



Staff Code of Conduct Policy

September 2024

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Policy to be reviewed annually			
Action	Owner	Date	Completed
Review	Head (Mark Maddocks)	September 2024	✓
Approved	Risk & Compliance Committee	November 2024	✓

Date of next review: September 2025

To be published on	
School network	✓

Accessibility notice

To enable easier reading, this Policy is available in a larger font upon request.

Aims, scope and principles

This policy aims to set and maintain standards of conduct that we expect all staff to follow in order to:

- **Protect children.** The definition of a child under the *Children Act 1989* is a young person under the age of 18. This policy is thus linked to the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.
- **Protect staff** against false or exaggerated claims or accusations by pupils. These may be malicious, or mistaken, i.e. made in good faith by a pupil who has misinterpreted words or actions. For the protection of staff, the definition of a pupil for this policy is a child of any age, up to 31st August of the academic year in which she is enrolled at St. Christopher's. It also includes pupils up to the age of 18 enrolled in any other primary or secondary educational establishment at home or abroad who attended St. Christopher's or who are visiting St. Christopher's School.
- **Comply with all relevant legislation**, in particular that dealing with the protection of children, including the *Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 2000* which created a new offence of abuse of trust.
- **Comply with all relevant guidelines** on best practice issued by the DfE, the Home Office or others.

By creating this policy, we aim to ensure our School is an environment where everyone is safe, happy and treated with respect.

1. Principles

- The relationship between staff and pupils is a professional one.
- The basic assumption in this policy and guidelines is that staff are acting professionally at all times, and are trusted by the School and by parents.
- A personal relationship between a member of staff and a pupil is inappropriate unless it is with the full knowledge and consent of the School and parents/guardians.
- All interaction between staff and pupils is carried out in a professional manner and in a professional context.
- A personal relationship between staff and a pupil which includes any sexual activity, whether same or other sex, constitutes gross misconduct. It is also a criminal offence under the *Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 2000* for a person aged 18 or over who is in a position of trust in relation to another person under that age to engage in sexual activity with that person. Any such activity could thus result in summary dismissal under the School disciplinary procedures, and imprisonment and unlimited fine under the law.
- The policy and guidelines apply in relation to all pupils, in all circumstances, and at all times including school holidays.

Many of the principles in this code of conduct are based on the Teachers' Standards which can be found at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/61b73d6c8fa8f50384489c9a/Teachers_Standards_De c_2021.pdf

Staff have an influential position in our School, and will act as role models for pupils by consistently demonstrating high standards of behaviour.

We expect that all teachers will act in accordance with the personal and professional behaviours set out in the Teachers' Standards.

We expect all support staff, Governors and volunteers to also act with personal and professional integrity, respecting the safety and wellbeing of others.

Our aims illustrate our ethos as a School, and what we require of our staff in terms of behaviour towards pupils, parents and colleagues:

2. St Christopher's Aims

Our girls are celebrated as individuals; they feel supported and challenged, to thrive and be the best version of themselves today and tomorrow.

Through our curriculum, pastoral care and our co-curriculum:

- We nurture creativity, curiosity, freedom of thought and intellectual ambition. Our girls find joy in understanding.
- We care for our girls and inspire them to discover their sense of self and their heart. Our girls find their passion and their voice.
- We champion their dreams and ambitions. Our girls grow into inclusive, courageous and principled young women, to be change-makers, for themselves and the good of others. Our girls find gratitude in challenges.

Failure to follow the Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action being taken, as set out in our staff disciplinary procedures in the Staff Handbook.

Please note that this Code of Conduct is not exhaustive. If situations arise that are not covered by this code, staff will use their professional judgement and act in the best interests of the School and its pupils.

3. Legislation and guidance

In line with the statutory safeguarding guidance "Keeping Children Safe in Education", we are required to have a Staff Code of Conduct, which should cover acceptable use of technologies, staff/pupil relationships and communications, including the use of social media.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66d7301b9084b18b95709f75/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_2024.pdf

4. General obligations

- Staff are trusted by the School and by parents, yet allegations of unprofessional conduct or improper contact or words can arise at any time. All members of staff are thus reminded that professionalism and vigilance are required both to ensure the safety of children in our care and to reduce the risk of an allegation of impropriety against a member of staff.

- Full details of how to report low-level concerns can be found in the school's low-level concerns reporting procedure.
- Members of staff should take particular care when dealing with a pupil who:
 - appears to be emotionally distressed, or generally vulnerable
 - is seeking expressions of affection from a member of staff
 - appears to hold a grudge against a member of staff
 - acts in a sexually provocative way, or who is inclined to make exaggerated claims about herself and others, or to fantasise, or one whose manner with adults is over-familiar
- The School trusts staff to act professionally at all times, and within the spirit of the policy and guidelines on staff-pupil relationships.
- Where staff have a personal relationship with a pupil who is not their child (e.g. through being personal friends of parents, membership of an out-of-school club or organisation, etc.), the Head should be informed of this so that this information may be kept on file for the protection of the member of staff.
- In order to protect pupils, staff must report to the Head any concerns that they may have themselves, or that may have been reported to them by a pupil or parent, about staff-pupil relationships.

Staff are expected to set an example to pupils. They will:

- Maintain high standards in their attendance and punctuality
- Never use inappropriate or offensive language in school
- Treat pupils and others with dignity and respect
- Show tolerance and respect for the rights of others
- Not undermine fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs
- Express personal beliefs in a way that will not overly influence pupils, and will not exploit pupils' vulnerability or might lead them to break the law
- Understand the statutory frameworks they must act within
- Adhere to the Teachers' Standards

5. Safeguarding

Staff have a duty to safeguard pupils from harm, and to report any concerns they have. This includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse, or neglect.

Staff will familiarise themselves with our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and procedures and the Prevent initiative, and ensure they are aware of the processes to follow if they have concerns about a child.

Our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy is available on SharePoint in the following location: Communication > Policies> Non-Subject Policies and also on the School's website. New staff will also be given copies prior to arrival.

6. Staff/pupil relationships

By virtue of their employment in education, all staff are legally considered to be in a relationship of trust with pupils, and care must therefore be taken to ensure that there is no abuse of trust as set out in law.

Staff will observe proper boundaries with pupils that are appropriate to their professional position. They will act in a fair and transparent way that would not lead anyone to reasonably assume they are not doing so.

7. One-to-one contact with pupils

If staff members and pupils must spend time on a one-to-one basis, staff will ensure that they:

- i) Use a room which has vision panels in the door, or keep the door open, and ensure that a colleague knows that a meeting or lesson is taking place
- ii) Arrange the meeting during normal school hours or immediately before or after school when there are plenty of other people about
- iii) Do not continue the meeting for any longer than is necessary to achieve its purposes
- iv) Avoid sitting or standing in close proximity to the child, except as necessary
- v) Avoid all unnecessary physical contact and apologise immediately if there is accidental physical contact
- vi) Report any incident that causes them concern to a senior colleague, and make a written record (dated and signed).

8. Physical contact during the teaching of practical subjects

- i) Physical contact between a member of staff and a pupil may be necessary and beneficial in order to demonstrate a required action, or a correct technique in, for example, music lessons or during PE, sports and games.
- ii) Members of staff should observe the following guidelines:
 - a. Explain the intended action to the child
 - b. Do not proceed with the action if the pupil appears apprehensive or reluctant, or if you have other concerns about the pupil's likely reaction
 - c. Ensure that they can be seen by others through a viewing panel or by being in a public space. If they are in any doubt, they should ask a colleague or another pupil to be present during the demonstration
 - d. Report any incident that causes them concern to a senior colleague and make a written record (dated and signed).

9. General guidelines on conduct with pupils

- i) Avoid contact with pupils outside of school hours if possible.
- ii) Personal contact details should not be exchanged between staff and pupils. This includes social media profiles.
- iii) If a staff member is concerned at any point that an interaction between themselves and a pupil may be misinterpreted, this should be reported to a member of SLT or the Head.

Staff should:

- i) Never use any form of aggressive contact such as holding, pushing, pulling or hitting, which could amount to a criminal assault.
- ii) Avoid threatening words.
- iii) Retain at all times an appropriately warm and supportive yet detached professional relationship as one of a teacher, not a friend.
- iv) Avoid discussion of any personal topics relating to themselves; their personal life is not relevant to their professional relationship with the pupil.
- v) Avoid any words or actions that are over-familiar.
- vi) Avoid overt displays of affection either personally or in writing, including messages in greetings cards - warm words are appropriate: check with a member of the SLT if you are unsure. Always ensure that any written messages to children in any format are sent through the School Office and that they are addressed c/o the child's parent.
- vii) Avoid actions, words or expressions that could be interpreted in the following ways:
 - a. suggesting a member of staff has an emotional relationship with any pupil
 - b. that any pupil is being singled out for special attention by a member of staff
 - c. suggesting that any pupil is a favourite.
- viii) Not communicate or meet with pupils out of school hours and off school premises without the knowledge and consent of both the School and parents or guardians.
- ix) Not give, ask for or use personal email addresses and personal mobile phone numbers for communication with pupils. It is not appropriate for a member of staff to text a pupil or ex pupil. Staff should always communicate openly through the parents' or guardian's telephone numbers or email addresses.
- x) Not contact any pupil through an internet chatroom or similar, including social media or messaging sites such as Snapchat, WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook or Messenger.
- xi) Avoid any conduct that could be interpreted as a sexual advance or "grooming" and avoid words or expressions that could be interpreted as having any sexual innuendo.

Please note:

While we are aware many pupils and their parents may wish to give gifts to staff, for example, at the end of the school year, gifts from staff to pupils are never acceptable.

10. Communication and social media

School staff's social media profiles should not be available to pupils. If staff have a personal profile on social media sites, they should not use their full name, as pupils may be able to find them. Staff should consider using a first and middle name instead, and set public profiles to private. The exception to this is where the member of staff has another business or professional interest outside of School, such as a second career performing as a musician, and their identity therefore needs to be publicised online.

Staff should not attempt to contact pupils or their parents via social media, or any other means outside school, in order to develop any sort of relationship. They will not make any efforts to find pupils' or parents' social media profiles.

Staff must never post an image of a pupil online: exceptions in the following paragraph.

If images of pupils are to be used online for school purposes (for example, on the school website), staff will ensure that they do not post images that identify children who are pupils at the School without their parents' consent, and without the prior agreement of a member of SLT.

11. Acceptable use of technology

Staff will not use technology in school to view material that is illegal, inappropriate or likely to be deemed offensive. This includes, but is not limited to, sending obscene emails, gambling and viewing pornography or other inappropriate content.

All staff must ensure that their mobile phones/ devices are stored away throughout contact time with children. Staff bags should be placed in a secure place within the classroom.

Mobile phone calls may only be taken at staff breaks or in staff members' own time. The use of mobile phones during teaching time is strictly forbidden. No member of staff should have their mobile phone with them whilst teaching except in circumstances where they have been granted permission by a member of the SLT.

As school cameras/phones often contain images of pupils they must only be taken off site with the prior permission of the EVC or a member of the SLT. Whenever a school camera or mobile device is used to take pictures of pupils, the images must be deleted immediately after they have been saved onto the secure central resources area. At the end of the day, cameras or mobile devices must either be returned to the School Office where they will be locked away securely, or should be stored in a locked drawer or cupboard in the class room.

The School has the right to monitor emails and internet use on the School IT system.

Staff may not use USB sticks on school devices.

Where staff are accessing cloud-based school systems (e.g. Teams, CPOMS) via personal devices such as mobile phones they should:

- Use either a 2 factor authentication or 6 digit passcode **and**
- Delete anything they download from their personal devices as soon as it is no longer required.

12. Conduct outside of work

Staff will not act in a way that would bring the School, or the teaching profession, into disrepute. This covers relevant criminal offences, such as violence or sexual misconduct, as well as negative comments about the School on social media.

- Staff are sometimes asked to the homes of pupils for social occasions. Social invitations from parents, apart from end of year parties, should not normally be accepted. Staff should consult with the Head or a Deputy Head about any such invitations. Staff should remember that their relationship with parents and pupils is a professional one even after they or the child have left St Christopher's.

- It is not normally appropriate for staff to meet pupils out of school. No social meeting between staff/ex staff and pupils/ex pupils should take place without the knowledge and consent of parents or guardians. Staff should keep the School informed of any such meetings to protect themselves.

Staff may not at any time without the Head's prior written consent (which shall not be unreasonably withheld) either receive any remuneration or reward for privately organised work with any pupil of the School, or accept any outside employment, post or appointment whether paid or unpaid.

Staff should be aware of the School's Online Safety Policy and Acceptable Use Policy.

13. Confidentiality

In the course of their role, members of staff are often privy to sensitive and confidential information about the School, staff, pupils and their parents.

This information will never be:

- Disclosed to anyone without the relevant authority
- Used to humiliate, embarrass or blackmail others
- Used for a purpose other than what it was collected and intended for

This does not overrule staff's duty to report child protection concerns to the appropriate channel where staff believe a child is at risk of harm.

14. Honesty and integrity

Staff should maintain high standards of honesty and integrity in their role. This includes when dealing with pupils, handling money, claiming expenses and using school property and facilities.

Staff will not accept bribes.

15. Gifts and hospitality

This procedure does not prohibit normal and appropriate hospitality (given and received) to or from third parties.

The giving or receipt of gifts or hospitality is not prohibited, if the following requirements are met:

- It is not made with the intention of influencing a third party to obtain or retain business or a business advantage, or to reward the provision or retention of business or a business advantage, or in explicit or implicit exchange for favours or benefits;
- It complies with the law;
- It is given in the School's name, not in your name;
- It does not include cash or a cash equivalent (such as gift certificates or vouchers), unless by prior agreement with the Head;
- It is appropriate in the circumstances. For example, in the UK it is customary for small gifts to be given at Christmas time;
- While pupils and their parents may wish to give gifts to staff, for example, to thank them at the end of the school year, gifts from staff to pupils are never acceptable;

- Taking into account the reason for the gift, it is of an appropriate type and value and given at an appropriate time;
- It is given openly, not secretly; and
- Gifts should not be offered to, or accepted from, government officials or representatives without the prior approval of the Bursar or the Head.
- All gifts from parents or pupils themselves, including ex-pupils (up to 3 years after leaving) must be declared to the Head in writing where the value **may be** above £200. The Head will consider whether it is appropriate to return the gift or donate it to a charity. The parent should be thanked for their gift and informed whether the gift is being donated to charity.
- If a gift is received from a group of parents then the maximum value that can be accepted will be based on an average of £50 per pupil.
- Staff may retain gifts received from suppliers if they are token work-related items e.g. pens, notepads, desk calendars or diaries. Any other gifts should be politely refused or donated to the School or School's nominated charity. In either case, the Bursar should be notified by email, and if the gift is being donated to charity then the giver of the gift should be told that this is the case.
- You may retain any other gifts of an individual value of up to £200.

16.Dress code

Staff are expected to dress professionally and appropriately for the job. Ripped or blue jeans, or leggings, are, for instance, not acceptable. Trainers and sneakers are deemed acceptable if clean and smart; running trainers are more appropriate for PE staff.

Discreet ear and nose piercings are acceptable; eyebrow or other face piercings are not. Tongue piercing are only acceptable if discreet and not too visible.

Clothes will not display any offensive, provocative or political slogans.

Staff are encouraged to keep in mind the Open Events calendar when they are seen by prospective parents of the school.

17.Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed every two years, but can be revised as needed. It will be ratified by the full Governing Board.

18.Links with other policies including Safer Recruitment Practices

This policy links with our policies on:

- Staff Disciplinary procedures, which will be used if staff breach this Code of Conduct. It also sets out examples of what we will deem as misconduct and gross misconduct
- Staff Grievance procedures
- Child Protection and Safeguarding
- Acceptable Use

- Online Safety
- Safer Recruitment

19.Safer Recruitment Statement

- St Christopher's School follows the Government's guidelines for the safer employment of staff who work with children.
- We obtain enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificates on all new members of staff, temporary staff, visiting and peripatetic staff, and contractors' employees, such as catering staff, who work unsupervised in the School.
- Governors and parent helpers who have regular unsupervised access to children are also required to have up to date DBS certificates.
- More details are set out in the policy on Safer Recruitment.
- New staff and Governors receive Child Protection and Safeguarding training as part of their induction process. This training is repeated regularly, bi-annually or usually annually.
- Staff will ensure that all information given to the School about their qualifications and professional experience is correct.