

Code of Conduct for Schools

About this policy

Purpose

This document covers the Code of Conduct for schools and other educational settings.
Refer to the table of contents, below, for a full list of topics covered.

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Version control

The table below shows the history of the document and the changes that were made at each version:

Version	Date	Summary of changes
1.0	Sept 2008	First published version.
2.0	March 2016	Additional guidance on social media and use of mobile phones, FGM, Prevent Duty and Positive Handling. Replaces printed version previously issued to staff.

Distribution

This policy is available on Hackney Learning Trust's HR for Schools web pages and a copy is held by the school.

1. About the Code of Conduct

This document aims to ensure that there is consistency in what is expected of the employee and employer. It sets out guidance for employees and other adults working with children, with the intention of minimising the risk of being accused of improper conduct, particularly towards the young people with whom they come into contact during the course of their work. This guidance is recommended to Hackney schools, children's centres, nurseries and other educational settings as a model code of conduct. It makes clear the conduct considered acceptable, and clearly indicates what action will be taken if school rules and/or policies are broken.

It is not possible to provide a complete 'checklist' of what is, or is not appropriate behaviour in all circumstances. There may be occasions and circumstances in which staff have to make decisions in the best interests and welfare of the school and the children in their charge, which could contravene this guidance or where no guidance exists. In such instances, the employee should ensure that senior management, preferably the Headteacher, is made aware of the action taken as soon as possible and that a record is kept, so that they are seen to be acting appropriately.

If an employee does not adhere to this guidance, the school may take [disciplinary](#) action against them. This may have serious consequences for staff, including the possibility of dismissal in the most serious cases.

This code of conduct should be covered in schools induction arrangements for all new staff and for most, will serve only to confirm what has always been their practice. Should they have any doubts about the advice contained in this document they should consult with their Headteacher or Human Resources.

2. Scope of the policy

This code of conduct seeks to establish a set of core principles which underpin the concept of public service and which are applicable to anybody who works with children, regardless of grade/position, hours of work or type of contract. It also includes governors, contractors, volunteers and any other adults working with children.

3. General Standards of Behaviour

This section outlines the expected standards of behaviour that must be demonstrated by all staff, and covers the following:

- Personal Standards.
- Use of Information Technology, Mobile Phones and Social Media.
- Dress Code.
- Contact with parents and the general public.
- Respect for others.
- Honesty, integrity, impartiality and objectivity.
- Accountability.
- Stewardship.
- Personal Interests.
- Openness.
- Appointment of staff.
- Duty of trust.
- Trade Union Membership.

3.1. Personal Standards

Personal standards of behaviour must be high in dealing with other staff, volunteers, governors, parents and children.

Public confidence in the school would be undermined if staff:

- Take drugs or drink alcohol while at work/on duty, or drink at social events within or outside working hours to the extent that their work could be affected. (See the [Drug and Alcohol Policy](#).)
- Threaten, fight or assault anyone on the school premises, or persist in verbal or non-verbal behaviour, which would intimidate anyone. It should be noted that this also means any such action outside the school premises which could potentially bring the school into disrepute.
- Steal, take without authority, or deliberately damage things that belong to the school.
- Use their position within the school inappropriately to advance the interests of any other person or organisation with which they are associated, or show favour to any friends, family or personal contacts.

3.2. Use of Information Technology, Mobile Phones and Social Media

The school provides internet and email facilities for work-related activities only, and any misuse may lead to [disciplinary](#) action. Staff members are permitted reasonable personal use of the internet during lunch breaks. The school may monitor email traffic and time spent on the internet as part of any investigations into suspected misuse of the system. Please see the [Email and Internet Use Policy](#) for more information.

Mobile phones are permitted in school, however, excessive use of mobile phones for personal calls should be avoided.

Staff should not engage in inappropriate use of social media sites, either inside or outside of working hours, which may bring themselves, the school or employer into disrepute. Staff should not have contact with any pupil through social media (unless the pupils are family members) and should exercise caution when posting photographs and/or comments so that professional standards are maintained and staff do not compromise themselves or the school.

3.3. Dress Code

It is the school's policy to maintain an image of a professional public service organisation providing high quality services. A person's dress and appearance are matters of personal choice. However, staff should ensure that they dress decently, safely and appropriately for the roles they undertake. Those who dress or appear in a manner that could be considered as inappropriate could render themselves vulnerable to criticism or allegation, and may result in [disciplinary](#) action.

3.4. Contact with parents and the general public

There is a general expectation of the school that staff will:

- Be polite to members of the public at all times.
- Give/provide their name when speaking or writing to parents/carers and other members of the public or school community when speaking or writing on behalf of the school.
- Ensure that any information provided in relation to the school is accurate.
- Ensure that any information provided to third parties is in line with the [Data Protection Act \(1998\)](#).
- Respect confidential information provided to them in the course of their work.
- Avoid doing anything which could make the public doubt the motives or integrity of a member of staff of the school or bring the school into disrepute.
- Ensure that any significant concerns or complaints expressed to them by parents, carers or the general public are passed on to the senior management of the school.

3.5. Respect for others

All staff must:

- Treat others with respect.
- Not discriminate unlawfully against any person and treat others equally regardless of ability, gender, age, race, position in school or any other protected characteristic.
- Treat other members of staff and colleagues of the school professionally.

Staff must not single out another for treatment where they feel threatened, humiliated or patronised. This type of behaviour could be seen as harassment or, in serious cases, bullying. Please refer to the [Harassment and Bullying Policy](#) for guidance on how to deal with such allegations.

3.6. Honesty, integrity, impartiality and objectivity

Staff are subject to national and local terms and conditions of employment, which are tailored to their particular job. All staff will be expected to comply with written or oral instructions, about the way in which they tackle their duties and conduct themselves.

Staff, volunteers and governors should be made aware of the school's policy for accepting gifts including arrangements for the declaration of gifts received and given.

It is against the law for public servants to take bribes. There are occasions when children or parents wish to pass small tokens of appreciation to staff, for example, Christmas or as a thank you, and this is acceptable. However, it is unacceptable to receive gifts on a regular basis or of any significant value. Money should never be accepted as a gift. Any reward given to a child or young person must be in accordance with agreed practice within the school.

Staff, volunteers and governors should avoid putting themselves in debt to a colleague where this would be likely to or could be seen to influence their work.

3.7. Accountability

All staff are accountable to the school for their actions.

They must also respect and adhere to the management structure of the school, ensuring that management roles and decisions are not ignored or undermined.

Managers have a responsibility to hold staff accountable for agreed actions and to themselves be accountable to the staff they manage.

3.8. Stewardship

All staff, volunteers and governors must:

- Use any public funds entrusted to or handled by them in a responsible and lawful manner.
- Not make personal use of property or facilities of the school unless authorised to do so.

3.9. Personal Interests

An employee must not in their official or personal capacity allow their personal interests to conflict with the school's requirements, bring the reputation of the school into disrepute, or use their position improperly to confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person.

3.9.1. Registration of interests

All staff must comply with any requirements of Hackney Learning Trust to register or declare interests and to declare hospitality, benefits or gifts received as a consequence of their employment.

3.10. Openness

Staff must maintain appropriate confidentiality and not disclose information given to them in confidence by anyone, or information acquired which they believe is of a confidential nature, without the consent of a person authorised to give it. Unless:

- They are required by law to do so
and/or
- Disclosure of the information to the appropriate person is required to adequately safeguard a child or children. Staff must not prevent another person from gaining access to information to which that person is entitled by law.

3.11. Appointment of staff

Staff must not be involved in the appointment or any other decision relating to the discipline, promotion, pay or conditions of another employee, or prospective employee, who is a relative, friend or partner.

In this paragraph:

'Relative' means a spouse, partner, parent, parent-in-law, son, daughter, step-son, step-daughter, child of a partner, brother, sister, grandparent, grandchild, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece, or the spouse of partner of any of the preceding persons. 'Partner' means a member of a couple who live together or who have a close personal relationship.

3.12. Duty of trust

All staff must, at all times, act in accordance with the trust that the school is entitled to place in them. Similarly, the school is expected to act in accordance with the trust that the employee is entitled to place on the school.

3.13. Trade Union Membership

We support the system of collective bargaining and believe in the principle of solving industrial relations problems by discussion and agreement. It may be advantageous for staff to belong to a trade union that represents them on the appropriate negotiating body. All staff are encouraged to be a member of an appropriate trade union.

4. Working with and safeguarding children

Hackney Learning Trust is governed by a number of government directives, policies and acts (Children Act, Education Act, Protection of Children Act, etc.) as well as our own local guidance issued by Hackney Children's Social Care and City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Board, that place us under a statutory duty to make arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

This section covers what this means to all staff in terms of their individual responsibilities to protect and promote the welfare of children. It covers the following areas:

- Definition
- An individual's responsibilities
- Procedures for promoting and safeguarding the welfare of children
- Safe Environment
- Conduct: general guidance
- Safe working practices: appropriate behaviour
- Reporting concerns
- Positive Handling

4.1. Definition

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined as:

- Protecting children from maltreatment
- Preventing impairment of children's health or development
- Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

Child Protection is also part of safeguarding and promoting welfare and refers to activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer significant harm.

These aspects of safeguarding and promoting welfare all contribute to the five outcomes for improving the wellbeing of children set out in the Children Act 2004, namely:

- Physical and mental health and emotional well-being
- Protection from harm and neglect
- Education, training and recreation
- Making a positive contribution to society
- Social and economic well-being

4.2. An individual's responsibilities

Everyone in the education service shares an objective to help keep children and young people safe. All staff play an important part in safeguarding children from abuse and neglect by early identification of children who may be vulnerable or at risk of harm, and by educating children about managing risks and improving their resilience through the curriculum. All staff have three main areas of responsibility:

- Understanding procedures and protocols for promoting and safeguarding the welfare of children.
- Providing a safe environment in which children and young people can learn.
- Identifying children and young people who are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, and taking appropriate action with the aim of making sure they are kept safe both at home and in the education setting.

The overriding principle of these policies is that the welfare of the child is paramount.

4.3. Procedures for promoting and safeguarding the welfare of children

All staff must be familiar with and follow school procedures and protocols for promoting and safeguarding the welfare of children. These documents are available on the schools website or from the school office. Staff should also know who the Designated Safeguarding Lead is and how to contact them to express concerns about a child's welfare. Contact details are available from the school office.

Staff should also be aware of the latest legislation and government guidance including having regard of [Working Together to Safeguard Children \(2015\)](#) and [Keeping Children Safe in Education 2015](#).

4.4. Safe Environment

All staff are accountable for the way in which they exercise authority; manage risk; and safeguard children and young people. Whether working in a paid or voluntary capacity, they have a duty to keep children and young people safe and to protect them from neglect and sexual, physical and emotional abuse.

Children and young people have a right to be treated with respect and dignity. It follows that trusted adults are expected to take reasonable steps to ensure the safety and well-being of children and young people. Failure to do so may be regarded as neglect.

4.5. Conduct: general guidance

Staff are responsible for their own actions and behaviour and should avoid any conduct which would lead someone to question their motivation and/or intentions. Everyone expects high standards of behaviour from school staff.

They must:

- Adhere to the standards of behaviour outlined at the start of this Code of Conduct document (see page 5).
- Always consider whether their actions are warranted, proportionate and safe and applied equitably.
- Take reasonable care of children and young people under their supervision with the aim of ensuring their safety and welfare.
- Continually monitor and review their practice and ensure they follow the latest guidance.
- Comply with relevant statutory provisions which support the well-being and development of children and young people, including where these require co-operation and collaboration with a range of agencies, as well as teacher colleagues and other adults.

They must not:

- Seriously demean or undermine children and young people, their parents, carers or colleagues, or act towards them in a manner which is discriminatory.
- Misuse or misrepresent their professional position, qualifications or experience.
- Bring the reputation and standing of the profession into serious disrepute.

4.6. Safe working practices: appropriate behaviour

We cannot provide a complete checklist of what is, or is not appropriate behaviour for adults in all circumstances. There may be occasions and circumstances in which staff have to make decisions or take action in the best interests of the child or young person which could contravene this guidance or where no guidance exists.

Individuals are expected to make judgements about their behaviour in order to secure the best interests and welfare of children in their charge. Such judgements should always be recorded and shared with senior management, preferably the Headteacher, so they are seen to be acting appropriately.

'Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults working with Children and Young People in Education Settings' provides guidance clarifying which behaviours constitute safe practice and which should be avoided. You can find this document [here](#).

This provides clear advice on appropriate and safe behaviours for all adults working with children when dealing with the following:

- Duty of care.
- Making professional judgements.
- Power and positions of trust and authority.
- Confidentiality.
- Standards of behaviour.
- Dress and appearance.
- Gifts, rewards, favouritism and exclusion.
- Infatuations and 'crushes'.
- Social contact outside of the workplace.
- Communication with children (including the use of technology).
- Physical contact.
- Intimate and personal care.
- Behaviour management.
- The use of care & control/physical intervention.
- Sexual conduct.
- One-to-one situations.
- Home visits.
- Transporting children and young people.
- Educational visits.
- First aid and medication.
- Photography, video and other images.
- Exposure to inappropriate images.
- Personal living accommodation including on site provision.
- Overnight supervision and examinations.
- Curriculum.

4.7. Reporting concerns

All staff have a duty to report matters concerning offences of a criminal or child protection nature. They have a responsibility to bring matters of concern to the attention of senior management and/or relevant external agencies at an early stage. This is particularly important where the welfare of children may be at risk.

4.7.1. What to do if you are worried a child is being abused

If a school employee has concerns about a child's welfare, or if a child discloses that they are suffering abuse or reveals information that gives grounds for concern, they should speak to their Designated Safeguarding Lead with a view to passing on the information to Children's Social Care.

Individuals must always consider the safety and welfare of a child or young person when making decisions on whether to share information about them. Where there is concern that the child may be suffering or is at risk of suffering significant harm, the child's safety and welfare must be the overriding consideration. Information Sharing Guidance, available here.

Individuals will need to use their own judgement, but it is preferable that all concerns are reported in accordance with this guidance. For example:

- Actions which endanger the health or safety of any individual, including risks to children or the public as well as other workers.
- Sexual or physical abuse of children.
- Neglect or emotional abuse of children.

Further guidance can be found in [What to do if you're worried a child is being abused](#) and [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#).

4.7.2. Female Genital Mutilation – Mandatory Reporting

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs. It is illegal in the UK and a form of child abuse with long-lasting harmful consequences.

Section 5B of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (as inserted by section 74 of the Serious Crime Act 2015) places a statutory duty upon teachers, along with social workers and healthcare professionals, to report to the police where they discover (either through disclosure by the victim or visual evidence) that FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under 18. Those failing to report such cases will face disciplinary sanctions. It will be rare for teachers to see visual evidence, and they should not be examining pupils, but the same definition of what is meant by "to discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out" is used for all professionals to whom this mandatory reporting duty applies. Teachers must report to the police cases where they discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out. Unless the teacher has a good reason not to, they should still consider and discuss any such case with the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead and involve Children's Social Care as appropriate.

4.7.3. Prevent Duty

Protecting children from the risk of radicalisation should be seen as part of schools' wider safeguarding duties, and is similar in nature to protecting children from other forms of harm and abuse. During the process of radicalisation it is possible to intervene to prevent vulnerable people being radicalised. Radicalisation refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of extremism.

Schools are subject to a duty under section 26 of the [Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015](#) ("the CTSA 2015"), in the exercise of their functions, to have "due regard" to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism". This duty is known as the Prevent duty. Bodies to which the duty applies must have regard to statutory guidance issued under section 29 of the CTSA 2015 ("the Prevent guidance").

As explained above, if a member of staff in a school has a concern about a particular pupil they should follow the school's normal safeguarding procedures, including discussing with the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead, and where deemed necessary, with the Police and Children's Social Care. Hackney has a Prevent lead who can also provide support.

4.7.4. Allegation Against a Member of Staff

It is an allegation when a teacher or member of staff (including volunteers) in a school or college that provides education for children under 18 years of age 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; or
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she would pose a risk of harm to children;
- Been arrested or cautioned for a criminal act.

If such an allegation is made, the member of staff receiving the allegation should immediately inform the Headteacher or the next most senior member of staff. If the allegation is against the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors must be notified. In all cases, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and an HR Advisor from the Human Resources Department must be notified.

4.8. Positive Handling

Refers to the management of relatively rare situations when children and young people present extremely challenging behaviour which may require some form of physical intervention from adults. This is sometimes referred to as restraint or care and control. Hackney Learning Trust has adopted the term Positive Handling.

Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 “enables school staff to use force as is reasonable in the circumstances to prevent a pupil from doing or continuing to do any of the following:

- (a) committing any offence (or, for a pupil under the age of criminal responsibility, what would be an offence for an older pupil):
- (b) causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any person (including the pupil himself), or
- (c) prejudicing the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school or among any pupils receiving education at the school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.”

The Headteacher will be informed at the earliest possible opportunity of any incidents where positive handling was used. The Headteacher (or their nominee) will initiate the recording process if not already under way and review each incident to ensure that any necessary lessons are learned. All parents will be informed after an incident where positive handling is used with a child. Parents will need to be notified sensitively and to be made aware of the full circumstances. HLT Positive handling policy is available [here](#).

5. Whistleblowing

5.1. About the Whistleblowing Policy

Whistleblowing inside the work place is the reporting by staff or ex-staff of wrongdoing such as fraud, malpractice, mismanagement, breach of health and safety law or any other illegal or unethical act either on the part of management, the Governing Body or by fellow staff.

The schools' [Whistleblowing Policy](#) allows staff to express their concerns without fear of victimisation or disadvantage. It is intended to encourage and enable staff to raise concerns within the school, rather than overlooking a problem or taking it outside of the organisation.

5.2. Raising Concerns

The [Whistleblowing Policy](#) should be used to raise serious concerns, including:

- Conduct which has failed, or is likely to fail to comply with a legal obligation.
- Disclosure related to miscarriages of justice.
- Actions which endanger the health or safety of any individual, including risks to children or the public as well as other workers.
- Damage to the environment.
- Theft or misuse of school property or assets.
- The unauthorised use of public funds.
- Possible fraud or corruption.

- Serious departure from professional standards.
- Sexual or physical abuse of children/service users/workers.
- Neglect or emotional abuse of children in the institution.
- Serious breach of school, Hackney Learning Trust or Local Authority regulations.
- Serious concerns about service provision, conduct of staff or others. For example something that:
 - Makes you feel uncomfortable in terms of known standards, your experience or the standards you believe the school subscribes to;
 - Is against the orders and/or policies of the school, Hackney Learning Trust, the Local Authority or the London Safeguarding Children Board;
 - Falls below established standards or practice;
 - Amounts to improper conduct

This is not intended to be an exhaustive list. It is important that all staff raise issues when they are just concerns rather than wait until they become more serious.

Staff should raise any concerns with their line manager, either orally or in writing. They have the right to have the matter treated confidentially.

If the individual feels unable to raise their concern with their line manager or the Headteacher, they may contact the Chair of Governors direct. If this occurs the individual will be asked to justify why they feel unable to raise their concern with their line manager or the Headteacher.

If the individual is not able to raise the issue with any member of school staff because of fears of victimisation, they should contact:

- Hackney Learning Trust's Safeguarding Team for assistance in cases of possible abuse of children.
- Human Resources for any other issues.

5.3. Fraudulent, criminal or child protection offences

All staff have a duty to report matters concerning fraud and offences of a criminal or child protection nature. Individuals will need to use their own judgement but it is preferable that suspicions are reported in accordance with this guidance rather than ignored.

5.4. External source

Whistleblowing to an external source without first going through the internal procedure is inadvisable without compelling reasons. Refer to the [Whistleblowing Policy](#).

5.5. Untrue allegations

Where allegations are made in good faith but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against the whistleblower. If, however, allegations are made frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against the individual.

5.6. Independent advice

Any member of staff who has a public concern that affects a third party and who wants independent advice, may contact the independent charity, [Public Concern at Work](#). Their lawyers can give free confidential advice at any stage. They can help if anyone is worried about something that is going on at work and are unsure about what to do next or have raised concerns but are concerned that it has not been addressed and the risk is ongoing.