

SHIREMOOR PRIMARY SCHOOL STAFF CODE OF CONDUCT POLICY



This Policy is to be read in conjunction with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Introduction

The Governors of Shiremoor Primary 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, all Shiremoor Primary School staff have a duty to keep children and young people safe and protect them from harm. Staff should ensure that they do not put themselves in situations in which allegations of abuse or inappropriate behaviour could be made.

The Public are also entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from school staff, governors and volunteers and to have trust and confidence in their integrity and professionalism.

All adults working in Shiremoor Primary 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 reducing 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 and clarify what behaviour constitutes safe practice and what is unacceptable and/or illegal.

Scope

The Code applies to all adults working in schools whatever their position, roles or responsibilities and is therefore aimed at all school-based staff and volunteers. The Code is predominantly geared towards safe working practices for the protection of children and in this connection should be read in conjunction with Shiremoor Primary School Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. However, the Code also encompasses other general aspects of conduct expected within Shiremoor Primary School.

The Code cannot cover every eventuality. Its purpose is to show the standard expected of employees, but it does not replace the general requirements of the law.

General obligations

Staff should understand the responsibilities that are an intrinsic part of their employment or role. They should make a professional judgement about their actions and behaviour and seek to avoid conduct, which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation or intentions. If there is an incident where staff feel there may be a concern, they should discuss the circumstances that informed their action, or their proposed action with a senior colleague, to help ensure that the safest practices are employed and the risk of actions being misinterpreted reduced. Records should be made of any incidents and decisions made or further actions agreed, with their justifications, in accordance with school policy. All staff should know the Designated Safeguarding Lead (and Deputy DSL's), be familiar with local child protection arrangements and understand their responsibilities to safeguard and protect children and young people. Staff should understand their responsibility to voice any general concerns that they might have about practice within the school, in accordance with Shiremoor Primary School's Whistle Blowing policy, (copy available from the office, the website and wall in the staff room). Staff should also be aware of and comply with Shiremoor Primary School's financial and administrative regulations and any other procedure manuals such as the staff handbook. Unlawful, unsafe or inappropriate behaviour may result in disciplinary action being taken.

Good practice guidelines

The following Code and guidelines set out specific areas of conduct and behaviour that constitute expected and safe practice. If staff are in any doubt about any aspect of this guidance or need to seek further clarification about a particular situation in the absence of specific guidance, they are advised to speak to a senior leader within Shiremoor Primary School.

Propriety and Behaviour

All adults working with children and young people are in a position of trust in relation to the individuals in their care. Staff are expected to adopt high standards of personal integrity and conduct and behave in such a way that does not compromise their position either within or outside Shiremoor Primary School.

To ensure that the workplace is a pleasant one for all, it is expected that employees greet one another appropriately and engage in professional conversations. Staff must treat others as they themselves would like to be treated. Staff should ensure that their behaviour towards others does not cause discomfort or could be perceived negatively. It is expected that behaviour towards others should be equal so that no person, or persons, is made to feel isolated or unwelcome.

Raised voices towards other employees is not permitted and neither is the use of bad language. If staff are unhappy about treatment they have received by another member of staff, they should report it immediately to a member of the leadership team so that the matter can be resolved swiftly to ensure that matters do not escalate.

The General Teaching Council for England's Statement of Professional Values and Practice also sets out the minimum professional standards for the regulation of the teaching profession and recognises that 'professionalism involves using judgement over appropriate standards of personal behaviour'.

Staff should:

- Treat colleagues and visitors with respect, dignity and professionalism at all times.
- Never engage in unwanted or inappropriate sexual comments, jokes, gestures, conversations or behave in a manner that makes them feel uncomfortable.
- Avoid making comments about another person's body, appearance or clothes, relationships or sex life that could be unwelcome or inappropriate.
- Never make unwanted sexual advances, invitations, flirting or requests for sexual contact.
- Respect professional and personal boundaries and stop immediately if someone indicates behaviour is unwelcome.
- Never share aggressive or offensive emails, messages, videos or other material and do not make sexual or inappropriate comments through email, messages or on other digital communication.
- Ensure that social events, work related travel, meetings and informal workplace settings have the same standards of professional behaviour.
- Behave in a manner, which would lead any reasonable person to question their suitability to work with children or act as a role model.
- Use their power to intimidate, threaten, coerce or undermine pupils or other members of staff;

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- make (or encourage others to make) unprofessional personal comments which scapegoat, demean or humiliate other individuals or might be interpreted as such.

Confidentiality and Information disclosure

Staff should not use any information obtained in the course of their duties to the detriment of Shiremoor Primary School or for personal gain or benefit or pass this information on to others who might use it in such a way.

Staff must also take all reasonable steps to ensure that the loss, destruction, inaccuracy or disclosure of information does not occur as a result of their actions, including information relating to school business and pupil data.

There are some circumstances in which staff may be expected to share information about a child, for example, when child protection issues arise. In such cases staff have a duty to pass information on without delay in line with local procedures. If staff are in any doubt about whether to share information or keep it confidential, they should seek guidance from a senior leader, Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads (DDSL). Staff should not use their position to gain access to information for their own advantage or to intimidate, humiliate or embarrass a child and are expected to treat any information they receive about children and young people in a discreet and confidential manner;

Equality issues

All staff should adhere to the Shiremoor Primary School Equal Opportunities Policy, in addition to the requirements of the law and should not discriminate in recruitment and employment practices, nor in the delivery of services;

Employment matters

All staff involved in appointments and/or tendering processes should ensure that these are made on the basis of merit.

All relationships of a business or private nature with external contractors, or potential contractors should be made known to the Headteacher.

Public duty and private interest

It is important that staff do not put themselves in a position where their duty to Shiremoor Primary School and their private interests conflict. Staff should not allow their own personal or political opinions to interfere with their work and the provision of a balanced and professional service, ensuring that they work to the professional standard required.

Other employment/private work

Any external work that staff undertake must not bring Shiremoor Primary School into disrepute or conflict with the school's interest.

Any copyright created by a member of staff during their employment with Shiremoor Primary School becomes the property of the school.

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Staff should not set up a business or accept employment with a business that is engaged in work, which is in direct competition with Shiremoor Primary School.

Private work should not be undertaken in the school's time, or using the school's premises or equipment, without prior approval of the Headteacher.

Shiremoor Primary School – Dress Code

The image you present creates the first impression - often the lasting impression - on the people you meet. A person's dress and appearance are matters of personal choice and self-expression. However, staff should consider the manner of dress and appearance appropriate to their professional role which may be different to that adopted in their personal life. Staff should ensure they are dressed professionally, safely and appropriately for the tasks they undertake.

The school is aware that dress is a sensitive issue and is mindful of the need to avoid direct or indirect discrimination against any employee on the grounds of their sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, or age. It is also aware of its responsibility to consider possible health and safety issues in determining an acceptable dress code.

Standard of Dress

In general the dress of all teaching and support staff must be tidy and smart, reflecting the professional ethos that the school wishes to foster and maintain in staff and students. The school accepts that those staff engaged in caretaking, cleaning and premises/grounds maintenance, will wear dress appropriate for their work. Please be mindful of this during summer months when the weather is warmer and you may wish to wear cooler clothing.

Staff should ensure they are dressed respectably, safely and appropriately for their particular role. Clothing should be clean and presentable and not cause offence to others. Clothing that reveals too much cleavage, your back, your chest, your stomach or your underwear is not appropriate for our school environment.

Trousers

Trousers or pants that are smart work wear are acceptable. Inappropriate trousers or pants include any that are considered too informal for our place of work and would be described as jeans or jean-style, denim, cargo pants, cut-off trousers, sweatpants, tracksuit bottoms (other than as part of P.E. kit), shorts, tight trousers, leggings and any other form-fitting pants such as people wear for exercise or biking (unless used as part of school sports activities).

Skirts and Dresses

Dresses and skirts should be of a length that is appropriate to work with children and that does not cause embarrassment to others. Mini-skirts, sun dresses, beach dresses and spaghetti-strap dresses are also inappropriate for the school environment.

Shirts, tops, blouses and jackets

Shirts, blouses, dress shirts, tops, knitwear and suit jackets are acceptable attire for work if they contribute to the appearance of smart, professional dress. Inappropriate attire for work includes vest tops, midriff tops, shirts, with potentially offensive words, terms, logos, pictures, cartoons or slogans, halter-tops, tops with bare shoulders or plunging necklines.

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Shoes and Footwear

It is your responsibility to wear suitable footwear for the work you undertake. Shoes and boots should look professional and should be conducive to you being able to work with small children and move quickly around school. Athletic shoes, trainers (other than for P.E. kit) , canvas shoes and tennis shoes are not acceptable for school environment unless used as part of school sports activities. Flip-flops and slippers are also unacceptable

Outdoor Wear

For health and safety reasons, staff should ensure that they wear outdoor coats and footwear appropriate for inclement weather during the winter months e.g. non-slip, waterproof. This is particularly important for staff who are on duty during the day and who are required to supervise students outside, whatever the weather.

Accessories, Jewellery and Makeup

Accessories and jewellery may be worn but there should be no visible body piercing, with the exception of small earrings. A professional appearance is encouraged and excessive makeup and perfume/aftershave is not deemed appropriate for a school environment. Please remember that some staff can be allergic to the chemicals in perfumes, aftershave and makeup, therefore staff are encouraged to wear these substances with this in mind

Tattoos

Many people wear body art as a form of self-reflection. School prefers that all tattoos are covered however, where tattoos are not covered, they should not cause offence to others for example they should not be symbols that other people may find upsetting or discriminatory. Facial or neck tattoos are not permitted as these may be a distraction to the learning of children.

Hair

Staff are expected to be a role model for students and, as with the rest of the dress code, are expected to look neat and professional at all times. Extremes of hair style and colour are not considered acceptable. Shaved patterns and unnatural colours do not project the image which Governors wish to portray for our School.

Religious symbols, ornaments and dress

Staff are permitted to wear religious symbols and ornaments, but it is expected that these are worn in a discreet and safe manner. The Headteacher is empowered to determine whether a particular symbol or ornament is sufficiently discreet, and commensurate with health and safety standards. Garments which are generally considered as having an important religious (or racial) connotation (e.g. the Sikh turban, or headscarves worn by some religious sects) may be worn at all times. However, staff should note the code on head dress below.

Head Dress and Hats

Hats or caps are not appropriate inside the school environment, except where necessary on health and safety grounds, or which have been permitted by the school on religious or racial grounds.

Head covers that are required for religious purposes or to honour cultural tradition are allowed provided they do not inhibit the performance of an individual's work or have a detrimental effect on teaching and learning, EXCEPT that the school does not permit any head covering that covers a substantial part of a person's face. The reasons for this are:

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- The school takes the view that in an institution where verbal communication and body language form an important and significant part of the work with children and young persons, it is not appropriate for any member of staff who comes into contact with students in teaching and learning situations to have a substantial part of their face covered; and
- We are concerned to ensure that the school remains vigilant about the safety and security of staff and students, and that no person employed by the school should have their faces covered, and that the identity of persons visiting the school wearing clothes that cover the face, should not be allowed to go beyond Reception until their identity has been ascertained. Reception staff should seek assistance from senior staff in these situations.

Conclusion

No dress code can cover all contingencies and it is expected that employees must exert a certain amount of judgment in their choice of clothing to wear to work. The school is aware that there will be occasions such as training days, visits/trips where staff may choose to wear alternative items to their usual dress however, it is expected that when staff represent the school at external training or for other activities during the working day, that they will present in professional dress as it is a day of work.

School does provide school P.E. tops for staff to wear when dressing for P.E. or more casual school days.

Financial inducements, gifts, hospitality and sponsorship

Staff should ensure that they use public funds entrusted to them in a responsible and lawful manner and that they do not give or receive any gift, loan, fee, reward or advantage, which might be misinterpreted.

Although staff should not give or receive gifts from pupils or parents on a regular basis or of any significant value, it is acceptable however for staff to receive small tokens of appreciation, such as at Christmas time.

Staff should not seek or receive preferential rates for themselves by virtue of their dealings on behalf of the school;

- staff should generally only give gifts to an individual young person as part of an agreed reward system

- where staff do give gifts, they should ensure that they are of insignificant value and declared to the Headteacher

Publication of Books/Articles

If staff want to publish books, articles, letters, dissertations etc. that they have written in connection with their duties and in which they describe themselves as holding an appointment with the school they must consult the Headteacher.

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 to a senior colleague 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.

Social contact

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.

Staff should always approve any planned social contact with pupils with senior colleagues, for example, when it is part of a reward scheme or pastoral care programme;

Staff should advise senior team members of any regular social contact they have with a pupil, where it is apparent that it may give rise to a concern.

Staff are not permitted to respond to parents or children on social media and should inform the Headteacher if a parent or child tries to approach them in this manner. This is to safeguard staff from allegations or accusations of professional misconduct.

Physical contact

It is unrealistic to suggest that teachers should never touch pupils. There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for staff to have physical contact with pupils, such as when a distressed pupil needs comfort and reassurance or as an integral part of some lessons such as PE and music. Horseplay, tickling or fun fights would never be acceptable and staff should always behave as professional adults.

However, innocent actions and appropriate physical contact can often be misconstrued and it is therefore crucial that staff only initiate physical contact for the minimum time necessary and in ways appropriate to their own role and the needs of the child.

Staff should use their professional judgement at all times. Where feasible, staff should seek the child's permission before initiating contact. Where a member of staff thinks that an incident could have been misinterpreted it should be reported to the headteacher.

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 pupils in their care where it is relevant for this to be provided in order for staff to be able to undertake tasks appropriately.

Adhere to the school's behaviour policy (available on the Policies and Guidance wall in the staff room) and be acquainted with DfES Guidance in respect of physical contact with pupils and meeting the medical needs of children and young people in school.

Showers and Changing

Children are entitled to respect and privacy when changing clothes or taking a shower. However, there does need to be an appropriate level of supervision to safeguard young people and satisfy

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health and safety considerations. Any supervision must therefore be appropriate to the needs and age of the young people concerned.

Staff should avoid any physical contact when children are in a state of undress or any visually intrusive behaviour where there are changing rooms and should announce their intention of entering a changing room and avoid remaining in the room unless pupil needs require it; Staff should not change in the same place as or shower with children.

Behaviour management and physical intervention

Corporal punishment is unlawful in all schools and physical force should never be used as a form of punishment; to do so is likely to constitute a criminal offence.

However in some circumstances, staff in schools have the right to use physical intervention/reasonable force for the shortest period necessary to control or restrain pupils. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 provides the legal power for school staff to use reasonable force to prevent pupils from committing a crime or causing injury, damage or disruption.

Staff should try to defuse situations before they escalate and should adhere to Shiremoor Primary School policies on behaviour management, including the use of reasonable force to control or restrain pupils.

Sexual contact with children and curriculum issues

It is a criminal offence for any adult in a position of trust to engage in any form of sexual activity with a young person under 18, even with their consent (Sexual Offences Act 2003). This also includes non-contact activities such as causing children to engage in or watch sexual activity.

There may be occasions when, as part of the curriculum, a teacher has to raise subject matter that is sexually explicit. In such situations, any lesson plan should highlight the areas of risk and sensitivity. Staff should respond to questions with careful judgement and avoid entering into inappropriate or offensive discussions about sexual activity. In this regard, staff should not:

- use their status and standing to form or promote relationships with children, which are of a sexual nature;
- pursue sexual relationships with children and young people either in or out of school;
- enter into or encourage inappropriate or offensive discussion about sexual activity;
- make sexual remarks to a pupil (including email, text messages, phone or letter), or use any communication which could be interpreted as sexually suggestive or provocative;
- discuss their own sexual relationships with, or in the presence of pupils;
- discuss a pupil's sexual relationships in inappropriate settings or contexts;
- confer special attention and favour upon a child which might be misconstrued as being part of a 'grooming' process.

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One to one situations

When staff work regularly on an individual basis with children, they are generally more vulnerable to allegations. To avoid such situations' arising meetings should, wherever possible, be arranged so that staff are visible and/or audible and not in secluded areas of the school. Staff should not arrange to meet a pupil away from the school premises without good reason, but if this is necessary, only with the expressed approval of parents and a senior member of staff.

Transporting children

In such cases where children need to be transported between different locations, a designated member of staff should be appointed to plan and provide oversight of all arrangements and should ensure that this is risk assessed and signed off by the Headteacher.

Educational visits and after school clubs

Health and safety requirements should be strictly adhered to. Staff should ensure that they display professional behaviour during activities that take place off the school site and ensure that their behaviour cannot be interpreted as seeking to establish an inappropriate relationship or friendship. Staff should therefore maintain a professional relationship with pupils at all times.

Where out of school activities include overnight stays, particular consideration should be given to sleeping arrangements, if applicable and pupils, staff and parents informed of the arrangements in advance. In this regard, staff should therefore:

- undertake risk assessments;
- have parental consent to the activity;
- ensure that their behaviour remains professional at all times.

First aid and administration of medication

In cases where first aid or medication needs to be administered, only designated, trained first aid staff should administer medication with the knowledge of the Headteacher.

Intimate Care

All children have a right to safety, privacy and dignity when contact of an intimate nature is required. A bespoke, individual medical health care plan should be drawn up and agreed with parents for all children, including those with special needs, who require intimate care on a regular basis.

Photography, videos and other creative arts

Many school activities involve recording images, but the use of such images needs careful consideration and handling. In particular, children who may have been abused in this way may feel threatened by the use of photography and filming.

Where possible, the use of personal photography equipment (such as mobile phones) is not to be used. If an image is recorded on a personal device, this must only be for school purposes, the

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image must be uploaded on the school network at the earliest opportunity and then the image must be deleted from the device. (See Acceptable Use Policy).

Internet use

Accessing child pornography or indecent images of children on the computer is illegal. Under no circumstances should adults in schools access inappropriate images on the internet. The same rule applies to the use of the school's equipment by members of staff at home, e.g. the use of laptops. Staff should follow the school's Acceptable Use Policy for the use of IT equipment.

DECLARATION OF RECEIPT

I confirm that I have read the Code of Conduct and Guidelines for Safe Working Practice and understand that any unlawful or unsafe behaviour could lead to appropriate legal or disciplinary action being taken.

Name: (please print): Signature:
.....

Date:

Please return this slip to your Headteacher as soon as possible