



# Heltwate School

## Staff Code of Conduct

This staff guidance is based on model policy taken from The Key website

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Adapted for purpose by D Shaw

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## 1. Aims, scope, and principles

This policy aims to set and maintain standards of conduct that we expect all staff to follow.

By creating this policy, we aim to ensure our school is an environment where everyone is safe, happy, and is treated with respect.

Many of the principles in this code of conduct are based on the [Teachers' Standards](#).

For our SEND student community, we recognise that our staff have a highly influential position in the school and therefore expect that all adults who come into contact with them at school, will act as positive role models by consistently demonstrating high standards of behaviour and practice.

We expect that all teachers will act in accordance with the personal and professional behaviours set out in the Teachers' Standards.

We likewise expect that all support staff, including colleagues employed on a supply basis, governors and volunteers will also act with personal and professional integrity, respecting the safety and wellbeing of others.

Failure to follow our staff code of conduct may result in disciplinary action being taken against individuals, as set out in our staff disciplinary procedures.

Please note that this code of conduct is not exhaustive.

If situations arise that are not covered by this code, staff are expected to use their professional judgement and always act in the best interests of the school and its pupils, reporting any concerns or nagging doubts to a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

## 2. Legislation and guidance

We are required to establish procedures for the regulation of staff conduct under regulation 7 of [The School Staffing \(England\) Regulations 2009](#).

In line with the statutory safeguarding guidance [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#), we should have a staff code of conduct, which will cover low-level concerns, allegations made against staff and whistle-blowing, as well as the acceptable use of technologies (including the use of mobile devices), staff/pupil relationships and communications, which will include the use of social media.

## 3. General obligations

All staff will continually set a positive example to our pupils.

They will:

- Maintain high standards in their attendance and punctuality
- Never use inappropriate or offensive language in school
- Treat pupils 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' Standards

## 4. Safeguarding

Staff have a duty to safeguard pupils from harm, and to report any concerns they have about the safety of themselves or others. 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 electronically on the Every and My Concern platforms, and in hard copy form in the staff room, as well as being displayed in the Safeguarding subsection of Documents and Policies on the school's website at [www.heltwate.co.uk](http://www.heltwate.co.uk)

All new staff will also be given copies of statutory, and relevant safeguarding information on arrival, and will be required to sign to say that they have read and understood them.

### 4.1 Allegations that may meet the harm threshold

The following information is based on 'Section 1: Allegations that may meet the harm threshold' in Part 4 of Keeping Children Safe in Education.

This section applies to all cases in which it is alleged that anyone working in the school, including a supply staff member, a volunteer, or a contractor, has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child, and/or
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, and/or
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children, and/or
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children – this includes behaviour taking place inside or outside of school

The Headteacher will deal with any such allegation quickly and in a fair and consistent way which provides effective child protection while also supporting the individual who is the subject of the allegation.

An appointed and named 'case manager' will lead any investigation. This will be the Headteacher, or the Chair of Governors where the Headteacher is the subject of the allegation.

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

A low-level concern is a behaviour directed towards a child by a member of staff that does not meet the harm threshold, which is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct. It 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 obvious favourites
- Taking photographs of children on a personal device
- Engaging in 1-to-1 activities where they can't easily be seen

- Humiliating pupils

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

All staff should share any low-level concerns they may 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 or misunderstood. 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 manner.

All unprofessional behaviour will be addressed by the senior leadership team in a timely fashion, and the staff member supported to correct their practice, at an early stage. Monitoring may be required to ensure that expected standards of professional practice continue to be met.

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

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

Our child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures are available electronically on the Every and My Concern platforms, and in hard copy form in the staff room, as well as being displayed in the Safeguarding subsection of Documents and Policies on the school's website at [www.heltwate.co.uk](http://www.heltwate.co.uk)

Our procedures for dealing with allegations will be applied with common sense and judgement.

### 4.3 Whistle blowing

Whistle-blowing procedures reports wrongdoing that it is "in the public interest" to report.

Examples linked to safeguarding include:

- where the health and safety of pupils or staff members could be being put in danger
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation or statutory requirement
- Attempts to cover up the above scenarios, or any other wrongdoing in the public interest

Staff are encouraged to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible to the Headteacher, or in his/her absence, to the deputy headteacher or a member of SLT.

All concerns will be taken seriously and investigated, and the individual's confidentiality will be respected wherever possible.

Staff should consider the examples above when deciding if their concern is of a whistle-blowing nature.

Consider whether the incident(s) was

- illegal,
- breached statutory or school procedures,
- put people in danger or
- was an attempt to cover any such activity up.

Staff should report their concern to the Head Teacher, or in his/her absence, to the Deputy Headteacher or a member of SLT. If the concern is about the Headteacher or it is believed that they may be involved in the

wrongdoing in some way, the staff member should report their concern to the Chair of Governors via the clerk as follows [clerk@heltwate.net](mailto:clerk@heltwate.net)

Concerns should be made and recorded in writing wherever possible. They should include names of those committing wrongdoing, dates, places and as much evidence and context as possible. Staff raising a concern should also include details of any personal interest they may have in the matter.

For our school's detailed whistle-blowing processes, please refer to our whistle-blowing policy.

## 5. Staff-pupil relationships

Staff will observe proper boundaries with pupils that are appropriate to their professional position.

They will act in a fair and transparent way which would not lead anyone to reasonably assume they are not doing so.

If staff members and pupils must spend time on a one-to-one basis, staff will endeavour to ensure that:

- This takes place in a public place which others can access
- Others can see easily into the room should this be required
- A colleague, class teacher, 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, personal gifts from staff to individual pupils are not acceptable.

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 Safeguarding and Child Protection and the Whistle Blowing policy.

Such concerns should be shared in confidence with the Head Teacher only, and in his/her absence, with the Deputy head teacher.

Should concerns about the practice of the Head Teacher be raised, these should be shared with our Chair of Governors by contacting the clerk at [clerk@heltwate.net](mailto:clerk@heltwate.net)

## 6. Communication and social media

School staff's social media profiles should not be available to pupils, and individuals should make every effort to ensure that their social media profiles are private and secure.

If staff have a personal profile on social media sites, they are advised to not use their full name, as pupils may be able to find them. Staff are asked to consider using a first and middle name instead and set public profiles to private.

Staff should not attempt to contact pupils or their parents via social media, or any other means outside school, in order to develop any sort of new relationship. They 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 without first seeking parental consent. Staff should be aware of the school's Online safety and acceptable use policy and are discouraged from forming relationships of any kind or being in communication with former students.

Staff should be aware of the school's Online Safety policy

## 7. Acceptable use of technology

Staff will not use technology in school or belonging to the 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 their personal use, in school hours or in front of pupils. They will also not use personal mobile phones or cameras to take pictures of pupils.

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

## 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 our staff's duty to report child protection concerns to the appropriate channels where staff believe a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm, as detailed further in our Safeguarding and Child Protection policy.

## 9. Honesty and integrity

Staff should maintain high standards of honesty and integrity in their role at all times.

This includes when dealing with pupils, handling money, claiming expenses, and using school property and facilities.

Staff members will not accept bribes. Gifts that are worth more than £25.00 must be declared and recorded on the Gifts and Hospitality register.

Staff will ensure that all personal and other 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
- any new or ongoing policy investigations

Where there are any updates to the information provided to the school, the member of staff will advise the Head Teacher as such as soon as is 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

At Heltwate School, we do not have a strict dress code, and we rely upon individuals to make sensible and considered choices about how they dress. We do however believe that all school personnel should be clothed professionally, smartly, responsibly, and appropriately at all times whilst at work.

Our staff act as representatives of the school and role models for our students, and as such, they should be dressed accordingly.

The way in which staff dress and present themselves, plays an important part in the image we wish to give to pupils, parents and carers, visitors, and the general public. For this reason, we ask all staff to be aware of their presentation and to always adhere to an appropriate and 'common sense' dress code when at work or when representing the school.

We also respect the right of individuals who wish to wear specific clothing because of their faith, but only with the proviso that this type of clothing does not cause any health and safety issues to themselves or to others.

Staff must dress in a professional, appropriate manner, and in clothing that is appropriate for the work day tasks that they are undertaking.

School personnel are asked to use their common sense and personal judgment regarding their individual dress code and respect that their timetable should determine what they wear.

Outfits must not be provocative, or overly revealing, both with regards to length of the torso and legs. Necklines must not be low and therefore revealing and female staff are expected to wear appropriate supportive underwear which should not be visible through the clothing above.

During the summer months, or when the weather is warmer, we appreciate that staff will want to be cool and comfortable whilst supporting and working with our students. Staff are however reminded that shorts, and hemlines of other seasonal attire should be of a sensible and non-revealing length.

Staff are reminded that those who dress or who conduct themselves in a manner which could be viewed as offensive, revealing or inappropriate, will render themselves more vulnerable to reactive behaviours from students, and criticism or allegation from others.

Staff are reminded that our pupils because of their diverse learning needs and disabilities are sometimes not aware of or struggle to understand social boundaries and accept visual clues as their normality. They therefore need the support and guidance of staff and adults around them to act as suitable role models. Our



students do sometimes develop 'crushes' on staff, and the wearing of revealing clothing may unfairly encourage these inappropriate feelings and emotions.

Tattoos and other body art must not contain offensive images or wording. Should this prove to be the case, individuals may be asked to cover any offensive material whilst at work

Staff are reminded that our pupils may be attracted to excessive body piercings and that as such they may cause an individual to be more at risk of injury from a Health and Safety perspective. Staff who choose to wear excessive piercings may be instructed to remove these or cover them if they are deemed to be a safety risk to pupils. The school will not accept any responsibility for injury to staff members who choose to wear body piercings at work.

SLT members reserve the right to challenge staff who they feel are not appropriately dressed for work, or who may pose a safety risk to others, and further formal action may be taken to ensure that any identified risks are rectified in a timely fashion.

All school staff must abide by the safety policies and procedures of their specific work areas and wear appropriate clothing and footwear.

Wearing of high heeled or open-toed footwear is done at the individuals own risk and the school will not be held responsible for any injuries caused by inappropriate footwear or clothing.

Jewellery or badges must not be worn if they breach the health and safety policy and procedures, if they cause offence to pupils, parents/carers, or other members of staff, or if they pose a danger to others.

The wearing of long and dangling jewellery is discouraged for safety reasons as children may be attracted to these items, grab, and pull them, causing injury. Again, the school will not take responsibility for any injuries incurred where staff members deliberately and knowingly choose to put themselves at risk by breaching our Health and Safety policy and procedures.

Clothes must not display any offensive or political slogans. Contravention of this guidance will be challenged on an individual basis and rectified by SLT where required

## **11. Conduct outside of work**

Staff will not act in a way that would bring the school, or the teaching profession, into disrepute. This covers conduct including but not limited to relevant criminal offences, such as violence or sexual misconduct, as well as negative comments about the school on social media.

## **12. Physical contact and personal privacy**

There are occasions during the school day when it is entirely appropriate and proper for staff to have physical contact with students, but it is crucial that they only do so in a way that is in line with their professional role.

Staff should remember that physical contact should always be proportionate to the needs of the student at that time, of limited duration and appropriate to the child's biological age, physical and mental development, gender, ethnicity culture and background.

Staff should consider if their actions are proportionate and appropriate in relation to the special educational needs of the student they are physically or emotionally supporting, and whether such contact may escalate or de-escalate a given situation, e.g., our students with ASD often prefer not to be touched at all by others and may require time out to achieve regulation when they are distressed.

Physical contact should never be secretive or casual and should always have a transparent purpose. It should never be used for the gratification of the adult. Physical contact on a regular basis is likely to raise questions unless the justification for this forms a part of a formally agreed, developed and transparent management or support plan. Any such plan may be subject to review at any time, and wherever possible, staff should always seek the pupil's permission before initiating physical contact of any kind.

There may be occasions when a distressed child needs comfort and reassurance. Such contact should always be transparent and wherever possible limited in duration according to the needs of the individual pupil.

Physical contact and adult support during such activities as PE, performances and physical instruction should always only be performed after seeking the student's permission to do so, and with staff being vigilant and sensitive to any distress or discomfort such contact may cause the child. Wherever possible, a second member of staff should be present.

Pupils have the right to expect privacy when changing clothes or taking a shower. However, school recognises that an appropriate level of supervision and support is necessary in order to ensure the safety of our students, to satisfy health and safety considerations and to ensure that behaviour expectations are met amongst peers.

Staff supervision should be age and wherever possible gender appropriate and sensitive to the needs of the individual in terms of the support required and provided

### 13. Personal & Intimate care of children and young people

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 staff assistance or support is required, this should normally be undertaken wherever possible by **two** members of school staff in the vicinity.

However, we recognise that in certain circumstances this higher level of support may not be possible due to supervision needs in the classroom. When lone working to support personal or intimate care needs, staff should try to ensure that another appropriate adult is in the locality who is aware of the task to be undertaken and that, wherever possible, they are visible and/or audible.

The views and consent of the parents, carers and where appropriate the pupil, regardless of their age and understanding, should be actively sought in formulating a personal or intimate care plan if needed. Staff should endeavour to make parents and carers fully aware of the range of different circumstances under which their child may receive personal or intimate care at school.

Pupils are always entitled to respect and privacy, especially when in a state of undress, including, for example, when changing, toileting and showering. Staff should consider the child's needs, feelings, and personal autonomy first and foremost in such circumstances.

Placement students, volunteers, and supply staff, irrespective of the duration of their support role and the time they have been in school, should not be asked to engage in toileting or personal and intimate care of students. They have signed to say that they will not undertake such tasks at their induction, and for supply staff this task is not a part of their contractual expectations.

For more detailed information, staff should consult the Intimate Care policy.

## 14. Positive management of student behaviour

Staff should not use any form of degrading or humiliating treatment or language to punish or belittle a child.

Where pupils display difficult or challenging behaviour, staff should follow the school's Positive Management of Behaviour Policy using agreed strategies appropriate to the circumstance and refer to the individual's Risk Reduction plan. These are in place for all students across our community and can be found on the school server – Staff Share – Behaviour. These plans are reviewed on a regular basis by the class and behaviour lead as required.

In contentious and challenging situations, staff are asked not to shout or behave in a domineering manner towards students. If they feel that they are at risk of doing so, they should ask a colleague to support them, and distance themselves from the situation until they regain a sense of calm and self-moderation. A raised or louder voice should only be used when there are safety concerns or where a child is at risk of accidentally or purposefully hurting themselves or others due to their reduced contextual understanding, or escalated emotions.

All Heltwate staff have the opportunity to be trained in a form of positive handling called Team Teach – training which is reviewed on a regular basis by our in-house training team.

Staff who have recently joined the school **should not** engage in any form of physical intervention or restraint until they have been trained to do so safely. They are however allowed and expected to act in a supportive and proactive role, offering and implementing de-escalation techniques prior to a behavioural crisis being reached. If not intervening could put a child at significant risk, the Loco Parentis rule will apply, and appropriate risk reduction intervention is expected.

Physical intervention and restraint will always only be used as a very last resort and in circumstances where the student has become a dangerous risk to themselves or others. Such circumstances should be evidenced on the IRIS system, with appropriate justification recorded in full by the staff member involved.

In all situations where physical intervention has taken place, staff must record full details of the incident and follow up interventions on IRIS. An alert is then forwarded to the Head and Deputy head teacher to ensure that they are fully aware of the circumstances. Parents and carers must also be fully informed if their child has been in receipt of physical intervention, even if it has been of minimum duration.

Under no circumstances should physical force be used as a form of punishment or to dominate a student.

The school's Behaviour policy includes clear guidance about the use of calm rooms or break-out (isolation) spaces. The legislation on these strategies is complex and staff should take extreme care to avoid any practice that could be viewed as unlawful, a breach of the pupil's human rights and/or false imprisonment. All contentious situations involving the use of the school's 'calm rooms' should be fully recorded on IRIS.

Sometimes children will take themselves to a calming or secluded space in order within the classroom environment to regulate their own behaviour. If a child chooses to use a calming area or break-out space of their own accord, and there is no behaviour incident attached, this action does not need to be documented and parents do not need to be informed. In these cases, the child should be monitored but there is no need for him/her to be closely observed at all times.

## 15. Transportation of pupils

In certain circumstances, members of staff may be asked and will consent to transport students as part of their curriculum needs, or to support out of school activities. Wherever possible, school vehicles should be used for these journeys, with at least one adult in addition to the driver, acting as an escort.

If a member of staff uses their own personal vehicle, they must ensure that consent to do so has been sought from parents and the Head teacher or a member of SLT, and that business insurance to cover the purpose of the journey is already in place and agreed.

Staff should ensure that the child's behavioural record is primarily safe and that the transport arrangements and the vehicle meet all legal requirements. The vehicle must be checked as being roadworthy and appropriately insured, and that the maximum capacity is not exceeded. Child seats should be considered as required.

It is not appropriate for staff to offer lifts to pupils outside of their normal working hours unless this has been expressly agreed by the Head teacher and discussed with parents and/or carers beforehand.

In circumstances where a pupil requires transport in an emergency, or where not doing so would put the child at additional risk, permission and agreement must be sought from the Head teacher, a member of SLT and from the student's parents/carers and again the rule of Loco Parentis will apply. Such circumstances should be reported on the IRIS system, with appropriate justification recorded.

Staff should take particular care when supervising pupils away from the school site, during trips and visits elsewhere, and remember that they remain in a position of trust, where the same high standards of safety and conduct apply.

## 16. Our Curriculum Pathways

At Heltwate School, we offer an open forum for debate and consultation to our students, and where their thoughts and opinions are instrumental and hugely important in the ongoing development of our school. Many areas of their curriculum may raise subject matter which could be contentious and of a sensitive nature.

Care should be taken to ensure that any resource material will not be mis-interpreted and that it does not show bias, intolerance, or discrimination in terms of gender, culture, ethnicity, sexuality and/or faith.

Staff must not enter into or encourage inappropriate discussion about sexual activity or sexual behaviour with students.

## 17. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually but can be revised as needed. It will be ratified and approved by the Governing Board of Heltwate School

Our governing board will ensure this Code of Conduct is implemented effectively and will ensure appropriate action is taken in a timely manner to safeguard all children and to deal with any concerns in a timely fashion.

## 18. 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. It also sets out examples of what we will deem as misconduct and gross misconduct
- Staff grievance procedures
- Safeguarding and Child Protection policy
- Gifts and hospitality
- Online safety
- Whistle-blowing policy
- Email, Class Dojo, and all other home/school communications

This Staff Code of Conduct will be ratified by the Governing Board on:	25/09/2024
Due for review on or by:	September 2025
Signed by the Designated Safeguarding lead/ Headteacher:	Ms. Claire Moore
Date:	09/09/2024
Chair of Governors:	Mr. Chris Marshall
Date:	09/09/2024