needed to assist newly qualified or other teachers who are new to this area of work. This will call for the exercise of careful judgment in responding to questions raised by pupils. Notwithstanding the advice given above it is recognised that, in order to discharge particular pastoral responsibilities, employees may from time to time need to engage in conversation with pupils which cover sensitive matters. Staff at PFS must use their professional judgment to ensure that they are not drawn into areas inappropriate to their duties or their relationship with the pupils concerned. Staff must also use their discretion to ensure that, for example, any probing for details cannot be construed as unjustified intrusion. In responding to individual pupils' distress, employees will need to consider carefully whether they should offer advice, sympathy or counselling if a discussion enters a sensitive area or, alternatively, refer them to a colleague, for example a member of or Therapeutic team, or agency who is better placed to offer appropriate advice. The persistent and hurtful use of sarcastic, demeaning or insensitive comments towards young people may also be regarded as a form of abuse which is potentially very damaging and should be avoided.

### **Infatuations**

In cases where a young person develops an infatuation, there is a high risk of words or actions being misinterpreted and for allegations to be made against staff. Staff should report immediately any clear/apparent indications (whether they are verbal, written or physical) that suggest a pupil may be infatuated with them and respond sensitively to such situations in order to maintain the dignity of all parties.

### **Out of School and After School Activities**

Staff at PFS should take particular care when supervising pupils in the less formal atmosphere of a residential setting or after-school activity. The more relaxed relationships that may promote successful activities can be misinterpreted by young people. It is important to emphasise that the standards of professional conduct and behaviour expected of employees should be no different to that which applies within The Family School. Staff should always take care to have another adult present during out of school activities, unless otherwise agreed with senior staff. Health and safety requirements should be strictly adhered to.

### **Teaching materials**

The use of books, videos and films of an explicit or sensitive nature, particularly in relation to language or sexual behaviour must be given careful consideration to ensure that its selection is not subsequently misinterpreted. There should always, therefore, be a link with the objectives of the teacher's scheme of work/ lesson plan.

### **Reporting Incidents**

Teachers should report any concerns they may have following any incident where s/he feels that his/her actions may have been misinterpreted. This report should be made to the head teacher or DSL as soon as possible after the incident and should include as an immediate follow-up the preparation of a written note of the incident, a copy of which should be given to the Head. The teacher may also wish to seek advice from his/her professional association.

The head teacher at PFS who face similar situations are advised to contact the Free School's Assigned Inspector.

Whilst reporting of incidents is always advisable it is particularly important to ensure that a contemporaneous written record is made if any form of restraint has been used against a pupil or whenever a pupil, parent or third party has complained about an action or expressed an intention to complain.

### **Social contact: Personal letters and on-line communication**

Staff should not establish or seek to establish social contact with pupils to secure or strengthen a friendship. This includes giving any personal details to a pupil such as a home/mobile phone number, home or email

address as well as contact via social media platforms. The school has a number of mobile telephones as well as a landline for professional contact with parent/carers. Whilst regular contact with parents/carers is encouraged in order to work closely with them for the benefit of their children, for example to give positive feedback at the end of the day, personal mobile phones should not be used. It will rarely be appropriate for teachers to write personal notes or letters, or to send e-mail, to individual pupils. If a teacher believes it to be necessary to write a personal note to a pupil, s/he should discuss the purpose and context with a member of SLT who should refer to the DSL if they require further advice. If a member of staff wishes to send a letter/email home praising the efforts of a child (for example) these should be addressed to the parent. This advice is not intended to curtail the use of e-mail where the School has agreed the use of this medium for submission of work, advice over aspects of subjects being covered or other professional matters and have ensured that parents and carers are aware of this. However, all teachers and other adults using e-mail in this context need to be aware of the less formal style that can characterise this form of communication and should ensure that responses do not convey an inappropriate tone.

Teachers should keep passwords secure and ensure that no other person can gain access to their e-mail account and maliciously send messages which appear to have been written by them. Ideally, both teachers and pupils should use an e-mail address provided by the school. Since these services can be monitored, they provide a measure of protection for both parties.

## 6. Communication and social media

School staff's social media profiles should not be available to pupils. If they have a personal profile on social media sites, it is recommended that these should not use their full name, as pupils may be able to find them. Staff should consider using a first and middle name instead, and need to set public profiles to private.

Staff should not attempt to contact pupils or parents via social media, or any other means outside school, in order to develop any sort of relationship. Any out of school hours contact should only occur if it is in relation to school business and the school leadership is aware and has agreed such contact. Staff will not make any efforts to find pupils' or parents' social media profiles.

Staff will ensure that they do not post any images online that identify children who are pupils at the school.

Staff need to be aware they are working in positions of trust and as role models, staff need to make sure they do not post anything on their own social media platforms that could be deemed inappropriate this includes images, written word and comments.

Staff should be aware of the school's acceptable use of ICT policy.

## 7. Acceptable use of technology (see additional policy)

Staff will not use technology in school to view material that is illegal, inappropriate or likely to be deemed offensive. This includes, but is not limited to, sending obscene emails, gambling and viewing pornography or other inappropriate content.

Staff will not use personal mobile phones and laptops, or school equipment for personal use, in front of pupils. They will also not use personal mobile phones or cameras to take pictures of any pupils.

We have the right to monitor emails, social media and internet use on the school IT system.

For more information refer to the schools acceptable use of ICT policy that all staff are required to sign to say they have read at the start of each academic year.

## 8. Confidentiality

In the course of their role, members of staff are often privy to sensitive and confidential information about the school, staff, pupils and their parents.

This information should never be:

- Disclosed to anyone unless required by law or with consent from the relevant party or parties



- Used to humiliate, embarrass or blackmail others
- Used for a purpose other than what it was collected and intended for

This does not overrule staff's duty to report child protection concerns to the appropriate channel where staff believe a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm, as detailed further in our child protection and safeguarding policy.

## 9. Honesty and integrity

Staff should maintain high standards of honesty and integrity in their role. This includes when dealing with pupils and families, handling money, claiming expenses and using school property and facilities.

Staff will not accept bribes. Gifts over £15 must be declared and recorded on the gifts register that is held by the schools business manager.

Staff will ensure that all information given to the school is correct. This should include:

- Background information (including any past or current investigations/cautions related to conduct outside of school)
- Qualifications
- Professional experience

Where there are any updates to the information provided to the school, the member of staff will advise the school as such as soon as reasonably practicable. Consideration will then be given to the nature and circumstances of the matter and whether this may have an impact on the member of staff's employment.

## 10. Dress code

Due to the nature of the work undertaken at PFS staff will need to dress accordingly (PE offsite etc).

The school provide all staff with polo tops, staff can either choice to wear these or choose dress in an appropriate professional manner in keeping with their role at the school.

Outfits will not be overly revealing.

No ripped jeans etc.

Clothes will not display any offensive or political slogans.

On health and safety grounds large hooped earrings a items that could cause risk of strangulation should not be worn.

## 11. Conduct outside of work

Staff will not act in a way that would bring the school, or the teaching/education profession, into disrepute. This covers conduct including but not limited to relevant criminal offences, such as violence, sexual, hate crimes or crimes surrounding equality and protective characteristic.

## 12. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed on a two yearly cycle however it can be revised as needed. It will be approved by the head teacher and ratified by the governing body

The head teacher along with the governors will ensure this code of conduct is implemented effectively, and will ensure appropriate action is taken in a timely manner to safeguard children and deal with any concerns.

### 13. Links with other policies

This policy links with our policies on:

- Staff disciplinary procedures, which will be used if staff breach this code of conduct.
- Acceptable use of ICT
- Whistle blowing policy
- Health and Safety Policies
- Child protection and safeguarding