Staff Code of Conduct Policy

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Contributors	Rob Arrowsmith		
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Note	This policy must not be amended without prior approval of the Education Director		

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1. Supporting Documents

- Safeguarding Policy (EDE.POL.002)
- Low-Level Concerns arrangements
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Positive Handling and Physical Intervention Policy (EDU.POL.020), and Restrictive Interventions Recording and Reporting Policy
- Mobile Phone Policy (EDU.POL.040) and Online Safety Policy (EDU.POL.009)
- Educational Visits Policy (EDU.POL.028)
- Data Protection Policy
- Staff Disciplinary and Grievance procedures, held by the central HR team

Related policies are held within RADAR in the School's policy folder.

2. Introduction

At Acorns School, every adult is a role model. Many of our pupils have experienced trauma or have found earlier settings hard to manage, and they rely on the adults around them to be consistent, safe and trustworthy. This code sets out the

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standards of conduct we expect of everyone who works in our school, so pupils learn and grow in a safe, respectful and nurturing environment.

This code is not exhaustive. We expect staff to use professional judgement and to act in the best interests of pupils and the school. The guiding question behind every decision is simple: how will this help our children.

3. Aim & Scope

This code applies to everyone working at Acorns School including teachers, trainee teachers, support staff, leaders, governors, volunteers, agency staff and contractors. It aims to:

- Set clear standards of professional and personal conduct.
- Keep pupils safe and uphold their dignity, wellbeing and rights.
- Protect staff by being clear about what is expected of them.
- Support a trauma-informed, therapeutic culture in everything we do.
- Make clear how concerns about conduct are raised and handled.

4. Abbreviations and Definitions

Allegation that meets the harm threshold. A concern that an adult has behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child, possibly committed a criminal offence against a child, behaved towards a child in a way that indicates they may pose a risk, or behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

Low-level concern. Any concern, however small, that an adult has acted in a way that is inconsistent with this code, including conduct that does not meet the harm threshold. Reporting low-level concerns helps keep everyone safe and supports an open culture.

5. Policy Content

5.1 Principles and Approach

Our approach rests on the following principles:

- Children first. Pupil safety and wellbeing come before all other considerations.
- Role models. We model the behaviour, language and attitudes we want pupils to learn.
- Trauma-informed and relational. We understand behaviour as communication and respond with calm, consistent, respectful relationships, in line with the Keys Connect model.
- Professional integrity. We act honestly, maintain professional boundaries, and use sound judgement.
- Open culture. We raise concerns, including about colleagues, knowing we will be supported.

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5.2 Standards of Conduct in Practice

Professional conduct and relationships

- Maintain high standards of attendance, punctuality and reliability
- Build trusting, professional relationships and always maintain clear boundaries with pupils.
- Treat pupils, families and colleagues with respect, and include those who may feel isolated.
- Not express personal beliefs in a way that exploits pupils' vulnerability or encourages them to break the law.

Professional boundaries, positions of trust and personal relationships

Staff hold a position of trust and keep clear professional boundaries with pupils and families. Staff:

- Do not form or pursue a romantic or sexual relationship with a pupil and understand that this is an abuse of trust and, under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, can be a criminal offence.
- Declare to a senior leader any existing relationship or connection with a pupil or their family, and any personal relationship between members of staff that could create a conflict of interest.
- Do not give pupils their personal contact details, and do not befriend or follow pupils on personal social media accounts.
- Treat all pupils even-handedly and avoid favouritism.

Physical contact

Physical contact can be a normal and caring part of working with our pupils, for example to comfort a distressed pupil, to keep a pupil or others safe, or to support care and learning. Staff make sure any contact is appropriate to the pupil's age, needs and dignity, and is welcomed by the pupil. Staff:

- Keep physical contact open and appropriate, never secretive, and stop if a pupil does not want it.
- Never use physical contact to meet their own needs, and report any contact that has been, or could be, misread.

Personal or intimate care is not covered by this code and is not part of the role. It is only provided where the school has a separate intimate and personal care policy that the headteacher has agreed, and staff then follow that policy in full. Staff must not provide intimate or personal care otherwise, and should check with the headteacher if they are unsure.

Physical intervention to manage risk is different from caring contact and is covered on page 4 of this policy and in the Positive Handling and Restrictive Interventions policies.

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One-to-one working, lone working and transporting pupils

Some work with pupils is one-to-one. Staff manage the extra risk this brings. Staff:

- Work where they can be seen by others wherever possible, for example in a room with a window or with the door open and let a colleague know where they are.
- Follow the school's arrangements for lone working and for any out-of-hours or off-site work.
- Only transport a pupil with the agreement of a senior leader and with the right insurance and risk assessment in place and avoid being alone with a pupil in a vehicle where this can reasonably be avoided.

Safeguarding and the duty to report

- Know and follow the safeguarding policy, child protection procedures and the Prevent duty.
- Report any safeguarding concern about a child immediately, in line with the safeguarding policy.
- Report any low-level concern about an adult, following the school's procedures.

Behaviour, physical intervention and the language staff use

We support behaviour through relational, trauma-informed practice and through each pupil's plan, using positive reinforcement and the least intrusive response that works. Physical intervention is only ever used as a last resort, by trained staff, using authorised techniques, and always in line with the Positive Handling and Restrictive Interventions policies.

- Use only the techniques in which they are trained and authorised, and never as a punishment.
- Use calm, respectful and de-escalating language before, during and after any intervention, never language that shames, threatens or provokes.
- Support the pupil and take part in a debrief afterwards, and make sure the incident is recorded in line with the Restrictive Interventions Policy.

Communication, technology and social media

- Follow the school's acceptable use and online safety policies.
- Keep all contact with pupils professional and not use personal accounts or devices to contact pupils.
- Not post anything online that could harm a pupil, a colleague or the reputation of the school.

Personal phones and cameras

Staff use personal phones and other personal devices with cameras only away from pupils and during non-contact time. We use school equipment, not personal

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devices, to take any photographs or recordings of pupils. In any early years setting, staff personal phones and cameras are not used when children are present, in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage framework and the Mobile Phone Policy (EDU.POL.040).

Dress, footwear and language

- Dress professionally and modestly, in clothing appropriate for working with pupils with complex needs.
- Wear clothing and footwear that let them move quickly and safely and take part in a physical intervention if needed, for example secure, flat or low footwear rather than open, backless or high-heeled shoes.
- Avoid clothing, footwear, jewellery or accessories that could cause injury, be grabbed, or get in the way of keeping pupils safe, and avoid slogans or images that could cause offence.
- Follow any additional dress, footwear or protective equipment requirements for specific activities, for example PE, practical lessons, food preparation or off-site work.
- Use clear, respectful and professional language at all times, and avoid language that could cause offence or be misunderstood.

Gifts and hospitality

Staff do not accept gifts, hospitality or favours that could be seen as a reward, as buying influence, or as part of grooming. Staff:

- Politely decline gifts of more than token value and tell a senior leader about any gift they are unsure about.
- Do not give personal gifts to individual pupils.
- Record gifts and hospitality where the school requires it.

Drugs, alcohol and fitness for work

Staff come to work fit to carry out their role and to keep pupils safe. Staff:

- Do not attend work under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, and do not drink alcohol during the working day or while responsible for pupils.
- Do not bring illegal drugs onto the site.
- Tell a senior leader if a health condition or its treatment could affect their fitness for work, which links to staff personal medication at 7.12.

Staff personal medication

Some staff need to bring their own medication into school. We handle this in a way that keeps pupils safe and respects staff privacy. Staff:

- Store any personal medication securely and out of pupils' reach at all times, in a lockable drawer, locker or other place pupils cannot access, and never in a coat pocket, an open bag or an unlocked desk.

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- Tell a senior leader if they are taking medication that could affect their ability to work safely, for example by causing drowsiness or affecting judgement, reaction time or the ability to take part in a physical intervention, so that any adjustment can be agreed.
- Tell a senior leader if their medication could harm a child who found or took it, for example a controlled drug or a strong painkiller, so that storage and handling can be checked.
- Share only what the senior leader needs in order to manage the risk, as staff are not required to disclose private health information beyond that.

The senior leader treats this sensitively and in confidence, and records only what is needed to manage the risk.

Smoking and vaping

At Acorns School the site is smoke-free and vape-free. Staff do not smoke or vape on the school site or in front of pupils, including in vehicles used to transport pupils.

Confidentiality and data

- Protect the confidentiality of pupils, families and colleagues, and only share information on a need-to-know basis.
- Handle personal data in line with the Data Protection Policy.

Conduct outside school

Staff are accountable for their conduct outside school where it could affect their suitability to work with children or the reputation of the school. We expect the same integrity online and in the community as in the classroom.

Allegations and low-level concerns about adults

Concerns about an adult are handled under Part 4 of Keeping Children Safe in Education and apply to trainee teachers, volunteers, agency staff and contractors as well as employed staff. Allegations that meet the harm threshold are managed promptly and fairly by the case manager, working with the local authority designated officer. Low-level concerns are recorded and reviewed to spot any pattern. Detailed procedures sit in the Safeguarding policy (EDE.POL.002) and the low-level Concerns arrangements, and any formal action follows the staff disciplinary procedure, which is held by the central HR team.

Whistleblowing

Staff who have concerns about wrongdoing or unsafe practice can and should raise them, and will be supported and protected. The route for doing so is set out in the Whistleblowing policy.

5.3 Recording, Monitoring and Reporting

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Signed acknowledgements, low-level concern records and allegation records are held securely. Leaders monitor conduct themes and report to the proprietor and governors, so the school can act early on any emerging pattern.

5.4 Equality and Inclusion

At Acorns School, this code is applied fairly and without discrimination, in line with the Equality Act 2010. We expect all staff to promote equality, respect diversity, and challenge discrimination. Any concern that this code is being applied unfairly should be raised with the headteacher.

6. Responsibilities

6.1 All staff

- Uphold this code, act with integrity, and treat pupils and colleagues with dignity, respect and fairness.
- Maintain professional boundaries and report any concern about a child or about an adult promptly.
- Work within the Teachers' Standards or the relevant professional standards for their role.
- Staff are expected to maintain professional curiosity and challenge poor practice respectfully where pupil welfare may be affected.

6.2 Leadership

Leadership at Acorns School models and upholds this code, supports staff to meet it, and makes sure conduct concerns are handled fairly and promptly. The headteacher is the case manager for allegations against staff, working with the local authority designated officer, except where the allegation concerns the headteacher, in which case it is referred to the regional director.

6.3 Governance

The proprietor and governors at Acorns School oversee the school's culture and the handling of conduct and safeguarding concerns and provide challenge and support.

6.4 Named leads

The designated safeguarding lead at Acorns School Marple is Paula Tankard. The deputy designated safeguarding lead is Carrie-Anne Harrison. The person who manages allegations and low-level concerns about adults is Miranda Rathmell, Headteacher.

The designated safeguarding lead at Acorns School Ashley is Paula Tankard. The deputy designated safeguarding lead is Ellie Coot. The person who manages allegations and low-level concerns about adults is Paula Tankard.

7. Training Requirements

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This code is covered at induction at Acorns School and revisited through ongoing professional development. All staff sign to confirm they have read, understood and will follow this code, and sign again when it is materially updated.

8. Equality Impact Statement

All policies will be developed and implemented in a manner that promotes equality, diversity, and inclusion, ensuring fair and equitable treatment for all individuals. Policies must align with relevant equality legislation and reflect the expectations and standards set by our regulatory bodies. They will demonstrate a commitment to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity, and fostering an inclusive environment that respects and values the diverse needs, backgrounds, and experiences of those we support, as well as our workforce.

9. Sources of Information / References

This policy reflects current statutory guidance and legislation, including:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2025, and 2026 from 1 September 2026), in particular the staff behaviour expectations and the Part 4 procedures for managing allegations and concerns about adults, which apply to trainee teachers as well as employed staff.
- Guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings (Safer Recruitment Consortium, 2022).
- Teachers' Standards (DfE, 2011, updated 2021), including the standards on personal and professional conduct.
- The Initial Teacher Training and Early Career Framework (DfE, 2024).
- Behaviour in schools (DfE, 2024).
- The Sexual Offences Act 2003, including the offences relating to abuse of a position of trust.
- The Equality Act 2010.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework, where the school has an early years setting.

10. Version Control

This document can also be found in Radar.

This policy is reviewed annually, or sooner if legislation or statutory guidance changes. The next review date and version history are recorded in the control table above. The named owner for review at Acorns School is the headteacher.

11. Appendices

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11.1 Appendix A: School-Specific Annex

The Head completes this annex with local detail so the policy is true for this school. Everything in this annex is school personalisation.

At Acorns School Marple the following local arrangements apply:

- Case manager for allegations against staff: Miranda Rathmell
- Local staff wellbeing and Employee Assistance Programme details can be accessed by all staff on Circle.
- Senior leader to notify about staff personal medication, and where it is stored: Miranda Rathmell.
- Local record of signed acknowledgements is held securely by Headteacher.

At Acorns School Ashley, the following local arrangements apply:

- Case manager for allegations against staff: Paula Tankard
- Local staff wellbeing and Employee Assistance Programme details: Information is held in the 'My benefits' section of Circle.
- Senior leader to notify about staff personal medication, and where it is stored: Paula Tankard – headteacher's office.
- Local record of signed acknowledgements: Admin office

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