

STAFF CODE OF CONDUCT

This section should be completed following ratification of the Policy.

Audience	DSL's & All Safeguarding Staff, Trust Leaders & Trustees, All staff & All Parents
Ratified	October 2025
Other Related Policies	Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy, Online Safety Policy, AI Policy and General Data Protection Policy
Policy Owner	Trust Safeguarding Team & Compliance Committee
Review Frequency	Annually in September

Ownership

Preston Hedges Trust is responsible for the production and maintenance of this document. It is issued by the Clerk, catherine.gautrey@prestonhedges.org to whom any change requests or queries should be directed.

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1. Safer working practices

It is important that you understand not only your role in protecting children, but also expectations for personal and professional conduct.

In relation to Personal and Professional Conduct the Teaching Standards state that:

- A teacher is expected to demonstrate consistently high standards of personal and professional conduct. The following statements define the behaviour and attitudes which 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.

2. Expectations of staff -we expect *all* staff to be:

- 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, including 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.

All staff 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, dress code and punctuality.

All staff must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

Professional boundaries should also be maintained in the online world as it is in the classroom; staff engaging with pupils and / or parents online have a responsibility to model safe practice at all times.

Additionally, all staff must adhere to all safeguarding guidance and comply with all guidance within and linked to this document in terms of personal and professional conduct. We expect all members of the school community; specifically support staff as well as volunteers, PTA members and supply staff to behave appropriately. The above apply to all, although we accept that some members of the community will have less developed knowledge around some policy and practice. In these cases, we expect staff to follow school policy.

3. Reporting a concern

If at any point, you have safeguarding concerns about a member of staff, even if the concern is deemed “low-level” you have a responsibility to report these concerns and the leaders/trust must create opportunities for these low-level concerns to be recorded on Confide.

The term “low-level” concern does not mean it is insignificant, it means that the behaviour towards a child does not meet the threshold of harm. A low-level 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, including breakfast and after school club, supply, contractors or external providers may have acted in a way that:

- It 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 Designated Officer (formally LADO)

Paragraph 430 (KCSIE 2025) gives examples of such “low-level” concerns which could include, but are not limited to:

- Being overly friendly with children
- Having favorites
- Taking photographs of children on their mobile phone, watch or device contrary to school policy
- Engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door
- Humiliating pupils

Concerns should initially be raised to the Principal both verbally and written on Confide; in the event that staff remain concerned or the concern is regarding the Principal, then they must contact the CEO or Chair of Trust. Details on how to contact them are below:

CEO – Mr Paul Watson – paul.watson@prestonhedges.org

Chair of the Trust – Mr Mike Brinkley – mike.brinkley@prestonhedges.org

If the staff member is still not satisfied they can report their concerns to the Designated Officer (formerly LADO). Designated Officer for Northamptonshire:

Email – LADOConsultations@NCTrust.co.uk

Or by phone:

Andy Smith – 07850 854 309

Sian Edwards (interim) – 07738 636 449

Francesca Hamilton – 07443 348415

Milton Keynes LADO – 01908 254307

In the case whereby you believe that the school has addressed it insufficiently you can

contact the MASH team on: Northamptonshire 0300 126 7000 and Milton Keynes_01908 253169/253170. You can also contact Ofsted.

Those taking such actions in good faith will not suffer a detriment for taking this action.

KCSIE 2025 (paragraph 74) “Where a staff member feels unable to raise an issue with their employer or feels that their genuine concerns are not being addressed, other whistleblowing channels may be open to them:

The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline is available for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally. Staff can call 0800 028 0285 – line is available from 08:00am to 8:00pm, Monday to Friday and their email is: help@nspcc.org.uk

Please see the Whistleblowing Policy for more information.

4. Confidentiality

Staff will have access to confidential information about pupils and the school. In some circumstances, staff may be given additional highly sensitive information. This information must not be used for their own or others’ advantage. Information must never be used to intimidate, humiliate, or embarrass the pupil. Confidential information should never be used casually in conversation and should never be shared inappropriately.

Information sharing around child protection concerns must be shared with the DSL/ Deputy DSL (DDSL). In such cases, individuals have a duty to pass information on without delay, but only to the DSL/ DDSL responsible or in their absence, the Principal.

If a member of staff is in any doubt about whether to share information or keep it confidential, he or she should seek guidance from a DSL/DDSL.

5. Staff behaviour

Staff should adopt high standards of personal conduct in order to maintain the confidence and respect of their peers, pupils and the public in general.

An individual's behaviour, either in or out of the workplace, should not compromise her/his position within the work setting or the reputation of the school or Trust.

This means that adults should not: (list not exhaustive)

- behave in a manner which would lead any reasonable person to question their suitability to work with children or act as a role model

- Make sexual remarks to a pupil (including email, text messages, phone or letter)
- Discuss their own sexual relationships with, or in the presence of, pupils
- Discuss a pupil's sexual relationships in inappropriate settings or contexts
- Make (or encourage others to make) unprofessional personal comments which scapegoat, demean or humiliate, or might be interpreted as such
- Breach the Public sector Equality Duty; guidance for public authorities 2023 by making discriminatory remarks or any such like behaviour covered under the Equality Act 2010
- Use their own mobile phone and smart watch for personal reasons in areas pupils may be throughout the school day

6. Dress and appearance

Staff dress and appearance should be appropriate to their professional role and may be different to that adopted in their personal life. Staff should ensure they are dressed decently, safely and appropriately for the tasks they undertake. This also applies to online or virtual teaching. Those who dress or appear in a manner which could be considered as inappropriate to the professional nature of the job could render themselves vulnerable to criticism or allegation and are not acting under this policy. Staff are expected not to wear clothing which is seen to be inappropriate.

6.1 Clothing guidelines

Clothing should:

- be appropriate to staff role
- not be worn if it is likely to be viewed as offensive, revealing or sexually provocative
- be absent of any political or contentious slogans
- be professional

Denim jeans or similar are not permitted other than for out-of-school activities, trips or specific days where typical school clothing would not be appropriate.

Staff should reflect on their clothing, for example underwear should not be visible, and skirts and dresses should be of an appropriate length and the leadership teams at school

reserve the right to discuss inappropriate clothing with the staff member.

7. Gifts

There are occasions when children or parents wish to pass gifts to staff e.g. at 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. All staff may find themselves in the position of receiving gifts from families that they have helped. This is understandable and should be noted to the Principal/ DSL/DDSL.

Please refer to the gifts and hospitality policy and complete the declaration form if gifts are received above the value of £30 from an individual.

We do not give personal gifts to pupils – an individual, group or class. This could be misinterpreted as a gesture either to bribe, or single out the young person. It might be perceived that a 'favour' of some kind is expected in return.

8. Social Contact/ Contact outside of school

Staff should not establish or seek to establish social contact with pupils (or parents) for the purpose of securing a friendship or to pursue or strengthen a relationship. Staff should not give their personal details such as home/mobile phone number; home or e-mail address to pupils or parents. Staff may be requested to undertake private tutoring of the pupils at school – they should seek advice from the DSL & Principal as they could expose themselves to conflicts of interest or the need to make a social care referral. This could leave the staff member open to allegation and additionally, safeguarding concerns could arise that further complicate appropriate boundaries.

Some staff may be parents of children in school and their children may have social contact with children outside school. These staff should be particularly aware of potential problems and issues and they should not behave in any way which would compromise their role in school. Staff should report and record any situation which they feel might compromise the school or their own professional standing.

As a good rule to follow, friendships already in place or as part of your child's friendships are acceptable, but must not be over promoted to other parents/ pupils at school. It is vital that in these cases, staff understand their code of conduct. New friendships should not be sought through school outside of these circumstances. Staff in this position must also be very aware of social media and the important links with professional standards.

9. Use of technology for online / virtual teaching

Wherever possible, staff should use school devices and contact pupils only via their school email address / log in. This ensures that the setting's filtering and monitoring software is enabled. In deciding whether to provide virtual or online learning for pupils, senior leaders should take into account issues such as accessibility within the family home, the mental health and wellbeing of children, including screen time, the potential for inappropriate behaviour by staff or pupils, staff access to the technology required, etc. Virtual lessons should be timetabled and senior staff, DSL and / or SLT should be able to drop into any virtual lesson at any time – the online version of entering a classroom.

The following points should also be considered by all staff:

- Think about the background; photos, artwork, identifying features, mirrors – ideally the backing should be blurred
- Staff and pupils should be in living / communal areas – no bedrooms
- Staff and pupils should be fully dressed
- Filters at a child's home may be set at a threshold which is different to the school
- Resources/ videos must be age appropriate – the child may not have support immediately to hand at home if they feel distressed or anxious about content. It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to inform school

If staff need to contact a pupil or parent by phone and do not have access to a work phone, they should discuss this with a senior member of staff and, if there is no alternative, always use 'caller withheld' to ensure the pupil / parent is not able to identify the staff member's personal contact details.

Staff should not lend their devices to other staff members, as this would allow access to their emails, which may contain confidential information. Staff should also not use any devices that do not have appropriate "password or number code" security in place. Staff are expected to ensure any devices used in school have the appropriate security in place. If this is not the case, they are expected to contact Sweethaven our

IT partner.

10. Social media

The following should be regarded in relation to the online social media world.

Some management teams recommend not using social media. Our Trust does not do this. We believe that it infringes on your right to a private life. We do expect that your online self is considered carefully and does not bring the school or Trust's reputation into disrepute. We expect the following:

- You do not name employment at the school on social media, (unless a professional platform)
- It is recommended for a range of reasons that you may consider not using your full name
- You do not accept or send requests for new friendships gained through the teacher/ parent link
- You consider your profile picture for appropriateness and the best guidance is not to have full face photos due to cloning, but this is your choice entirely
- You look at posts and consider whether you would be happy for any member of the reasonable school community to be aware of what you have put
- You are very careful with your privacy settings
- You report approaches from or concerns around the school community to the DSL/DDSL promptly
- Posts must not under any circumstances be of a racial, prejudice, be negative regarding the school/Trust or staff/ parents/children (including explicit or inferred), breach confidentiality, bring the Trust into disrepute. This could be construed as gross misconduct

11. Photographs of children

Staff must never under any circumstances photograph our children on their own electronic devices including phones, apple watches or other such devices, cameras and tablets. This includes even if the intention is to delete them immediately afterwards. Devices with photographs of children must only be taken home for work purposes and not shared with anyone else. This must be approved by the Principal. The Principal must ensure that there is a business case for allowing the photographs to be taken/ accessed off site. After their intended use photos should be deleted or stored securely. This is a measure to protect staff as much as children.

12. Physical contact

There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for staff to have physical contact with pupils, but it is crucial that they only do so in ways appropriate to their professional role.

A 'no touch' approach is impractical for most staff and may in some circumstances be inappropriate. Appropriate physical contact in schools may occur most often with younger pupils. As a good rule, if pupils come to you and put their arms around you, a gentle pat and then stepping away so that they are nurtured, but also learn appropriate boundaries is recommended.

It is not possible to be specific about the appropriateness of each physical contact, since an action that is appropriate with one child in one set of circumstances may be inappropriate in another, or with a different child. Staff should therefore, use their professional judgement at all times and must never initiate any close physical contact.

Physical contact should never be secretive, or for the gratification of the adult, or represent a misuse of authority. If a member of staff believes that an action could be misinterpreted, the incident and circumstances should be recorded in writing as soon as possible and passed to the Principal.

Physical contact, which occurs regularly with an individual child or young person will be within either an intimate care plan based from the intimate care guidelines or a risk assessment. Any changes to the care plan should be made in writing and without delay, even if the change in arrangements is temporary; e.g. staff shortages, changes to staff rotas etc. Intimate and personal care should not be carried out by an adult that the child does not know. Where feasible, staff should seek the child's permission before initiating contact. Staff should listen, observe and take note of the child's reaction or feelings and

– so far as is possible – use a level of contact which is acceptable to the child for the minimum time necessary.

Extra caution may be required where it is known that a child has suffered previous abuse, trauma or neglect. In the child's view, physical contact might be associated with such experiences and lead to staff being vulnerable to allegations of abuse. It is recognised that many such children are extremely needy and seek out inappropriate physical contact. In such circumstances, staff should deter the child sensitively by helping them to understand the importance of personal boundaries.

The general culture of 'limited touch' should be adapted, where appropriate, to the individual requirements of each child. Children with special needs may require more physical contact to assist their everyday learning. Younger children in distress may require comfort. The arrangements should be understood and agreed by all concerned, justified in terms of the child's needs, consistently applied and open to scrutiny.

This means that adults should:

- Be aware that even well-intentioned physical contact may be misconstrued by the child, an observer or by anyone to whom this action is described
- Never touch a child in a way which may be considered indecent/ unnecessary/ inappropriate always be prepared to explain actions and accept that all physical contact be open to scrutiny
- Never indulge in tickling or play tapping etc
- Never sit a child on their lap
- Be aware of isolated situations being inappropriate

13. Behaviour management

All pupils have a right to be treated with respect and dignity. You should have full awareness of the Behaviour and Fundamental Values Policy. The use of humour can help to defuse a situation; the use of sarcasm, demeaning or insensitive comments towards pupils is not acceptable in any situation. Staff should adhere to the school's Behaviour and Fundamental Values Policy and keep senior staff aware of any significant issues.

14. Physical intervention

Please refer to our Trust Physical Restraint Policy and our Behaviour & Fundamental

15. Sexual contact with young people

Any sexual behaviour by a member of staff with or towards a child or young person is both inappropriate and illegal. Children and young people are protected by the same laws as adults in relation to non-consensual sexual behaviour. They are additionally protected by specific legal provisions regardless of whether the child or young person consents or not. This includes the prohibition on adults in a position of trust.

The sexual activity referred to does not just involve physical contact including penetrative and non-penetrative acts. It may also include non-contact activities, such as causing children to engage in or watch sexual activity or the production of pornographic material.

There are occasions when adults embark on a course of behaviour known as 'grooming' where the sole purpose is to gain the trust of a child and manipulate that relationship so sexual abuse can take place. Staff should be aware that giving special attention and favour upon a child might be construed as being part of a 'grooming' process, which is an offence.

16. One-to-one situations

Staff working in one-to-one situations with children may be more vulnerable to allegations. Teachers and others should recognise this possibility therefore should plan and conduct such meetings accordingly. Every attempt should be made to ensure the safety and security needs of both staff and pupils are met.

This means that adults should:

- avoid meetings with pupils in remote, secluded areas of school
- ensure there is visual access and/or an open door in one-to-one situations
- always report any situation where a child becomes distressed or angry to a senior colleague
- consider the needs and circumstances of the child/children involved

Volunteers and students should not put themselves in one-to-one situations with children unless they have been asked to escort children to a stated destination in school.

17. Medical care

Child needing immediate medical treatment:

If a child comes to school in need of immediate medical treatment, they should initially be taken to one of the school's designated first-aiders, where appropriate action will be taken. This may result in a call to emergency services. It is not usual practice for staff to transport injured children in their own vehicles, however, in extreme circumstances, following appropriate risk assessment and agreed by the Principal, this may happen. Staff will always travel alongside a colleague, with one being a trained first aider.

If in the judgement of the first aider or the DSL/ DDSL /Principal, there are indications that the cause of the injury may be related to child abuse, the external medical professionals must be informed, alongside MASH. Provision of medical treatment should not be delayed by attempts to contact the parent or guardian in advance and in some cases of suspected child abuse it would be inappropriate to alert parents. Individuals should be aware that the injury may be evidence and appropriate recording steps should be taken. However, school staff never photograph injuries. See the safeguarding and child protection policy for further details.

Where there is a suspicion of possible child abuse, but no need for immediate medical treatment:

- If it is believed that a child may be suffering, or may be at risk of suffering significant harm, even in the absence of any physical evidence, this should be brought to the attention of MASH immediately
- It is good practice for professionals to discuss any concerns they have with the family and, inform them of a referral and where possible, seek the family's agreement. Full details of any such conversation should be recorded on MyConcern.

However, there are exceptional circumstances where such discussion and agreement seeking would place the child at increased risk of significant harm. In these circumstances it can be appropriate to refer without informing the family, although MASH will subsequently disclose the source of the referral to the family.

17.1 Administering medicine

The school offices hold strict guidance on our policy around giving medicine and its storage. Care plans and/or medical forms show any specialist medication and storage. For further information, see the First Aid Policy.

17.2 Intimate care

All children have a right to safety, privacy and dignity when contact of an intimate nature is required (for example assisting with toileting or removing wet/soiled clothing). A care plan must be drawn up and agreed with parents/carer for all children who require intimate care on a regular basis.

Children should be encouraged to act as independently as possible and to undertake as much of their own personal care as is practical. It is good practice to make another employee aware of the task to be undertaken.

Additional vulnerabilities that may arise from a physical disability or learning difficulty should be considered with regard to individual teaching care plans for each child. As with all arrangements for intimate care needs, agreements between the child, their parents/carers and the organisation must be negotiated, agreed and recorded. In addition, the views and/or emotional responses of children with special educational needs, regardless of age and ability must be actively sought in regular reviews of these arrangements.

18 Health and Safety on the school site

All members of the school community are responsible for ensuring a safe site for our pupils and must not ignore any risks noticed.

The site manager has responsibility for site safety and carries out risk assessments and appropriate checks on the site with support available from the Principal, Chief Operating Officer and the Trust Operations Manager.

Where a critical incident occurs, that defined by injury, extensive damage to property, death or distress, the Critical Incident Procedure should be adhered to. See the Health and Safety Policy for further detail.

19 Site security

The school provides a secure site, but the site is only as secure as the people who use it. Therefore, all people on the site have to adhere to the rules, which govern it.

Therefore:

- All doors with access to the public should be closed to prevent intrusion
- Visitors must only enter through the main entrance and after signing in at the office
- They should be given a visitors' badge on entry
- Staff should not let any visitors into school who do not follow the above steps
- Parents should sign their child in and out of school if attending an event outside of the registration periods
- Children will only be allowed home with adults with parental responsibility or confirmed permission. Photographic identification/password may be required
- Children should never be allowed to leave school alone during school hours, and if collected by an adult, signed out
- Staff are responsible for ensuring high value items are kept securely, particularly at the start and end of the day or when there is a community event taking place

Should a child leave the school premises without permission then staff are to report the incident to the Principal immediately. The parents and police will be informed of the circumstances. We would expect staff to aim to keep a watchful eye from a distance on the pupil where possible.

20 Online Safety – see the school's Acceptable Use Policy and Online Safety Policy for key information

The Trust has detailed policies for online safety and use of AI demonstrating a strong commitment to online safety. The Executive Team and the Trust ARC Committee are responsible for ensuring appropriate monitoring and filter systems are in place to protect children, whilst not over blocking access to prevent effective safeguarding education for them.

Safeguarding guidance is vital and whilst this document seeks to provide a high level of guidance, professional decisions appropriate to given scenarios will need to be made. All such decisions must be made in line with policy that can be applied and with the child's best interests at heart.

If there is any doubt, advice must be sought from a senior member of staff or a DSL/DDSL. All guidance is publicly accessible via the school website.

21 Making a Criminal Disclosure

Annually staff will be asked to complete an Annual Criminal Disclosure form.

During their employment staff are required to complete the Criminal Declaration form as soon as reasonably possible should they obtain a caution, conviction, bindover orders and warnings even if they are spent, except for those listed as protected cautions and convictions.

The completed declaration must be placed in a sealed envelope and passed to the Office Manager if you work in school, COO if you work within the central team, CEO if you are part of the Executive team and the CEO must pass their declaration to the Chair of the Trustees.

All envelopes must be marked Private and Confidential.

22. Useful contacts

Northamptonshire Safeguarding Hub 0300 126 7000

MASH email; MASH@nctrust.co.uk

Out of hours contact 0300 126 7000

Milton Keynes Safeguarding Hub - 01908 253169/70

Milton Keynes; children@milton-keynes.gov.uk

Out of hours contact 01908 265545

Northamptonshire /Thames Valley Police - non- emergencies 101

Police - emergency - 999

NSPCC <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe>