



# ABINGDON

## **Staff Behaviour Policy (Code of Conduct)**

This policy should be read in conjunction with other school policies, especially the Safeguarding Policy and the ICT Policy, and in conjunction with the Staff Handbook. Those working at Abingdon Prep School should have particular regard for the EYFS requirements in the Safeguarding Policy. Remember, as far as safeguarding is concerned, never assume that 'it won't happen here.' It is always better to share a concern than to keep quiet. Subject to the qualifications in the safeguarding policy, concerns should go to the DSL, or if staff prefer they can use the whistleblower email: [whistleblower@abingdon.org.uk](mailto:whistleblower@abingdon.org.uk).

**Safeguarding is a core responsibility of all staff, volunteers and governors within the Abingdon Foundation.**

Given that, we would also advise all staff to read the government guidance, "What to do if you're worried a child is being abused: Advice for practitioners," which is found at [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/419604/What\\_to\\_do\\_if\\_you\\_re\\_worried\\_a\\_child\\_is\\_being\\_abused.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/419604/What_to_do_if_you_re_worried_a_child_is_being_abused.pdf)

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. Among the special features of life at Abingdon is a fairly relaxed and informal atmosphere. Teachers are expected to fulfil many roles in and out of the classroom and are likely to find themselves working with large and small groups of pupils. Staff with responsibilities for tutoring in boarding houses have further opportunities for involvement. In addition, the teacher may often find themselves 'in loco parentis'. Given the risk of false allegations on the part of pupils, staff are advised to think carefully about the setting and nature of their varied relationships with their pupils so as not to lay themselves open to undue suspicion or accusation; this is particularly important for those involved in the boarding community.

### **2. Government Guidance**

- 2.1. It would be wrong to dictate hard and fast rules in the atmosphere of a school where the great importance of relaxed and informal pastoral interaction between teachers and pupils is basic to our educational philosophy.
- 2.2. The most recent [standards](#) (2012, updated 2013) for Trainee and Newly Qualified Teachers include a section on Personal and Professional Conduct:
  - A teacher is expected to demonstrate consistently high standards of personal and professional conduct. The following statements define the behaviour and attitudes that set the required standard for conduct throughout a teacher's career.
  - Teachers uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school, by:
    - Treating pupils with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to a teacher's

- professional position;
  - Having regard for the need to safeguard pupils' well-being, in accordance with statutory provisions;
  - Showing tolerance of and respect for the rights of others;
  - Not undermining fundamental British values, which are defined as comprising: democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs;
  - Ensuring that personal beliefs are not expressed in ways which exploit pupils' vulnerability or might lead them to break the law.
- Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach, and maintain high standards in their own attendance and punctuality.
  - Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.
- 2.3. All teaching staff are advised to read and abide by the Teachers Standards guidance issued by DfE. This can be found at [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/665520/Teachers\\_Standards.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/665520/Teachers_Standards.pdf)
- 2.4. Further, the Education (Independent Schools Standards)(England) Regulations (ISSRs) (2014) places a responsibility on the School and its staff to:
- Actively promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs;
  - Not discriminate against pupils on the basis of protected characteristics, which include: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation.

### **3. One-to-one teaching/coaching**

- 3.1. There will be occasions when one-to-one teaching is appropriate and required. In these situations staff must ensure that they are professional and must create an environment that is safe for the student. In a one-to-one situation, the space in which the situation occurs should not be enclosed or totally private: there must be a means for it to be public, e.g. there should be a window in the door, or curtains left undrawn, or the door left open for public access. If at all possible, another adult should be made aware that the staff member is alone with a pupil, and if this is not possible, then it is imperative that the room should be open, and the space publicly visible.

### **4. Images and video**

- 4.1. Before taking any images or videos of any pupil, all staff should be aware of those pupils where consent to being photographed or videoed has been refused. This list of pupils is shared with All Staff on Firefly and the document is called: Multimedia Consent. This contains consent information for both Abingdon Senior School, APS and St Helen's and St Katharine's.
- 4.2. At Abingdon Prep School, the policy regarding images and video is clearly laid out in the APS Mobile Technology Handheld Device Policy. This must be adhered to by all APS staff due to the age groups involved.
- 4.3. At Abingdon Senior School, staff can only take images and videos in the course of their professional duties. In doing so, they should always endeavour to use school

equipment. If this is not practicable, then they may use their own personal devices. If images or videos are taken on a personal device, then all and any images must be transferred to school equipment as soon as possible. In practice this means that the images or video should be transferred to a school device on the day that the staff member returns from a trip, or, during term time, on the same day as the image or video was taken. When the image or video is transferred to a school device, it must immediately be deleted from the member of staff's personal device. No staff member should ever keep images or videos of pupils on their own devices.

- 4.4. Staff members must never share images or videos of pupils, or publish images or videos of pupils, without first expressly seeking permission from the communications department of the Registry. For this to be granted, written permission will be required from the parents of each pupil involved, and from the pupils him or herself whenever the pupil is over 12 years of age.

## **5. Social contact**

- 5.1. A few of the following points, given the atmosphere in the world outside, are probably worth bearing in mind:
- If engaging with pupils in your own home or another non-public setting, do not do so on a one to one basis but to meet with at least two pupils at any one time. This would apply for social gatherings as well. Except in the case of boarding staff (including the Chaplain) staff must not entertain students in their own homes without the express permission of the DSL. A classroom or the housemaster's office/study, would be considered public, but always bear in mind the guidelines (above) about one-to-one scenarios: care must be taken.
  - Members of staff should not establish or seek to establish social contact with pupils for the purpose of securing a relationship that involves an inappropriate level of emotional dependence (on either side) or that would otherwise represent an abuse of the position of trust. If a pupil seeks to establish social contact, or if this occurs coincidentally, the member of staff should exercise her/his professional judgement in making a response and be aware that such social contact could be misconstrued.
  - Social contact also includes social contact online: staff should be wary of befriending pupils on social networking sites if such contact could be misconstrued, or goes beyond an appropriate professional remit. This includes email communication. Please refer to the relevant sections in the [Safeguarding Policy](#) and in the [ICT Policy](#) and in the [Staff Handbook](#).
  - In particular, staff must be aware of their legal and professional responsibilities, and their duty of care, especially if invited to join pupils at a pub, in a restaurant or at a party where alcohol is being consumed and/or where there is no other adult supervision, even where the pupils involved are all over the legal requirements regarding consumption of alcohol.
  - Staff are advised that there are risks in making available their personal details such as home/mobile phone number, home or personal email address to pupils. Internal email/direct messaging systems should be used in accordance with the School's [ICT Policy](#) for good use, and the [Staff Handbook](#).
- 5.2. Staff should always be aware that situations can be misconstrued if the boundaries of appropriate professional conduct become blurred. Avoid allowing situations to develop that might place pupils or staff at risk of harm, or of allegations of harm to pupils.

## **6. Emails**

- 6.1. When using an Abingdon email account, staff should ensure that their communications are professional, appropriate and duly considered. Staff must not engage in email communication that could lead to the name and reputation of the school being brought into disrepute.

## **7. Favouritism**

- 7.1. Staff should not put themselves in a position where it might appear that they are showing favouritism to one or more pupils. In particular, be aware that giving presents to individual pupils might raise concerns about 'grooming'. As far as possible, be consistent and transparent in how you reward pupils or otherwise foster teacher-pupil relationships. In addition be aware of the potential for a pupil to form an unsolicited, emotionally-dependent, attachment to a teacher. In particular, if pastoral interactions with a pupil become inappropriate or difficult, then the DSL should be immediately informed and guidance sought. The circumstances should be recorded in writing and, if necessary, a note placed on the child's file.

## **8. Sexual relationships**

- 8.1. Staff are reminded that it is an offence for a person aged 18 or over, such as a teacher, to have a sexual relationship with a child under 18 where that person is in a position of trust in respect of that child, even if, in the case of those over 16, the relationship is consensual.

## **9. Physical contact**

- 9.1. Inappropriate physical contact should be avoided. Contrary to popular belief, the Children Act says very little about what may or may not be done in this area, beyond the general requirement to look after children properly. There is such a thing as appropriate physical contact and 'non-abusive' actions include:
- applying restraint to prevent a pupil harming himself or another person;
  - removing, with reasonable force, potentially dangerous items from a pupil's possession, or a pupil from a dangerous location;
  - shepherding pupils, for example with a hand on back or shoulder;
  - comforting, for example with a hand on shoulder, back or arm; and
  - securing attention by tapping a pupil's shoulder.
  - demonstrating the correct technique to a pupil in a music or PE lesson.

**Always ask permission before touching.  
It is always unacceptable to harm a boy.**

**Corporal punishment should not be used or threatened, because the school rejects the use of corporal punishment.**

Please also refer to the [Restraint \(Use of Force\) Policy](#)

## **10. Discipline**

- 10.1. If you find yourself questioning a pupil about any serious matter, or one of any possible delicacy, it is probably advisable to do so with another adult witness

present and, again, to make sure that a record is kept.

- 10.2. Staff are asked to bear in mind that a pupil's housemaster should be kept properly informed of any actions taken, conversations held, or questioning undertaken with a pupil which might have any later repercussions, bearing in mind that housemasters are legally in loco parentis. Preferably an email should be sent, in summary, so that there is a written record.
- 10.3. It is the responsibility of each member of staff to be aware of the complaints procedure and the policy on sanctions. These, with other relevant documents are on the policies area of the school website.

### **11. British Values and "Prevent Duty"**

- 11.1. At Abingdon School we believe in actively promoting the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. As a school we do not discriminate against pupils on the basis of protected characteristics, which include: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation.
- 11.2. It is the role and duty of all staff to promote these values and to do all they can to prevent pupils being drawn into radicalisation and terrorism. The PREVENT duty is the duty in the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 on specified authorities, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. The Prevent duty Department of Education advice for schools and childcare providers, June 2015, states that, 'School staff should use their professional judgement in identifying children who might be at risk of radicalisation and act proportionately'.

### **12. Boarding**

- 12.1. It is a statutory requirement that boarding pupils have private areas and these clearly would include their study bedrooms. Although house tutors have full right of access to these school rooms, it is clearly prudent to respect courtesies such as knocking on the door before entering. Wherever possible, staff should not talk to pupils on a one to one basis in their rooms with the door closed.
- 12.2. There may be occasions when it is appropriate for staff to allow pupils to enter their accommodation (such situations might be having a group of boarders in for a meal or a snack or to watch a film, or meeting boys to discuss their progress.) On such occasions staff must be very aware of ensuring that this does not lead to any compromising situations. Staff must never be in one-to-one situations with pupils in their accommodation without informing another responsible adult, and on these occasions staff should heed very carefully the advice above on the appropriate procedures regarding one-to-one teaching/coaching. Pupils must always stay in the "public" rooms of staff accommodation, ie the kitchen, study, living or dining room, and must never, on any account, go into the bedrooms or bathrooms in staff accommodation.
- 12.3. If a boarder leaves the School without permission there are clear procedures laid out in the boarding staff handbook. These procedures must be followed. (Please see [Boarding Staff Handbook](#).)

### **13. Medicine**

- 13.1. Under no circumstances should teaching staff advise on the taking of medicines, increase or decrease of the dosages of medication and the like. These concerns are strictly within the province of the School's medical staff.

### **14. Conveying pupils by car**

- 14.1. Occasional Business Use Insurance, taken out by the school on behalf of employees, means that staff are covered by school insurance when conveying a passenger (staff or pupil) in his or her own private vehicle when it is used on school business. There is a presumption that the car being used is roadworthy, insured and has met all statutory motoring requirements.
- 14.2. Occasional Business Use insurance is for when you are using your car on an **occasional** basis such as taking a boy to the hospital or collecting from the station etc.
- 14.3. If you were driving for the School using a school vehicle, then you need to register your licence with the School.
- 14.4. Mileage rates are available from the Bursary. Mileages should be based on the distance between the school and destination, or home and destination, if less.
- 14.5. There might be an occasion when you need to convey a pupil by car on an ad hoc basis. The grounds for doing this must be clear to a reasonable, objective observer. If such an occasion does occur, then you should inform your line manager immediately you finish your journey, preferably by email, and you must ensure that this does not become a regular occurrence.

### **15. Sport and music tuition**

- 15.1. Unfortunately, recent cases and evidence have shown that musical and sporting tuition can sometimes be used as an environment in which to groom children. Given this, staff working in these areas must be very aware of fulfilling the all the requirements of safe behaviour outlined above.

### **16. Activities**

- 16.1. It is important not to place pupils of the same or differing age groups in situations which might make bullying, intimidation or other pupil-to-pupil abuse more likely and, where such situations might arise, it is important that proper adult supervision be arranged. Senior pupils, assisting the supervision of junior ones, should also be aware of this precaution.
- 16.2. In addition to the internal procedures required by the Head when staff plan trips outside the School, either in term or during the holidays, teaching staff should ensure that pupils are properly supervised and care taken for their safety and security during such trips. In cases where the trip involves obvious risks such as adventure training style activities, the ratio of supervising staff to pupils should be given careful consideration. Pupils should be given clear instructions as to timings, rendezvous and the conduct expected of them.

- 16.3. Staff should ensure that if they are in charge of any school activity or facilities where safety regulations and precautions are required, these are clearly published and the attention of pupils is drawn to them from time to time. Any accidents or other untoward incidents should always be recorded, signed and dated.

### **17. Safeguarding**

- 17.1. All staff must ensure that their behaviour promotes the welfare of the pupils, and must ensure that they are fulfilling their duty of care with regard to Safeguarding as laid out in the [Safeguarding Policy](#). Remember, If, at any point, there is a risk of immediate serious harm to a child a referral should be made to children's social care immediately. **Anybody can make a referral.**

### **18. Whistleblowing Policy**

- 18.1. Staff are reminded that the school has a clear whistleblowing policy with regard to safeguarding, as outlined in Part 12 of the [Safeguarding Policy](#) and the Staff Handbook.
- 18.2. There is also a separate 'malpractice' [Whistleblowing Policy](#), also available on the website.

**Remember that this is for staff as well as for pupils, and is readily accessible via the Firefly dashboard link and is whistleblower@abingdon.org.uk**

### **19. Don't sit on information**

- 19.1. Working closely with children is fundamental to teaching in schools. Where such interaction with children exists, so also does the opportunity to abuse them. It is regrettably the case that, in rare instances, teachers and other staff have been found to be responsible for child abuse. Given their daily contact with pupils in a variety of situations, staff are also vulnerable to allegations of abuse, whether deliberately or innocently false, malicious or misplaced. However, staff should avoid making their own judgements of whether an allegation is false or otherwise.
- 19.2. Whilst every effort is made to ensure that the School's practices and policies do not put children at risk, there may exist matters that have been overlooked, or new situations which have developed, that need challenging on Safeguarding grounds. Any member of staff may make a referral to an external agency and no one should hesitate to take action to report concerns because of fear of possible repercussions. Any adult or prefect who makes in good faith a report to the DSL, the police, ISI or the Social Services of any concern or allegation about school practices or the behaviour of colleagues which are likely to put pupils at risk of abuse or other significant harm, can expect immunity from retribution or disciplinary action. This is the essence of whistleblowing.
- 19.3. There is a link to a confidential Whistleblowing email account on the Senior School study sites for pupils and staff who are feeling upset or worried. At the Abingdon Senior School this will be accessible by Mark Hindley (DSL).
- 19.4. At Abingdon Prep School staff and pupils can email Rachel Pairman, Deputy Head in confidence, she will pass on safeguarding issues to the DSL or Head.

- 19.5. Abingdon Preparatory school has a Listening Service where pupils can make a confidential arrangement to speak to a number of staff about any concerns or worries they have. At the senior school, pupils can also access the school counsellors in confidence. If a safeguarding disclosure arises then the procedure for allegations should be followed, as per the [Safeguarding Policy](#). Remember that in matters of safeguarding you cannot guarantee confidentiality.

## **Don't sit on information.**

### **Deputy Head Pastoral**

Last internal policy review: May 2019

Last governor policy review: May 2019

Next governor policy review: May 2020