



The Priory School, Hitchin

Educating Students for Success in Life

Name of policy	Code of Conduct Policy
Statutory	Yes
Date policy was up-dated	Autumn 2025
Date of next review	Autumn 2026
Governors committee	F&R
Member of staff responsible for the policy	Karen Jenkins

Responsibility **Respect** Resilience

Objective, Scope and Principles

- This Code of Conduct is designed to give clear guidance on the standards of behaviour all school employees are expected to observe.
- School employees are role models, and are in a unique position of influence, and must adhere to behaviour that sets a good example to all the pupils within the school.
- As a member of a school community, each employee has an individual responsibility to maintain their reputation and the reputation of the school, whether inside or outside working hours.
- This Code of Conduct applies to all employees of the school. This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.
- In addition to this Code of Conduct, all employees engaged to work under Teachers' Terms and Conditions of Employment have a statutory obligation to adhere to the 'Teachers' Standards 2012' and in relation to this policy, Part 2 of the Teachers' Standards - Personal and Professional Conduct.
- This Code helps all staff to understand what behaviour is and is not acceptable. Regard should also be given to the disciplinary rules set out in the Schools' Disciplinary Policy and Procedure. Staff should be aware that a failure to comply with the school's Code of Conduct could result in disciplinary action including but not limited to dismissal.

Setting an Example

- All staff who work in schools set examples of behaviour and conduct which can be copied by pupils. Staff must therefore for example avoid using inappropriate or offensive language at all times.
- In the study of different texts across the curriculum, staff should be encouraged to talk about the origins of language and why it is used in context. Although we cannot and should not be censoring texts, staff will refrain from reading aloud any racist, homophobic or discriminatory language that may appear in the texts they study with students.
- Where staff are investigating students who have used racist, homophobic or discriminatory language, staff should give careful consideration to whether there is a need to repeat the language used as part of the investigative process.
- All staff must, therefore, demonstrate high standards of conduct in order to encourage our pupils to do the same.
- All staff must also avoid putting themselves at risk of allegations of abusive or unprofessional conduct.
- All staff are expected to familiarise themselves and comply with all school policies and procedures.

Safeguarding Pupils

- Staff have a duty to have regard to Keeping Children Safe in Education throughout their employment and abide by the duties placed upon them within this.
- Staff have access to the school's Child Protection Policy, Whistleblowing Policy, Behaviour for Learning Policy and Anti-Bullying policy; staff must be familiar with these documents.
- Staff have a duty to safeguard pupils from physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect.
- The duty to safeguard pupils includes the duty to report concerns about a pupil or colleague to the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).
- The school's DSL is Mrs Faye Nearney. The Deputy DSLs are:
 1. Sam Brazier
 2. Rob Freeland
 3. Safina Malik
 4. Julie Laycock
 5. Lawrence Foster
 6. Emma Shipp
 7. Claudia Follano
 8. Fiona Cochrane
 9. Fiona Thompson
- Staff have a duty to record concerns accurately and urgently onto CPOMS.
- Staff should treat pupils with respect and dignity and must not seriously demean or undermine pupils, their parents or carers, or colleagues.
- Staff must take reasonable care of pupils under their supervision with the aim of ensuring their safety and welfare.

Low-Level Concerns

- In line with KCSIE a low-level concern about staff behaviour is viewed as any concern that an adult working in or on behalf of the school may have acted in a way that is inconsistent with the Staff Code of Conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work, and does not meet the 'harm threshold' or is otherwise not serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO.
- Examples of such behaviour could include, but are not limited to:
 - being overfriendly with pupils
 - having favourites
 - taking photographs of pupils on their own electronic devices, contrary to school policy
 - engaging with a pupil on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door
 - humiliating a pupil through sarcasm, making a joke at their expense or embarrassing them
 - discriminating against a pupil

- Low-level concerns may arise in several ways and from a number of sources. For example, suspicion, complaints, or allegations made by a child, parent or other adult within or outside of the organisation, or as a result of vetting checks.
- Where low-level concerns are reported to the school, the Headteacher will be informed of all low-level concerns and is the ultimate decision-maker in respect of the response to all low-level concerns.
- Low-level concerns shared about supply staff and contractors will be shared with their employers so any potential patterns of inappropriate behaviour can be identified.
- If the school is in any doubt as to whether the information which has been shared about a member of staff as a low-level concern in fact meets the harm threshold, we will consult with the LADO.
- Low-level concerns will be recorded in writing and reviewed so potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified.
- Records will be kept confidential and will be held securely and retained and in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and other relevant policies and procedures (for example data retention policies).
- Where a pattern is identified, the school will implement appropriate action, for example reviewing the LADO threshold and/or implementing disciplinary procedure in line with school policy.

Online Safety and Internet Use

- Staff must exercise caution when using information technology and be aware of the risks to themselves and others. Regard should be given to the school's Online Safety Policy and Acceptable Use Agreements at all times both inside and outside of work.
- Staff must not engage in inappropriate use of social media sites which may bring themselves, the school, school community or employer into disrepute. Staff should ensure that they adopt suitably high security settings on any personal profiles they may have.
- Staff should exercise caution in their use of all social media or any other web-based presence that they may have, including written content, videos or photographs, and views expressed either directly or by 'liking' certain pages or posts established by others. This may also include the use of dating websites where staff could encounter pupils either with their own profile or acting covertly.
- Contact with pupils should only be made via the use of school email accounts or telephone equipment when appropriate and strictly for educational reasons.
- Photographs or video footage of pupils should only be taken using school equipment, for purposes authorised by the school, or on a personal device if permission has been given by the Headteacher. Any such use should always be transparent and only occur where parental consent has been given. The resultant files from such recording or taking of photographs must be stored in accordance with the school's procedures on school equipment.

Professional responsibilities when using any form of ICT, including the Internet, in school and outside school

- Employees of the school have a duty to report an eSafety incident which may impact on them, their professionalism or the school.

For your own protection we advise that you:

- ensure all electronic communication with pupils, parents, carers, staff and others is compatible with your professional role and in line with school policies;
- do not talk about your professional role in any capacity when using social media;
- do not put online any text, image, sound or video that could upset or offend any member of the whole-school community or be incompatible with your professional role;
- use school ICT systems and resources for all school business. This includes your school email address, school mobile phone and school camera;
- do not disclose any passwords and ensure that personal data (such as data held on MIS software) is kept secure and used appropriately;
- only take images of pupils and/or staff for professional purposes, in accordance with school policy and with the knowledge of the school's Leadership Team;
- do not browse, download, upload or distribute any material that could be considered offensive, illegal or discriminatory;
- ensure that your online activity, both in school and outside school, will not bring the school or professional role into disrepute;
- check emails daily as a minimum (on working days) or every other day if one day is particularly busy.

Relationships

- Staff must declare any relationships that they may have with pupils outside of school. Staff should not assume that the school are aware of any such connections. A Google declaration form will be circulated to staff once a term and the template can be found in appendix 1 of this document.
 1. Family connections with pupils in school
 2. Pupils who belong to close family friends who you have regular contact with
 3. Pupils who stay over at your house as there are friends with your child/ children
 4. Pupils you tutor
- Relationships with pupils must be professional at all times. Physical relationships with pupils are not permitted and may lead to a criminal conviction.
- Encouraging a relationship to develop in a way which may lead to a sexual relationship or any other inappropriate relationship will be viewed as a grave breach of trust.

- Contact with pupils must be via school-authorised mechanisms and solely for educational purposes. At no time should personal telephone numbers, text, email addresses or communication routes via personal accounts on social media platforms be used to communicate with pupils.
- If contacted by a pupil by an inappropriate route, staff should report the contact to their Line Manager immediately and to the DSL and record it on CPOMS
- Behaviour giving rise to concern should also be reported which includes pupils seeking affection, being sexually provocative or exhibiting overly familiar behaviour.
- Existing or new personal relationships at work should be declared to the Line Manager.
- Staff should inform their Line Manager of any relationships which may create an enhanced risk to children so that necessary steps can be taken e.g. cohabitation with a person convicted of a serious offence.

Pupil development

- Staff must comply with school policies and procedures that support the wellbeing and development of pupils.
- Staff must co-operate and collaborate with colleagues and with external agencies where necessary to support the development of pupils.
- Staff must follow reasonable instructions that support the development of pupils.

Conduct at work

Where conduct at work does not meet the expectations of The Priory School Code of Conduct and/or other professional expectations the School Disciplinary policy and procedure will apply (See School Disciplinary policy).

- Misconduct is any type of behaviour or conduct at work that falls below the standard required by the school or is in breach of any policy or rule.

Examples of misconduct include (but are not limited to):

- minor breaches of policies
- poor timekeeping
- work not of the required standard (where capability is not in question)
- disruptive behaviour
- time-wasting
- refusal to follow instructions
- inappropriate or offensive behaviour, for example foul or abusive language
- disruptive behaviour
- minor damage to, or unauthorised use of property/facilities
- negligence in the performance of duties
- breach of the absence reporting procedures
- inappropriate use of social media.

- Gross misconduct is a more serious act of behaviour that irreparably undermines the implied duty of mutual trust and confidence with the school or prejudices its reputation or business. Gross misconduct is seen as so serious it justifies dismissal without notice or payment in lieu of notice.

Examples of gross misconduct include (but are not limited to):

- serious failure to follow child protection procedures
- failure to maintain appropriate professional boundaries with any pupil
- behaviour that has harmed or may have harmed a child
- behaviour that indicates an employee may not be suitable to work with children including such behaviour outside of the workplace which may or may not involve children
- gross negligence
- wilful / deliberate breach of professional standards relevant to your employment and/or role
- wilful or persistent refusal to carry out a management instruction or any act of serious insubordination
- theft or fraud
- falsification of any school records
- violent or threatening behaviour
- dishonesty involving anything that relates to life in a school
- breach of confidentiality or failure to ensure that confidential information is kept secure
- serious damage or misuse of School property/premises
- criminal offences or conduct, including those committed outside the workplace, which impact on the employee's ability or suitability to do their job
- smoking (including the use of e-cigarettes) in any unauthorised area on School premises
- being under the influence of alcohol or drugs on School premises or at a school event
- inappropriate use of the School's Information Technology including email or internet abuse or accessing sites containing pornographic, offensive or obscene material
- covertly recording hearings, meetings or colleagues
- harassment, bullying or discrimination against any other person (whether in person or online)
- unauthorised absence from the workplace
- serious breach of trust and confidence
- serious breach of health and safety procedures or regulations
- behaviour prejudicial to the good name or interests of the school or which may bring the school into disrepute.

Conduct Outside of Work

- Staff must not engage in conduct outside work which could seriously damage the reputation of the school or the employee's own reputation or the reputation of other members of the school community.
- In particular, criminal offences that involve violence or possession or use of illegal drugs or sexual misconduct are regarded as unacceptable.
- If any allegation of wrongdoing occurs in a staff member's work outside school (whether or not they deny this) which may have a bearing on their employment they must disclose this immediately to the Headteacher.
- Forming inappropriate relationships or friendships with children or young people who are pupils under the age of 18 at another school/college will be viewed as inappropriate and impact upon the school's ability to trust the member of staff to maintain professional boundaries with pupils at the school.
- A work-related social event is considered to be an extension of the workplace and as such the standards of behaviour expected at these events is in line with this policy.

Honesty and Integrity

- Staff must maintain high standards of honesty and integrity in their work. This includes the handling and claiming of money and the use of school property and facilities.
- All staff must comply with the Bribery Act 2010. A person may be guilty of an offence of bribery under this act if they offer, promise or give financial advantage or other advantage to someone; or if they request, agree or accept, or receive a bribe from another person. If you believe that a person has failed to comply with the Bribery Act, you should refer to the school's Whistleblowing procedure. For Hertfordshire schools, for further information see the HCC Anti Bribery Policy for Schools available on The Grid. Gifts from suppliers or associates of the school must be declared to the Headteacher, with the exception of "one-off" token gifts from pupils or parents.
- Personal gifts from individual members of staff to pupils are inappropriate and could be misinterpreted and may lead to disciplinary action.
- When gifts from pupils are given to staff, the member of staff should notify their line-manager.
- Staff must not act on behalf of the school unless they have the authority to do so.
- Professional references from the school written by staff need to be quality assured and agreed by the Headteacher.

Gifts and hospitality

Please see the Gifts and Hospitality policy

Work Outside the School (either paid or voluntary)

- Staff may undertake work outside school, either paid or voluntary, provided that it does not conflict with the interests of the school nor be to a level which may contravene the working time regulations or affect an individual's work performance in the school. It is recommended that permission is sought from the Headteacher in advance.
- Staff must disclose any work outside school or outside business interests where there is a potential conflict of interests with their employment at the school. Disclosures must be made by email to the Headteacher.
- Many teaching staff undertake private tutoring. The following criteria will apply:

- Do not teach the child in question as part of my daily timetable
- Tutoring is done completely independently of the school
- No monies come through the school at any point, informally (e.g. via the pupil) or formally
- No private tutoring is to take place on the school premises

Confidentiality

- Where staff have access to confidential information about pupils or their parents or carers, staff must not reveal such information except to those colleagues who have a professional role in relation to the pupil.
- All staff are likely at some point to witness actions which need to be confidential. For example, where a pupil is bullied by another pupil (or by a member of staff), this needs to be reported and dealt with in accordance with the appropriate school procedure. It must not be discussed outside the school, including with the pupil's parent or carer, nor with colleagues in the school except with a senior member of staff with the appropriate authority to deal with the matter. However, staff have an obligation to share with their manager or the school's Designated Senior Person any information which gives rise to concern about the safety or welfare of a pupil. Staff must not promise a pupil that they will not act on information that they are told by the pupil.
- Staff are not allowed to make any comment to the media about the school, its performance, governance, pupils or parents without written approval. Any media queries should be directed to the Headteacher.

Dress and Appearance

- All staff must dress in a manner that is appropriate to their role and promote a professional image.
- Staff should dress in a manner that is not offensive, revealing or sexually provocative.
- Staff should dress in a manner that is absent from political or other contentious slogans.

Appendix 1

Relationships with pupils outside of work declaration – Google document template

Employee Name:	
Relationship category	Student name and year group
Family connections with pupils in school	
Pupils who belong to close family friends who you have regular contact with	
Pupils who stay over at your house as there are friends with your child/children	
Pupils you tutor	