



**CODE OF
CONDUCT FOR
STAFF
POLICY AND
PROCEDURES**

2022/23

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR STAFF POLICY

Responsibility

SMT member: Principal

Aim

The Code of Conduct for Staff *Policy* aims to provide guidelines for the conduct expected from college staff.

Hereford Sixth Form College seeks to provide a safe and supportive environment where the welfare and health and safety of students and staff is paramount.

Staff should seek to act professionally at all times but we recognise that at times tensions and misunderstandings may occur in the context of interaction between staff and students.

This guidance aims to help staff not only in the safeguarding of students but also with regards to reducing the risk of conduct which could be mistakenly interpreted as improper.

Professional Behaviour

Staff must place their work for the College as a priority and must not enter into any other employment without the express permission of the Principal.

Whilst minor gifts or hospitality may be considered as part of the courtesies of working life, staff must be cautious about all gifts and hospitality and if you have any doubt about the appropriateness of acceptance you must consult the Principal.

Staff should not make statements to the media regarding any aspect of College work without seeking the express authority of the Principal.

Staff must always act with integrity and must never act in a dishonest or fraudulent manner.

Declarations should be made of interest (direct or indirect) in contracts, in staff appointments and in the assessment of students.

Other than where reasonable, necessary and lawful for the proper performance of duties staff must not assault another person at or in connection with your work.

Relationships and Behaviour

Staff must treat other employees and College users with courtesy and respect.

Staff must not allow themselves to be influenced significantly in the way they carry out their duties by ties of family or friendship or by some other association nor should they expect others to behave in such a way towards them.

Where new members of staff have existing personal or business relationships with students, their parents or staff of the College, staff are advised to be mindful of the need to separate their working and personal lives. Staff must ensure they maintain professionalism and confidentiality at all times. The member of staff should advise their line manager of any relationships they think may cause a conflict of interest or of any concerns that may arise.

Staff should at all times conduct their relationships with students or other staff on a professional basis. Breach of the professional nature of the relationship may be treated as a serious disciplinary offence.

As well as conducting their own relationships with students on a professional basis, staff should not discuss with students the abilities or remuneration of other members of staff, nor should they encourage students in any form of behaviour which would contravene College policy.

All staff have a duty of care to keep students safe and are accountable for the way in which they use their authority and trust. This duty can be best exercised through the development of caring but professional relationships.

Staff should:

- Treat all students with respect and dignity
- Always remember that the welfare of the student is paramount.
- Not discriminate against employees or College users on the grounds of their age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief or sexual orientation; this includes sexual or racial harassment and any form of bullying.
- Not swear or use offensive or discriminatory language.
- Never make sexual remarks to a student or discuss their own personal sexual relationships.
- Avoid any form of degrading or humiliating treatment to punish a student, such as the use of sarcasm, demeaning or insensitive comments towards a student.
- End a discussion with a student or member of staff if it becomes embarrassing or uncomfortable.
- Work in an open and transparent environment and encourage open communication.
- Give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Never allow allegations made by a student to go unrecorded or not acted upon by gaining advice from the safeguarding team

- If an allegation is made in relation to the behaviour of a member of staff, volunteer or governor, please report it to the Principal as soon as possible. If the allegation made is against the Principal a report should be made to the Chair of Governors.
- Not do things of a personal nature that the student can do for themselves.
- When communicating with students staff should only use College mobiles (which can be accessed through the Estates Manager) or College devices when contacting students i.e. not their personal numbers. The Staff portal communication tools, college email or official College internet sites may also be used as a means of contacting students.
- Staff should not communicate with students outside of the context of their work.
- Staff should not keep images of students on any personal equipment/devices.
- When setting up a Facebook (or other) page for study purposes staff must agree this with their line manager. Staff must liaise with the College's E-Media Coordinator to set the page up and must ensure that these social media pages are managed appropriately with material which is specifically of relevance to the subject area upon which it is focused. For more information or if you have queries please contact the E-Media Coordinator.
- When working remotely or from home, all staff must abide by the "Safeguarding students and GDPR while working from home" guidance, a copy of which can be found in Appendix 1.
- Discuss and/or take advice promptly from their line manager if they have acted in a way which may give rise to concern

Social Contact with Students

Staff should never make contact with a student outside of the College for the purpose of friendship. This is particularly important when there is a possibility of the student becoming infatuated with a member of staff. It is recognised that at times there may be occasions when reasonable or accidental contact may be unavoidable. In such circumstances staff should be mindful at all times of their professional relationship with students.

Providing lifts to students as part of a private arrangement is not acceptable unless the need for this has been agreed by a line manager and there should be at least one adult additional to the driver to act as an escort. Giving lifts should never be a regular occurrence with any student other than family members or their close friends whilst they are present at College.

Staff should refrain from lending money to a student. Students who are in need of money for food or travel should be directed to the Student Support Advisors team which are located in the Pavilion Foyer where an emergency loan can be made.

Staff should also:

- Not accept gifts that may be construed as bribes (end of term gifts are fine).
- Never give out personal contact details, mobile phone numbers or personal email, face book addresses or other social media platforms with personal details.
- Never accept friendship or access requests from students on any social media sites.
- Report any suspected infatuation to your line manager.
- Report any situation which you feel may compromise your professional standing to your line manager.
- Not make any contact with former students for at least 3 years after they have left the college (unless related to College or Professional Business reasons authorised by SMT) to protect themselves from any possible allegations of inappropriate relationships.

Working one to one with students

Staff should be aware of the potential risks which may arise when working with students alone.

It is fully recognised that occasions will arise where confidential meetings or interviews must take place between a member of staff and a student:

- If possible leave the door open ajar or use a room with a window in the door.
- Where such conditions cannot apply, staff are advised to ensure that another member of staff knows that the meeting is taking place.
- Never meet a student away from the College unless express permission and reasons are discussed with your line manager.
- Avoid travelling in a car with one student. Relevant business car insurance is required if travelling with students in a car.

Sexual contact / Position of Trust

All staff should be aware that under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, it is a criminal offence for a person in a position of trust to engage in any sexual activity with a young person under 18 and whom they have a relationship of trust irrespective of the age of consent, even if the basis of their relationship is consensual. Regardless of age, any such behaviour is a breach of this Staff Code of Conduct Policy, will be treated seriously and must be reported immediately.

Physical contact

It is not necessary to have physical contact with any student, outside your job description even when they are distressed and this should be avoided at all times.

If you have to deal with a challenging student:

- Try to defuse the situation before it escalates.
- Never compromise your own safety.
- If you have to use reasonable physical restraint to prevent a student harming themselves or another, report this immediately to your line manager.
- Contact reception in the case of a fight breaking out.

Educational visits and college activities

Staff should take care in less formal situations and remember that they are still in a position of trust and authority whilst managing or taking part in educational visits or other college extra-curricular activities.

The College has a strict 'no alcohol/drugs' policy on all College educational trips. Any member of staff reported to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol whilst on a College trip will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the Colleges' Disciplinary Procedures.

Staff responsible for organising trips must abide by the college's Trips and Visits Policy and Procedures and be familiar with the Department of Education's advice on Health and Safety (updated November 2018):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-and-safety-on-educational-visits/health-and-safety-on-educational-visits>

Confidentiality

Much of the College's work is of a confidential nature. You must not disclose any information to anyone who the College may consider has no right to receive it.

Staff should never share information about students in a casual manner or allow student access to information on staff computers or in staff rooms.

Staff should:

- Never give out their personal details or another students personal details to other students.
- Log off or lock their computer whenever leaving it unattended.
- Not allow a student to use your computer unless you have first logged off.
- Use initials, the student number or the details generated via the staff portal in the subject line of emails to colleagues, not name.
- Only use your college email address when contacting students and not your personal email address.

Reporting Child Protection and Safeguarding Concerns

All staff, whether paid or voluntary, have a duty to keep young people safe and to protect them from sexual, physical, emotional harm or neglect.

Children have a right to be safe and to be treated with respect and dignity. It follows that staff are expected to take reasonable steps to ensure the safety and well-being of students.

All staff should have a sound understanding of the College's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures and other accompanying policies as well as the Statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021. Staff must follow these procedures in order to act upon any safeguarding or child protection concerns which they may have with regards to a student. All members of staff must report any disclosures of abuse made by a student or other safeguarding concerns to the students Director of Studies or the Designated Senior Lead(s)/Deputy designated Safeguarding Lead immediately.

Adults should not take images of young person's injury, bruising or similar (e.g. following a disclosure of abuse), even if requested by children's social care or make audio recordings of a young person's disclosure. All staff who need to share "special category personal data" are aware that the Data Protection Act 2018 contains "safeguarding of children and individuals at risk" as a processing condition. This allows practitioners in circumstances where a young person is deemed to be at risk of harm to share information without consent; if it is not possible to gain consent, it cannot be reasonably expected that a practitioner gains consent or if to gain consent would place the young person at risk.

Whistle blowing and reporting concerns about the behaviour of a member of staff or a volunteer:

Staff should acknowledge their individual responsibilities to bring matters of concern, with regards to the behaviour of a colleague, to the attention of the Principal. This is particularly important where the welfare of children may be at risk.

Staff should report any behaviour by colleagues that raises concern regardless of source through following the guidance set out in the College's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Whistleblowing Policy and Procedures which can be accessed on the staff area of the VLE.

Allegations that meet the harms threshold:

Staff, governors and volunteers should be aware that abuse can lead to a criminal conviction. Should concerns arise regarding any allegation of abuse by a staff member Part 5 of the statutory guidance: **Keeping Children Safe in Education (Sept 2021)** must be followed and the specific local safeguarding children's Partnership guidance initiated.

All allegations of abuse of students by staff, governors or volunteers will be taken seriously and treated in accordance with the local safeguarding children Partnership procedures in line with the statutory guidance: Keeping Children Safe in Education (2021). Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership

guidance for dealing with an allegation and the LADO referral form and guidance documents can be accessed through the following link:

[LADO / Managing Allegations \(procedures.org.uk\)](https://procedures.org.uk)

These procedures will be used in respect of all cases in which it is alleged that anyone working in the college that provides education for children under 18 years of age, including governors and volunteers has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child;
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she may pose a risk of harm to children; or
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children (which may include behaviour that may have happened outside of College, that might make an individual unsuitable to work with children. This is known as transferable risk)

Concerns that do not meet the harms threshold:

Concerns may arise which do not meet the harms threshold in several ways and from a number of sources. For example: suspicion; complaint; or disclosure made by a child, parent or other adult within or outside of the organisation; or as a result of vetting checks undertaken.

The College encourages and promotes an open and transparent culture in which all concerns about all adults working in or on behalf of the college (including supply teachers, volunteers and contractors) are dealt with promptly and appropriately.

What is a low level concern?

The term 'low-level' concern does not mean that it is insignificant, it means that the behaviour towards a child does not meet the threshold set out in paragraph 338 of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021.

A low-level concern is any concern – no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt' - that an adult working in or on behalf of the school or college 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 allegations threshold or is otherwise not considered serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO.

Examples of such behaviour cited in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021 may include, but are not limited to:

- being over friendly with students;
- having favourites;
- taking photographs of children on their mobile phone;
- engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door; or,
- using inappropriate sexualised, intimidating or offensive language.

Such behaviour can exist on a wide spectrum, from the inadvertent or thoughtless, or behaviour that may look to be inappropriate, but might not be in specific circumstances, through to that which is ultimately intended to enable abuse.

It is crucial that any such concerns, including those which do not meet the harm threshold are shared responsibly with the Principal or Vice Principal (Operations) who will record concerns and take action to deal with them appropriately depending on the nature of the concern. This approach to managing and acting upon low level concerns will not only create and embed a culture of openness, trust and transparency in which the college's values and expected behaviour which are set out in the staff code of conduct are constantly lived, monitored and reinforced by all staff, but also to protect those working in or on behalf of schools and colleges from potential false allegations or misunderstandings.

Staff are also encouraged to self-refer if they feel they have been in a situation which could be misinterpreted as being compromising or if they feel that they may have behaved in a way that falls below the expected standards of professionalism.

Records of low-level concerns will be kept under review by the Principal or Deputy Principal so that potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified. The record should include details of the concern, the context in which the concern arose, and action taken. If the concern is deemed not to be of a safeguarding nature, it will still be recorded. The name of the individual sharing their concerns should also be noted, if the individual wishes to remain anonymous then that should be respected as far as reasonably possible. Where a pattern of such behaviour is identified, the college will decide on a course of action, either through its disciplinary procedures or where a pattern of behaviour moves from a concern to meeting the harms threshold, in which case it would be referred to the LADO or disciplinary procedures.

The NSPCC whistle blowing helpline is also available for staff to discuss any safeguarding or child protection concerns which they feel are not being addressed by the College internally. Staff can call 08000280285 or email help@nspcc.org.uk.

Overall conduct

Staff must comply with all reasonable requirements or instructions given to you by your superiors and carry out your duties with care and diligence.

Failure to maintain satisfactory standards of conduct will lead to disciplinary action in accordance with the College's *Disciplinary Procedures* which set out the College's due processes for dealing with misconduct or gross misconduct having regard to all the circumstances of each individual case.

The committing of any act, including a criminal offence, which is incompatible with a staff member's status as an employee of the College, even when not at work, or unconnected with work, is not acceptable and will be dealt with in accordance with the College's *Disciplinary Procedures*.

To clarify, following an employee's initial employment checks upon commencing employment with the College; they are required to disclose to the Principal immediately if they have been convicted or cautioned of any new offences during the period of employment. Additionally, they must inform the College of any pending investigation or action from the police or any court that might reasonably be agreed as impacting upon their suitability to undertake their role. Failure to do so may lead to disciplinary action which may place their employment with the College at risk.

Staff must not be on the College premises if they are under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs or other substances.

Smoking is not permitted throughout the College buildings and external campus.

Attendance

All staff must ensure that they arrive for duty on time and do not finish or leave until the authorised time without prior consent. Staff must follow the procedures set out in the Absence (Staff) Procedures Policy.

In usual circumstances employees wishing to leave College during the working day may do so providing that they have informed the Office.

Except for absence for sickness, staff should only be absent from work when that absence is authorised by either the Principal on the College Notification of Absence pro-forma.

When employees are to be absent because of sickness they must email staffabsence@hereford.ac.uk and their line manager as early as possible on the first day of absence. Teachers must also contact their Head of Department/Line Manager directly and pass on the details of any work to be set. Support staff should leave a message for anyone whose work is likely to be affected by their absence. Employees should estimate the probable length of their absence through sickness and ensure that the College is informed if the estimate turns out to be inaccurate. Employees must inform staffabsence@hereford.ac.uk on their return to work.

College policies

All employees are to be aware of the College's *Health and Safety Policy* especially as it relates to them and their areas of work and are to abide by any Code of Practice within that policy.

Personal property

Employees are responsible for the security of any personal property brought to College.

Employees bringing personal electrical property to College are responsible for its conformity to Health and Safety and IT requirements.

College property

Staff must not misuse or damage College property.

College equipment may be available for personal use with the express permission of the Principal.

Private telephone calls are permitted but must be paid for.

Related College policies and procedures:

- *Health and Safety Policy*
- *Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures*
- *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy*
- *Whistleblowing Policy and Procedures*
- *College Staff Disciplinary Procedures*
- *Absence (Staff) Procedures Policy*
- *Online Safety Policy for Staff*
- *Acceptable Use Policy*
- *Alcohol, drug and substance Use Policy*
- *Appropriate Dress Policy*
- *Disciplinary (Staff) Procedures*
- *Malpractice and conflict of interest's policy*
- *Staff Well being Policy*

Useful website links:

'Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who work with Children and Young People in Education' web link:

[Professional and Personnel Relationships \(cimpress.io\)](https://www.cimpress.io)

Addendum to *'Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who work with Children and Young People in Education'* April 2020

[Professional and Personnel Relationships \(cimpress.io\)](https://www.cimpress.io)

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021:

[Keeping children safe in education 2021 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk)

Health and Safety links:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-and-safety-advice-for-schools/responsibilities-and-duties-for-schools>

School trips and outdoor learning activities (HSE)

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/services/education/school-trips.pdf>

Health and safety on school trips (Government guidance)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-and-safety-on-educational-visits/health-and-safety-on-educational-visits>

Safeguarding students and GDPR while working from home...

Whilst working at home, please consider your online safety and that of students, as well as personal and sensitive data.

A few things to consider:

- Only use channels provided by the College e.g. Teams, VLE etc. Please contact IT Services if you wish to use another service. Please always use your college email addresses to communicate with your students (not personal email or WhatsApp etc).
- When emailing students, use the bcc field, not cc or to fields.
- Only use your college email to communicate college business.
- If calling students from your home phone or mobile, please ensure that you withhold your number (e.g. 141 from a landline).
- Be aware of your background if using Teams Meeting, e.g. pictures on the wall, family members etc.
- Be aware of and take sensible measures with confidentiality, personal and sensitive data when working from home, e.g. student data or portal pages showing on screens; conduct confidential discussions away from family members.
- When using Teams Meetings – set out your rules at the start, remind students that the same manners and behaviour is expected as in a classroom.
- Only use established HSFC curriculum social media pages to communicate via social media (please contact Ruth Figg if you want to set one up).
- If you have any safeguarding/behavioural concerns, screen grab (“print screen”) as evidence and contact the Safeguarding team, available Monday-Friday 9.00am-4.00pm daily and contactable by email and telephone. Whilst working remotely you can call through to reception on (01432) 355166.

The College Online Safety Policy for staff and the Data Protection Policy can be found on the VLE, under Staff Documents and College Policies:

<https://vle.hereford.ac.uk/mod/glossary/view.php?id=10710>

