

## Code of Conduct for Staff, Volunteers and Trustees

Policy Reviewed: January 2022  
Next Policy Review Date: January 2023

**This policy aims to give all staff /volunteers and trustees clear guidelines with which to work for the benefit of colleagues and children at the School and Kindergarten.**

**The words ‘staff and personal’ in the document below refers to staff, volunteers and trustees.**

### **1. Purpose, scope and principles**

This code of conduct applies to all staff employed by the school, all school volunteers, all staff on MWS duties whilst out of school (for example, school trips) and all members of the School’s Council.

MWS can only be successful in providing children with an outstanding Waldorf education through the behaviour of its staff, volunteers and trustees, whether this behaviour is with children, colleagues or external agencies. Just as we want the pupils to be themselves, to follow their own path and act with integrity, we also want our colleagues to do the same. This is central to any Waldorf School. As such, the work that teachers and other employees carry out must be done out of freedom and trust. Our actions must not only be derived from obligation but also be free acts born from personal integrity and a commitment to the children.

However, no organisation or culture can function without some basic agreed principles in place. In this vein, this document aims to set out employees’ legal obligations, together with some agreed minimum standards for all those involved with the school.

It is hoped that new recruits will find this policy useful and it will also serve to remind existing personnel of minimum standards.

School staff, volunteers and trustees are role models and are therefore in a unique position of influence in terms of setting a good example to all pupils/students within the school. As a member of our school community, each employee, volunteer and trustee has an individual responsibility to maintain her/his reputation and the reputation of the school. In some circumstances, this applies outside working hours and outside the school premises.

### **2. Collegiate and cooperative working**

MWS is inspired by the Waldorf ethos. Personnel strive to work out of principles of anthroposophy, central to which is collegiate working. They are expected to foster trust and professional working relationships by working collaboratively and collegially with each other. This includes active attendance at and participation in meetings and, where full responsibility teachers are concerned, curriculum development and relevant mandate work. Where decisions do not fall within the remit of one person, issues will need to be debated in an appropriate forum. Personnel need to, and should be able to and be encouraged to, express their positive and negative views during the decision-making process.

However, no community can function and develop without its members making some personal sacrifices for the greater good of the school and the principle of collegiate working. In this way, once a decision is reached, all staff need to remain loyal to and adhere to that decision, even if they represented a minority that opposed it.

It is important that wherever possible, all staff members use the right channels of communication, both to challenge and support each other. Policies must be agreed and decisions reached in the appropriate meetings.

Personnel are expected to uphold school policies and procedures, and raise any concerns about the life or running of the school in a responsible and appropriate way.

To challenge colleagues' decisions, the right channel to use is the forum in which the policy or decision was originally agreed or the person who made the decision /wrote the policy. Telling parents or pupils that you do not support a school policy/decision and / or actively not adhering to agreed policies/decisions are instances of actions which are unacceptable in that they may undermine colleagues or even bring the school into disrepute.

There may be times when other commitments prevent us from supporting each other, but, by and large, personnel are expected to support each other wherever possible by being flexible, covering colleagues' lessons/duties when they are off sick and taking on occasional additional work

Where there are disagreements or difficult relationships between people at work, personnel are expected to talk to each other informally and professionally to try to resolve the differences, using a colleague as mediator or an independent outside mediator/adjudicator if appropriate. Whilst this is not always possible (for example, where serious allegations are made or in instances of bullying), it is anticipated that the concerns and complaints procedure will be used once informal steps have failed to help matters.

### **3. Setting an example**

Staff set examples of behaviour that can be copied by pupils. Imitation features heavily within Waldorf education. All MWS personnel are therefore expected to use appropriate language and behaviour which they would want to be imitated.

The same applies to staff dress. We expect our pupils to be tidily and appropriately dressed for school and we expect the same of our staff. We expect staff with piercings other than those for earrings to remove the jewellery when in school.

### **4. Conduct outside work**

As a school that is proud of its heritage, ethos and standing in the community, we take pride in our reputation and expect personnel to avoid any actions that may damage the reputation of the school, their own reputations or the reputation of other members of the school community.

In particular, criminal offences that involve violence, possession or use of illegal drugs or sexual misconduct are likely to be regarded as unacceptable and as acts of gross misconduct.

#### **IT and Social Networks**

All personnel should exercise extreme caution when using information technology or social networks. They should be aware of the risks to themselves and others.

Inappropriate use of social media may bring staff, the school or the school community into disrepute. The Trust expects staff to ensure that social media posts never in any way reflect on the school or on the school community. No social media profile or post should mention the school and there should be nothing in your profile that links you to the school.

Staff who use social media must set the most restrictive privacy settings. Twitter and Instagram should be set as locked accounts; Facebook settings should be as private as possible.

Staff should be aware that anything said on social media that brings the school into disrepute can be used as a reason for fair dismissal.

## **5. Other work**

Staff may undertake work outside school, either paid or voluntary, provided that it does not conflict with the interests of the school nor be to a level which may contravene the working time regulations or affect an individual's work performance.

## **6. Safeguarding pupils**

All personnel have a duty to safeguard pupils/students from: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect. This duty includes reporting concerns about a pupil to the school's Designated Person (DP) for Child Protection as highlighted in the Child Protection Policy. Personnel are obliged to read the school's Child Protection Policy and are expected to take reasonable care of pupils under their supervision with the aim of ensuring their safety and welfare.

If a member of the school community is concerned that a correct safeguarding procedure is not followed then any person can make a referral, please see the Child Protection policy for further information.

When working alone with a pupil the door should be left open. However, it is recognised that during Learning Support lessons that are often given on a one-to one basis, it is necessary to provide the child with a peaceful, uninterrupted environment to allow him/her to be able to focus and concentrate and in this case that the door may be closed.

### **Confidentiality**

Where personnel have access to confidential information about pupils or their parents or carers, they must not reveal such information except to those colleagues who have a professional role in relation to the pupil. All issues discussed at College meetings are confidential and should not be discussed with those who are not members of College. If necessary, or where additional support is required, the College can escalate issues through to the Trust for resolution.

Personnel are likely at some point to witness actions which need to be confidential. For example, where a pupil is bullied by another pupil (or by a member of staff), this needs to be reported and dealt with in accordance with the appropriate school procedure. Care should be taken to use the right channels when discussing such cases. Safeguarding investigations should be carried out by one person and staff should only discuss these issues with pupils with permission from the Designated Person or Investigator.

Personnel have an obligation to share with the school's Designated Person any information which gives rise to concern about the safety or welfare of a pupil. Personnel must never promise a pupil/student that they will not act on information that they are told by the pupil.

**Pupil/student development**

As in all schools, personnel must comply with school policies and procedures and collaborate with colleagues and external agencies where necessary to support the development of pupils. Personnel are expected to follow reasonable instructions or requests that ultimately support the development of pupils.

**Dignity, diversity and inclusion**

As a Waldorf school, we strive to establish a strong community with strong moral values among our personnel and pupils. Respect for people from all walks of life is therefore essential, regardless of their age, race, sexuality, gender, marital status, religion, beliefs or transgender status. We also aim to help pupils to understand that we live in a multi-cultural society. Personnel must support and comply with policies relating to equal opportunity, British values, inclusion, access and bullying, and must help create a fair and inclusive school environment.

**Honesty and integrity**

As a school we aim to maintain high standards of honesty and integrity. This includes the handling and claiming of money and the use of school property and facilities. All personnel must comply with the Bribery Act 2010. A person may be guilty of an offence of bribery under this act if they offer, promise or give financial advantage or other advantage to someone; or if they request, agree, accept or receive a bribe from another person. If you believe that a person has failed to comply with the Bribery Act you should escalate it to the College of Teachers or Trust. Gifts from suppliers or associates of the school must be declared to the College of Teachers with the exception of 'one off' token gifts from pupils or parents. Personal gifts from individual personnel to pupils are likely to be seen as inappropriate and could be misinterpreted by the pupil or pupil's parents – especially where gifts are repeated or generous.

**Substance abuse, medication on site and prescriptive medication**

All staff must understand that whilst caring for the children at the MWS and Kindergarten that they must not be under the influence of alcohol or any other substances.

If a staff member is prescribed medication, then he/she must ask the GP or person dispensing the medication to ensure that the medication does not impair his/her ability to look after the children under his/her care. If this is the case, the member of staff must inform the school. Failure to do so is considered gross negligence.

Personnel must understand that any medication bought into the school must be securely locked away from the reach of children, either in the staff room, the office or a locked cupboard, it must not be in a bag that could be accessed by children.

**Touch, behaviour and physical contact with pupils**

School staff recognise the value that appropriate touch has for the children in our care and will provide physical comfort or consolation to a child who expresses a need for such.

We will not touch a child in a potentially sexually sensitive area unless the child has incurred injury that necessitates immediate medical attention and contact in that way. In such circumstances, we will, as adults, make every effort to ensure that another adult witness is present in order to protect ourselves and the child.

We will not touch a child who in any way expresses that they do not wish to be touched, unless in the extreme case of needing to restrain a child who is in danger to themselves or others.

If staff need to hold/restrain a child, they should always ask themselves?

- Is a less intrusive intervention preferable?
- Do we have to act now?
- Am I the best person to be doing this?

In less urgent situations and if at all possible, the member of staff should advise the child calmly and repeatedly about what they are going to do and why.

Physical contact may be misconstrued by a pupil, parent or observer. Touching pupils, including well-intentioned informal and formal gestures such as putting a hand on the shoulder or arm, can, if repeated regularly, lead to questions being raised. Personnel must not make gratuitous physical contact with pupils and teachers should avoid attributing 'touching' to their teaching style as a way of relating to pupils.

There are of course occasions when physical contact is acceptable or necessary. These usually fall into one of four categories:

1. Action to prevent harm or injury to the pupil or to others

If it is necessary to prevent a pupil causing injury to him/herself, to others or to prevent the pupil causing serious damage to property or if there are other circumstances that would reasonably be regarded as exceptional, the use of minimum force and contact necessary to prevent harm is acceptable and justifiable. In any such circumstance there should be a written record of the incident and the parents of the pupil involved should be informed the same day. Any such incident must always be reported to one of the Designated Child Protection Officers in the school immediately.

*Source – Dept of Education's publication - Use of Reasonable Force in Schools July 2013*

*What is reasonable force?*

*1. The term 'reasonable force' covers the broad range of actions used by most teachers at some point in their career that involve a degree of physical contact with pupils.*

*2. Force is usually used either to control or restrain. This can range from guiding a pupil to safety by the arm through to more extreme circumstances such as breaking up a fight or where a student needs to be restrained to prevent violence or injury.*

*3. 'Reasonable in the circumstances' means using no more force than is needed.*

*4. As mentioned above, schools generally use force to control pupils and to restrain them. Control means either passive physical contact, such as standing between pupils or blocking a pupil's path, or active physical contact such as leading a pupil by the arm out of a classroom.*

*5. Restraint means to hold back physically or to bring a pupil under control. It is typically used in more extreme circumstances, for example when two pupils are fighting and refuse to separate without physical intervention.*

*6. School staff should always try to avoid acting in a way that might cause injury, but in extreme cases it may not always be possible to avoid injuring pupil.*

## 2. Comforting a pupil in distress

In Kindergarten and to a lesser extent with the younger children in the main class, it is sometimes the case that a teacher will comfort a pupil by sitting them on their knee or putting an arm around them. You will need to use your own professional judgement in such circumstances, depending on the age of the child, the extent and cause of the distress and whether any other individuals are present. Consider how others might perceive your action and ensure that it does not develop into unnecessary contact.

Particular care must be taken in situations which involve the same pupil over a period of time. Generally, any physical contact between a member of staff and a pupil should be in response to the needs of the child and not the adult and should only be for the minimum duration of time necessary.

## 3. Unavoidable contact

This is a particularly sensitive issue in subjects such as Eurythmy, and gymnastics and in some forms of skills coaching. All teachers must be alert to the possibilities of pupils misinterpreting any contact. To avoid such misunderstanding, all planned contact must be demonstrably unavoidable. You need to use your professional judgement about the level of physical contact with individual children, which will take account of their age, the circumstances and the background. Generally speaking, it is unwise and unacceptable for physical contact to take place between adolescent pupils and teachers.

## 4. Other physical contact

One of the strengths of our school is a notable quality of warmth and mutual respect between staff and pupils and it is vital to retain this. Throughout the school, the daily handshake between staff and pupils is an important part of our rhythm and routine.

## **Corporal Punishment**

Any form of physical punishment is unlawful in schools. It is not under any circumstances allowable under the school's own disciplinary procedures and is actionable in law and applies to any adult who works with children in any setting. This also applies to any form of physical response to misbehaviour, with the exception noted in the above.

## **The use of mobile phones/camera phones/camera tablets/camera laptops/cameras**

MWS and Kindergarten aims to keep all children within its care safe. This includes raising awareness of potential danger through the taking of, and /or distributing of, photographs or moving images.

At no point can a mobile phone be taken by a member of staff into the main Kindergarten; all phones must be securely locked away elsewhere. They must not be taken out and used in the setting.

Any visitors to the setting must also observe the same principal; this includes parents (unless collecting children from the cloakroom), prospective parents and contractors.

Any staff member who sees a person using a phone must immediately ask them to stop and leave the setting.

To clarify, the following rules apply

- Staff phones/ camera phones are allowed to be used in the staff room during break times.

- If a member of staff needs to make a private call they will inform the senior member of staff present and find a room away from the children to make the call.
- They will not be used at any other time unless an emergency occurs.
  
- No images of pupils will be taken on personal image recording devices at any time. This is to ensure safeguarding of pupils and staff.
- Camera phones/tablets/laptops/cameras are not allowed into the Kindergarten under any circumstances.
- No mobile camera phones to be used near children under any circumstances
- The school has a camera; once the pictures have been used they will be removed unless archived for the use in school publicity.

### **First Aid and caring for pupils with particular problems**

Staff who have to administer first aid should ensure wherever possible that other children or another adult are present if they are in any doubt as to whether necessary physical contact could be misconstrued.

Wherever possible, staff who have to help children with toileting difficulties should be accompanied by another adult, and pupils should, wherever possible, be encouraged to change themselves. It is accepted that there will be some situations where pupils will present particular problems for staff and the emphasis must therefore be on what is reasonable in all the circumstances.

In situations where regular physical assistance is necessary it is advisable that parents and staff formally acknowledge this in writing.

### **Discussions with pupils, comments by teachers**

As with physical contact, comments by personnel to pupils, either individually or in groups, can be misconstrued. As a general principle personnel must not make unnecessary comments to and/or about pupils that could be construed to have a sexual connotation. It is also unacceptable for staff to introduce or to encourage debate amongst pupils in class, or elsewhere, which could be construed as having a sexual connotation that is unnecessary given the context of the lesson, or the circumstances. At the same time it is recognised that a topic raised by a pupil is best addressed rather than ignored.

Systematic use of insensitive, disparaging or sarcastic comments is also unacceptable.

### **Relationships and attitudes**

All personnel should understand the need to maintain appropriate boundaries in their dealings with pupils. Intimate relationships between a member of staff and a pupil are now regarded in law as a breach of trust. It is a criminal offence for a teacher or other persons who work with children to breach this trust, punishable on conviction by a fine and/or a term of imprisonment of currently up to 5 years. This legislation includes all children under the age of 18.

All personnel should ensure that their relationships with pupils are appropriate to the age and gender of the pupils, and take care that their language or conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Attitudes, demeanour and language all require care and thought, particularly when all personnel of either sex are dealing with adolescent boys and girls.

From time-to-time teachers may encounter pupils who display attention-seeking behaviour, or develop crushes on them. Staff should aim to deal with those situations sensitively and appropriately, but must ensure that their behaviour cannot be misinterpreted. Best practice in this situation would be to seek advice from one of the Designated Child Protection Officers immediately.

Pastoral Care and situations where conversations of a sensitive nature may be appropriate

A number of teachers have a pastoral responsibility for pupils and in order to fulfil that role effectively there will be occasions where conversations will cover particularly sensitive matters. Staff must, in these circumstances, use their discretion to ensure that, for example, any probing for details cannot be construed as unjustified intrusion.

Other staff may, from time to time, be approached by pupils for advice. For example, a pupil may appear distressed and you may feel the need to ask if all is well. In such cases you must judge whether it is appropriate for you to offer counselling and advice or whether to refer the pupil to their class teacher.

### **Extra-curricular activities, class trips etc**

Personnel should be particularly careful when supervising pupils in extra-curricular activities, or in a residential setting during a class trip, outdoor education centre or extended visit away from home. A less formal approach than usual may be appropriate in these settings, but that can be open to misinterpretation by pupils and the standard of behaviour expected of staff will be no different from the behaviour expected within school.

Class trip leaders should instruct all helpers and parent-volunteers on what is appropriate behaviour for the situation.

### **Reporting incidents**

Following any incident where a member of staff feels that his/her actions have been, or may be, misconstrued he/she should discuss the matter with one of the Designated Child Protection Officers. Where it is agreed with a DCPO, the member of staff or volunteer should provide a written report of the incident. A detailed written report should always be made if a member of staff has been obliged to restrain a pupil physically, or any other serious incident has occurred. These should be written in the incident book, found in the School staff room. Other teachers will be informed as entries in the incident book will be discussed at the weekly teachers meeting.

DCPOs for the school are Christine Reid and Barbro Edwards.

Reminder: All concerns over the well-being of a pupil or concerning any child protection issue should be addressed in confidence to the DCPO as soon as possible. Please see the Child Protection Policy.

### **Health and safety**

All staff, council members and volunteers are obliged to familiarise themselves with the health and safety policy and adhere to it.

### **Disciplinary action, misconduct and convictions**

All staff need to recognise that failure to meet the standards of behaviour and conduct within the code of conduct may result in disciplinary action, including dismissal. As with all environments where children or vulnerable adults are present, staff at MWS are obliged to notify the school without delay if they are convicted of a criminal offence, if proceedings are brought against them or a formal accusation is made of a criminal offence.

It should also be noted that employers have to notify the relevant authority when teachers are dismissed or cease employment for reasons of misconduct or incompetence, or where they resign in circumstances where dismissal was a possibility. Where employers judge misconduct to involve a risk of harm to children and young people, they are required to refer cases to the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA). Under the provisions of Home Office Circular 45/86, teaching is a 'notifiable' occupation. This means that the police report any conviction or caution of a teacher to the DBS. Offences involving a risk of harm to children, or to vulnerable adults, are considered by the ISA

This policy will be reviewed and revised by the College of Teachers and Trust Council on an annual basis.

### **Endorsement:**

**Name:** Linda Parker

**Position:** Chair of ECTE

**Date:** 31/01/2022