Wolverdene Special School
Staff Code of Conduct Policy 2026

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This policy will be reviewed annually. The next review is due in March 2027	

1. Purpose

This Code of Conduct aims to establish a set of principles which underpin the expected conduct of staff at Wolverdene School with the intention of encouraging staff to achieve the highest standards of conduct at work and of minimising the risk of improper conduct occurring.

The school requires that all staff have read and comply with the Code of Conduct. Where clarification is needed on any aspect of this document, this should be sought from the Headteacher.

Breach or failure to observe the provisions of this document may lead to action being taken under the school disciplinary procedure which can be obtained from the school office team.

This document is available to all staff on the school's website, as well as being provided on induction to all new members of staff.

The Code of Conduct is not exhaustive in defining acceptable and unacceptable standards of conduct and behaviour and in circumstances where guidance does not exist individuals are expected to use their professional judgement and act in the best interests of the school and its pupils.

2. Our School's Ethos and Values

As a school for children with SEMH (Social, Emotional and Mental Health) needs, Wolverdene is committed to adopting an holistic, nurturing, relational approach to support children who exhibit behaviours of concern. Staff are trained to employ a differentiated approach; ensuring that all children are treated as individuals and are able to reach their potential, whilst promoting positive mental health and well-being. The school's ethos to "Nurture a love of Learning" is upheld through offering children an emotionally and physically safe place to learn, alongside trusted adults. We adopt trauma informed, therapeutic practices based in theory and knowledge and operate through a restorative, reflective culture.

This Code of Conduct should be read in conjunction with the following policies: Child Protection, Safeguarding, Exclusions, Staff, Restrictive Physical Interventions, Relationships and Behaviour and Anti-Bullying.

3. Underpinning principles

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 their ability to care for children.

Staff should be aware that breaches of the law and other professional guidelines could result in disciplinary action being taken against them, criminal action and/or other proceedings including barring by the Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) from working in regulated activity, or for acts of serious misconduct prohibition from teaching by the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA).

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

Staff should be aware of and understand the school's child protection policy, arrangements for managing allegations against staff, whistle blowing procedure and the procedures of the relevant Multi-agency Partnership (MAP).

4. Scope

The Code of Conduct applies to:

- all members of staff, including teaching and support staff;
- volunteers, including governors;
- casual workers;
- temporary and supply staff, either from agencies or engaged directly;
- students on placement, including those undertaking initial teacher training, and apprentices.

References to 'staff' throughout the Code of Conduct refer to all of the above groups.
Any links within this document to other documents are for ease of use and do not form part of this Code of Conduct.

The Code of Conduct exists in addition to Hampshire County Council's Local Government Code of Conduct.

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Professional standards at work

Staff are expected to demonstrate the highest possible standards of personal and professional conduct and behaviour and consistently act with honesty and integrity. The school expects staff to treat each other, pupils, parents and the wider school community with dignity and respect at all times.

Furthermore, staff must have regard for the ethos and values of the school as well as its policies and procedures and act in accordance with these at all times, including in their dealings with those who come into contact with the school, e.g. visitors.

Staff must act in accordance with their duty of care to pupils and ensure that the safety and welfare of the children and young people at the school are accorded the highest priority. In this and other ways staff should always maintain standards of conduct and behaviour which sustain their professional standing and that of the school.

Safeguarding

Teachers are reminded of, and are expected to uphold, their wider responsibilities as set out in the Teachers' Standards, including an understanding of, and acting within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

Wolverdene School recognises its statutory and moral duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils and understands that staff play a vital role in meeting these responsibilities. Staff must be aware of their individual safeguarding responsibilities, including to provide a safe environment in which children can learn, to be aware of the signs of abuse and neglect, to identify children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm and to take appropriate action in such cases to prevent concerns from escalating.

All members of staff must be aware of the school's systems for supporting child safeguarding, including the role of the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

At Wolverdene the DSLs are: Nathalie Akhmatova (Headteacher and Principal DSL), Erika Pickett (Head of Care), Michaela Burgess and Ayesha Edwards (Assistant Headteachers) and Hayley Cooper (Family Support Worker).

Staff have a professional duty to report concerns about the welfare of a child. Any such concerns must be raised without delay to the school's Principal DSL in the first instance or to any of the other DSLs if the Principal DSL cannot be located. In the extremely unlikely event that none of the above are available, contact the

Hampshire County Council Safeguarding Team on 01962 876364**.** There should be no delay in reporting a concern if there is a risk of immediate serious harm to a child.

Staff are reminded of their duty to report safeguarding concerns about staff. Any concerns or allegations must be raised without delay to the school's Principal DSL in the first instance or to any other DSL if the Principal DSL cannot be located. If the safeguarding concern relates to the Principal DSL, then the concern must be reported to the Chair of Governors, Jo Lloyd, whose contact details can be obtained from the school's office team.

Staff should be familiar with the school's child protection policy, which is available to all staff on the website**.** All staff will receive appropriate child protection training and will be provided with guidance on child safeguarding as part of their induction to the school.

In accordance with the statutory guidance published by the Department for Education 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' 2023 all staff in Wolverdene School are required to read Part One 'Safeguarding information for all staff' and will be provided with a copy as part of their induction to the school. They will also need to sign to confirm that they have read this document on the school's CPOM system.

Further information is found in the guidance document 'The avoidance of unnecessary contact and allegations' and in 'Guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings' (May 2019) provided by the Safer Recruitment Consortium.

Appropriate relationships

Pupils

Individuals who work or volunteer at Wolverdene School are in a position of great trust and responsibility. Staff should be mindful of the need to maintain professional boundaries appropriate to their position and must always consider whether their actions are warranted, proportionate, safe and applied equitably.

Staff should act in an open and transparent way that would not lead any reasonable person to question their actions or intent. Staff should think carefully about their conduct so that misinterpretations are minimised.

Staff must avoid unnecessary physical contact with children. Where physical contact is essential, e.g. for safety reasons, the pupil's

permission must be gained for that contact wherever possible. If physical contact is made to remove a pupil from a dangerous situation or an object from a pupil to prevent either harm to themselves or others, then this should be recorded and reported using our electronic recording and reporting system. In all cases staff should act in accordance with the school's restraint policy.

Any sexual behaviour by a member of staff with or towards a pupil, child or young person whether inside or outside of work is unacceptable. Staff are reminded that under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, it is a criminal offence for a person aged 18 or over to have a sexual relationship with a child under 18, where that person is in a position of trust in respect of that child, even if the relationship is consensual. Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 defines a child as everyone under the age of 18.

Parents

Staff are expected to interact with parents in a polite and respectful manner and recognise parents' entitlement to express any concerns they may have about their child's learning, safety or wellbeing. Staff should avoid discussing school matters with parents outside school if approached and should instead refer the parent to the normal school communication channels.

Use of IT including social media

Internal e-mail and internet systems must be used only in accordance with the school's acceptable use of ICT policy.

Social networking sites offer the opportunity for communication with children, young people and their parents outside normal professional boundaries. School staff must take care to protect their privacy and protect themselves from risk of allegations in relation to inappropriate relationships and cyberbullying. Staff must not have any unauthorised contact or accept 'friend' requests through social media with any pupil (including former pupils and/or those who attend other schools) unless they are family members. Staff must exercise caution when having contact online through social media with parents so as not to compromise the school's reputation or school information.

Please refer to the school's acceptable use of ICT policy for further guidance on acceptable and unacceptable use of IT, social media and mobile phones

For further information on the acceptable use of school IT Resources, staff should refer to Hampshire County Council's leaflet 'Use of ICT Resources Do's and Don'ts: advice for school staff'. School and Lodge staff should not allow children to spend time on staff's personal mobile phones. Staff should also ensure that their personal mobile phones are not used around children, during teaching and contact time.

Confidentiality and disclosure of information

Staff must ensure that they do not disclose confidential information to anyone who does not have the right to receive it. Where information is disclosed this should be in line with the principles of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2016 and the Data Protection Act 2018. Equally staff should not prevent another person from gaining access to information to which that person is entitled by law. If there is doubt about whether or not to share information, advice must be sought from the Headteacher.

Information obtained during the course of an individual's work should never be used for personal gain or benefit, nor should it be passed onto others who might use it in such a way.

Dress and appearance

An individual's dress and appearance is a matter of personal choice; however, staff should ensure that they dress appropriately, decently and safely for a school environment and for the role they undertake, as well as setting a good example to both pupils and visitors.

Staff should have particular regard to the health and safety risks involved with certain lessons, i.e. physical education/food technology and the need to dress appropriately and safely when undertaking these activities, such as wearing appropriate footwear, removing jewellery etc. We do not allow staff to wear open-toes shoes or high heels and the wearing of jewellery that could snag, such as hooped earrings, should also be avoided.

The school recognises the diversity of cultures and religions of its staff and will take a sensitive approach when this affects dress and uniform requirements. However, priority will be given to health and safety, security and other similar considerations of other staff, pupils and the school.

Equal opportunities

The Governing Body of the school is committed to equality for all in the appointment, development, training and promotion of staff, and in all dealings with pupils and parents of the school. It also recognises that all members of staff have the right to work in a safe environment without fear of discrimination, harassment or abuse.

All pupils, colleagues, parents, members of the public and wider school community have the right to be treated with fairness and equality and must not be discriminated against. The school expects staff to uphold these principles.

Conduct outside work

Care must be taken by staff to avoid any conflict of interest between activities undertaken outside school and responsibilities within school. In no case should actions or activities undertaken outside of work (including but not limited to relationships and social media contact with

children, young people and vulnerable adults) bring the school into disrepute**.**

Staff must disclose any misconduct or alleged misconduct made against them, including any incidents arising from alternative or additional employment outside of this school. Disclosure must be made to the Headteacher without delay, after which consideration will be given to the relevance or otherwise of the misconduct to their role in the school.

Teachers are reminded that the Teachers' Standards, and specifically Part Two: Personal and Professional Conduct, set out their responsibilities in relation to upholding public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school.

Where staff are in doubt as to whether there is a conflict of interest advice must be sought from the Headteacher.

Declaration of interests

Staff should consider carefully whether they need to declare to the school any relationship with an individual where this might cause a conflict with the school's activities, for example, a relationship with a Governor, another staff member or a contractor who provides services to the school. Where such a declaration is necessary this should be made to the Headteacher.

Staff may undertake work outside school, either paid or voluntary, provided it does not conflict with the interests of the school nor be at a level which may contravene the Working Time Regulations or affect an individual's performance at work.

Speaking Up

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (as amended) gives protection to people who disclose reasonable concerns about serious misconduct or malpractice at work. This is sometimes known as Whistleblowing. The Governing Body of the school will treat all matters of malpractice very seriously and allegations about such matters will be dealt with quickly and with appropriate confidentiality.

Staff should acknowledge their individual responsibilities in bringing matters of concern to the attention of the Headteacher. This is particularly important where the welfare of children may be at risk.

A clear procedure is provided for staff to raise issues with the purpose of assisting in reducing the risk of serious concerns being mishandled, whether by the individual or by the school. Please refer to the school's Whistleblowing Policy and Protected Disclosures Procedure 2023 -

MOPP.docx for further information – it can be obtained by contacting the school office.

Staff must adhere to the school's Health and Safety policy and should ensure that they take every action to keep themselves and others in the school environment safe.

Health and safety

There may be occasions where children or parents wish to pass small tokens of appreciation to staff, for example as an end of year 'thank-you', and this is acceptable. However, it is unacceptable to receive gifts on a regular basis or of any significant value or to suggest to pupils that gifts would be appropriate or desired. Money should never be accepted as a gift.

Gifts and hospitality

It is not acceptable for staff to give gifts to pupils and any rewards given to children must be given in agreement with the declared behaviour policy of the school.

Staff should not solicit or accept any gift, hospitality or other reward from external parties which influences the way in which they carry out their duties or leads the giver to expect preferential treatment.

The use of school resources, property and equipment is for school-related activities only, except where otherwise agreed.

Use of school resources and funds

All members of staff must use any public or school funds entrusted or handled by them in a responsible and lawful manner.

Intimate / personal care

Occasionally at Wolverdene children may require assistance with toileting and intimate/personal care activities. The conduct of adults when supporting children with such activities should ensure that the health, safety, independence and welfare of the child is promoted and their dignity and privacy are respected.

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. 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. 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.

Any vulnerability, including those that may arise from a physical or learning difficulty should be considered when formulating the individual pupil'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 and in the necessary regular reviews of these arrangements. 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. However, there needs to be an appropriate level of supervision in order to safeguard pupils, satisfy health and safety considerations and ensure that bullying or teasing does not occur. This supervision should be appropriate to the needs and age of the children concerned and sensitive to the potential for embarrassment.

Corporal punishment and smacking are unlawful in all schools and education settings.

Staff should not use any form of degrading or humiliating treatment to punish a child. The use of sarcasm, demeaning or insensitive comments towards children is completely unacceptable.

Behaviour management

All pupils at Wolverdene are here because of significant and sustained problems with their behavioural, social and emotional development, so where pupils display difficult or challenging behaviour, adults should follow the Relationships and Positive Behaviour policy using strategies appropriate to the circumstance and situation.

Where a pupil has specific needs over and above those typically seen here at Wolverdene, a positive handling plan, including assessment of risk, will be drawn up and agreed by all parties.

Home visits

All work with pupils and parents should usually be undertaken in the school. There are however occasions, in response to an urgent, planned or specific situation or job role such as Family Support Worker, where it is necessary to make one-off or regular home visits. It is essential that these visits are risk assessed to safeguard both staff and pupils, who can be more vulnerable in these situations. The assessment should include an evaluation of any known factors regarding the pupil, parents/carers and any others living in the household. Consideration should be given to any circumstances which might render the staff member becoming more vulnerable to an allegation being made, e.g. hostility, child protection concerns, complaints or grievances. Specific thought should be given to visits outside of normal school hours or in remote or secluded locations. Following the assessment, appropriate risk management measures should be put in place, before the visit is undertaken. In the unlikely event that little or no information is available, visits should not be made alone.

Wolverdene has an established protocol – the so-called Purple File Protocol - for home visits that involves phone contact with a school representative before a visit, estimating a time of return and phone contact once the visit is over. Failure to make contact by the agreed time checks will prompt the school to take proactive steps to ensure the staff member's safety and wellbeing.

Transporting pupils

In certain situations, staff or volunteers may be required or offer to transport pupils as part of their work. As for any other activity undertaken at work, the employer has a duty to carry out a risk assessment covering the health and safety of their staff and to manage any known risks.

Consideration must be given to the potential distraction of the driver and the supervision of the passenger(s). A judgement should be made about the likely behaviour and individual needs of the child/ren. In all cases at least one other adult should travel in the vehicle so that the driver is not distracted or compromised.

A designated member of staff should be appointed to plan and provide oversight of all transport arrangements and respond to any concerns that may arise.

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 driver should ensure that they do so. They should also be aware of and adhere to current legislation regarding the use of car seats / booster seats for younger children.

Staff should ensure that their behaviour is safe and that the transport arrangements and the vehicle meet all legal requirements. They should ensure that the vehicle is roadworthy and appropriately insured and that the maximum carrying capacity is not exceeded.

Staff should never offer to transport pupils outside of their normal working duties, other than in an emergency or where not doing so would mean the child may be at risk. In these circumstances the matter should be recorded and reported to both the Headteacher and the child's parent(s).

On-site personal living accommodation

Generally, staff should not invite any pupils into their living accommodation in the Lodge.

It is not appropriate for staff to be expected or requested to use their private living space for any activity, play or learning. This includes

seeing pupils for discussion of reports, academic reviews, tutorials, pastoral care or counselling. Managers should ensure that appropriate accommodation for such activities is found elsewhere in the setting. Under no circumstances should pupils be asked to assist adults with jobs or tasks, either for or without reward, at or in their private accommodation.

This guidance should also apply to all other persons living in or visiting the private accommodation.

EQUALITIES, SAFEGUARDING AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES STATEMENT

- Wolverdene School, in all policies and procedures, will promote equality of opportunity for children and staff from all social, cultural and economic backgrounds and ensure freedom from discrimination on the basis of membership of any group including gender, sexual orientation, family circumstances, ethnic or national origin, disability (physical or mental), religious or political beliefs. As part of our commitment to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), Wolverdene School aims to: Provide equal opportunity for all; foster good relations, and create effective partnership with all sections of the community; only take actions which do not discriminate unlawfully in service delivery, commissioning and employment; provide an environment free from fear and discrimination, where diversity, respect and dignity are valued; demonstrate zero tolerance to any form of bullying, harassment or abuse.