

# Code of Conduct (maintained school)

Both the school and Durham County Council are committed to delivering excellent services and our employees are key to this commitment. The school expects the highest standards of conduct from its employees and this document sets out the minimum standards of conduct and responsibilities to help guide us all in our behaviour and actions at work.

This Code has been developed to ensure that everyone is clear regarding their individual responsibilities and it is vital that you are familiar with and understand this and the supporting school policies and guidance.

Any policies mentioned within this Code are published on the [Schools Portal](#) and/or are available within the school from the headteacher or school office.

Breaches of any element of this Code (inside or outside of work) are a serious matter and could result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

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Where the headteacher is the employee concerned, any reference to the headteacher in this policy should be replaced with the chair of governors.

## 1 Principles

All employees of the school have a responsibility to ensure they comply with this Code along with any other approved policies or procedures in use within the school. Employees are expected to give the highest possible standard of service to the public and, where it is part of their duties, to provide appropriate advice to governors, councillors and fellow employees with impartiality.

Where applicable this Code will also apply to agency workers, contractors, consultants or third parties providing work or services for, or on behalf of, the school e.g. private nurseries, after school clubs, out of hours organisations.

This Code meets the recommendations of the Nolan Committee's Standards in Public Life, establishing the Seven Principles of Public Life, which are:

- **Selflessness** - You must act solely in terms of the public interest and not in order to gain financial or other material benefits for yourself, family, or friends.
- **Integrity** - You should not place yourself under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence you in the performance of your official duties.
- **Objectivity** - You must make choices on merit when making decisions on appointments, contracts, or recommending rewards and benefits for individuals.
- **Accountability** - You are accountable for your decisions and actions to the public and you must submit yourself to whatever scrutiny is appropriate.
- **Openness** - You should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that you take. You should give reasons for your decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.
- **Honesty** - You have a duty to declare any private interests relating to your work and you need to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.
- **Leadership** - You should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

When working on behalf of the school you must:

- act in the interests of the school when carrying out your duties, and in accordance with the principles of public life
- comply with the school service requirements, policies and standards, procedures, legislation and other professional standards which apply to your role
- declare to your headteacher any potential or actual conflicts of interest or relationships that may impact on your work, or that of the school
- report any concerns or breaches of this Code, or any other school policies, to your headteacher
- ask your headteacher if you are unsure what is required of you

In addition to this policy, teachers must also adhere to:

- the terms and conditions outlined in the School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD)
- the Teachers Standards which are set out by the Department for Education (DfE). These cover both teaching standards and personal and professional conduct. Teacher's performance will be regularly reviewed against these professional standards

## 2 Responsibilities

It is your responsibility to familiarise yourself and comply with this Code and all relevant school policies and procedures. If you are in any doubt about your responsibilities, you must seek clarification from your headteacher.

### 2.1 Leadership responsibilities

Those with leadership or management roles have additional responsibilities. You should:

- set a positive personal model of behaviour
- ensure that standards in the Code are established and communicated
- provide clarification, where required, to improve employee understanding
- take appropriate action at the earliest opportunity to manage non-compliance with the standards set out in this Code
- promote a safe and healthy working environment
- maintain a culture that is free from bullying, discrimination and harassment where everyone is treated with respect and dignity and individual contributions are welcomed and acknowledged
- ensure staff are aware of the policy and have access to it
- ensure any complaints with regard to sexual harassment are taken seriously and acted on promptly

## **2.2 Individual responsibilities**

As an employee and representative of the school, you are expected to conduct yourself to the highest standards and act with honesty, integrity and professionalism.

You must:

- carry out the full requirements of your role, as detailed in your contract of employment (statement of particulars), job description and school policies and procedures
- complete mandatory training as required
- raise issues – if you have any concerns don't be afraid to speak up
- act in an appropriate manner in any situation where you can be readily identified as a school employee, whether at work or otherwise
- wear and maintain any uniform, clothing and personal protective equipment provided to you by school
- report any concerns or suspicions you have to your headteacher
- declare any relevant interest, outside employment or receipt of gifts or hospitality as outlined in this Code
- maintain professional relationships with governors, employees, contractors or partners or potential contractors
- be aware that the school has a zero tolerance approach to sexual harassment.

You must not:

- engage in any conduct or behaviour that is harmful to the reputation of the school or council, its services or interests, or conduct which brings the school or council into disrepute, even when outside of work
- be under the influence of alcohol or unprescribed drugs at work
- misuse your position or seek to use information obtained in the course of your work, for personal interests or the interests of others
- criticise the school or the council either through media, social media, verbal or written communication

## **3 Confidentiality and keeping information secure**

Maintaining confidentiality of sensitive information is essential and all employees are under an obligation to comply with Data Protection legislation. The General Data Protection Regulation is the most significant update of data protection laws in the last two decades and deals with appropriate protection of personal and special category data/information.

You must ensure that you save, store, share and retain information in line with school policies and guidelines and treat all information you receive in the course of your employment as confidential to the school. You are only permitted to disclose confidential information where it is required by law or where the school has agreed to do so. If you are unsure, you should consult your headteacher before any disclosure is made.

You must:

- be familiar with and adhere to school policies relating to the use of IT
- comply with the school's IT security procedures
- comply with the school's procedures relating to the secure handling and transit of paper records and obtain headteacher/Data Controller approval as appropriate prior to taking any paper records off site which contain personal or confidential information, or follow relevant agreed school procedures
- report any suspected data losses or security breaches immediately to your headteacher
- label and store information documents to allow access to authorised users and restrict unauthorised users
- refer any media or press enquiries to the headteacher immediately, and follow their instructions
- check with your headteacher if you are in doubt about whether you can provide information to a third party

You must not:

- disclose information on pupils without their parent's consent or, where the child is of reasonable understanding, the child, unless for specified exceptions relating to safeguarding or where legally obliged
- disclose information relating to staff and/or parents, unless for specified exceptions relating to safeguarding or where legally obliged
- disclose your computer password/login details to anyone
- use information or facilities provided, for unauthorised personal use, improper or commercial gain, or for fraudulent or malicious activities
- compromise the security of school information, for example by installing unauthorised software, inappropriately securing information or interfering with standard security settings
- disclose any confidential information relating to the school, colleagues, pupils, parents or anyone else who has contact with the school, either whilst at work or outside of work, unless you have express permission to do so
- release any information relating to an employee's or pupil's private affairs unless their consent has first been obtained, unless there is a statutory duty on the school to provide this information

## **4 Internet and social media**

The school understands that employees may use social media sites in their personal time, both in and outside of work. Whilst these sites can be a way of keeping in touch with friends and colleagues, you should be aware that information posted on these sites is often public and may be viewed by colleagues, residents and the media/press.

As an employee, you have responsibility not to breach any confidentiality or post anything that could damage the school's reputation. Further guidance is available in the school's [Personal Use of Social Media Policy](#) on the Schools Portal.

Internet access for personal use is at the school's discretion and must not affect your performance or productivity at work. The school may monitor the use of the internet for legitimate business reasons, including compliance with this Code. By using the internet employees are deemed to have consented to the monitoring, recording and auditing of internet use.

You must:

- be familiar with and adhere to the school policies relating to the use of the internet and social media
- adhere to the school's IT policies and procedures when using social networking sites for personal use
- make it clear when posting information or comments on social networking sites that any personal views expressed do not represent those of the school or Durham County Council
- inform your headteacher immediately if you believe you have acted inappropriately when using social media, even if the mistake has since been resolved
- report to your headteacher any instances where you believe another employee has posted inappropriate or offensive comments on social networking sites
- only communicate electronically with pupils, parents/carers and other professionals via work approved communication channels e.g. via a school provided email address or telephone number

You must not:

- post information on social networking sites which is confidential to the school, its pupils or parents
- post entries on social networking sites about the school, colleagues, pupils or parents or any other person linked to the school which are derogatory, defamatory, discriminatory or offensive in any way or which could bring the school into disrepute
- communicate with pupils or ex-pupils under the age of 18 using social media without the express permission of the headteacher

## **5 Working with children, parents, colleagues and governors**

You must:

- be polite, courteous and helpful when dealing with all members of the local community, children, parents, governors, colleagues and other professionals involved in pupil wellbeing
- treat all groups and individuals with respect, value their opinions and beliefs and behave in an appropriate manner
- treat others in a fair and equitable manner in accordance with the school's procedures and the wider requirements of the law
- develop productive and supportive relationships with all school colleagues and participate in whole school development and improvement activities
- keep all children, parents/carers and employees' money, personal records, information and correspondence secure in accordance with the school policies and procedures, and Data Protection legislation
- give appropriate and impartial advice to governors when requested and ensure working relationships are kept on a professional basis
- speak to your headteacher if you are unsure what information you are able to provide to governors or anyone else requesting information
- declare all close personal relationships with governors to your headteacher

You must not:

- discriminate unfairly in the provision of facilities, services, employment practices or any other area of school duties
- form inappropriate close personal relationships with governors, children or their relatives/carers
- give any information, including information relating to pupils, parents/carers or colleagues, to anyone except those authorised to receive it

## **6 Appropriate relationships with pupils and parents**

You must be mindful of the need to maintain professional boundaries and must always consider whether your actions are warranted, proportionate, safe and applied equitably.

You must:

- act in an open and transparent way with pupils and parents that will not lead any reasonable person to question your actions or intent
- treat pupils with respect and dignity
- avoid unnecessary physical contact with children. Where it is essential e.g. for safety reasons, obtain the pupil's permission wherever possible and only use when no other form of control is available and use only the minimum force needed to achieve the required outcome (refer to relevant policies and guidance in relation to positive handling)
- report any incidents where physical contact was necessary to remove a child from a dangerous situation/object and/or to prevent harm to themselves or others to the headteacher and record the incident in accordance with school procedures
- interact with parents in a polite and respectful manner and recognise parent's entitlement to express concerns they may have about their child's learning, safety or wellbeing
- follow school procedures and health and safety requirements when organising and/or accompanying pupils on school trips and activities taking place outside of school premises

You must not:

- give pupils your home address, mobile or home phone number, or non-school related email address unless you have authorisation from your headteacher
- make arrangements to meet pupils, either individually or in groups, outside school, other than school trips authorised by the headteacher
- give a pupil a lift in your own vehicle, other than on school business with the permission of the headteacher
- discuss school matters with parents outside of school and should refer them to normal school communication channels
- use any form of degrading treatment to punish or undermine pupils, or use sarcasm, demeaning or insensitive comments towards pupils

## **7 Safeguarding of pupils and children**

Schools have a statutory and moral duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils. You must be aware of your individual safeguarding responsibilities, including to provide a safe environment in which children can learn, to be aware of signs of abuse and neglect, to identify children who are suffering or are likely to suffer significant harm and to take appropriate action in such cases to prevent concerns from escalating.

You must:

- follow and adhere to the school's child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures
- if a child reports any safeguarding issues, report this immediately to the designated safeguarding lead and headteacher
- report any safeguarding concerns about employees, supply staff, volunteers or contractors immediately to the designated safeguarding lead and headteacher
- report any concerns about employees, supply staff, volunteers or contractors that do not meet the safeguarding threshold in line with the Low Level Concerns Policy
- inform the headteacher immediately if you meet the criteria for disqualification under the Disqualification Under the Childcare Act 2006 statutory guidance

You must not:

- promise confidentiality to a child who reports safeguarding issues to you
- engage in inappropriate relationships or contact with pupils or children outside of school

## **8 Criminal convictions/loss of licence of qualification**

You must inform your headteacher immediately if:

- you receive any criminal conviction, caution or are held on bail, or placed under bond during your employment with the school, either within or outside of your normal working hours
- you receive any driving convictions that result in the loss of your driving licence
- you are subject to medical restrictions or changes to category entitlements in your driving licence that may impact on your ability to carry out the duties of your contracted role
- you have engaged in behaviour that has resulted in loss of licence, affiliation, accreditation or qualification that may impact on your ability to carry out the duties of your contracted role

As all school posts are subject to an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, as well as the above, you must also inform your headteacher immediately if you are subject to a criminal investigation. All information you provide in this regard will be dealt with in strict confidence.

## **9 Procurement, administering or managing school contracts**

All schools need to have contract procedure rules in place. The governing body can choose to set school specific rules which, in such cases, must be published on the school's website to ensure school's purchasing procedures are transparent. Schools not adopting their own rules should use Durham County Council's standard contract procedure rules as published in the Constitution of the Council.

You must:

- comply with the school's Contract Procedure Rules and any other relevant school procedures for orders and contracts
- exercise fairness and impartiality when dealing with all customers, suppliers, other contractors and sub-contractors
- declare any private or personal relationships with contractors, sub-contractors or suppliers by completing form SCCE1

You must not:

- discriminate unfairly against anyone involved in the tendering and contracting process
- disclose any confidential information relating to tenders or costs for internal or external tenders to any unauthorised person
- use your influence or show any special favour to current or former employees or their partners, close relatives or associates when awarding contracts to businesses relating to them or employing them in any capacity
- play any part in the selection of service providers if you have any direct or indirect interest in the outcome

## **10 Personal interests**

Section 117 of the Local Government Act 1972 requires you to make a formal declaration about contracts in which you have a financial interest, that is any direct or indirect interest of monetary value, whether or not the value is readily ascertainable. It is a criminal offence to fail to comply with this.

Other financial interests could include when money other than your salary is paid into your bank account by the school or the council, or where your address is linked to a business receiving payment from the school or the council.

Non-financial interests could include governorship of another local school or involvement with an organisation or pressure group which may seek to influence the school's policies.

You must:

- declare any financial or non-financial interests which could conflict or be seen to conflict with the school's or the council's interests to your headteacher by completing form SCCE2
- declare an interest and abstain from being involved with any professional decisions about matters in which you have a personal interest

## **11 Commitments outside of work**

Outside work means any paid or unpaid work, including voluntary work, undertaken in addition to your school employment. Any requests to carry out other employment will be considered and will not be unreasonably refused, however outside work must not, in our view, conflict with school interests or weaken public confidence in the school, or adversely impact upon your ability to carry out your role with the school.

Approvals will be reviewed should any concerns arise as to the impact the outside commitment has on your ability to carry out your role within the school.

Before doing any outside work you must complete form SCCE3 for authorisation and if there are any subsequent changes relating to your outside work, you may need to complete a further SCCE3 form.

You must not:

- put yourself in a position where your duty and private interests' conflict or could appear to conflict
- seek to gain business in the course of carrying out your school duties

- carry out any outside work or a private interest during working hours, including making/sending or receiving telephone calls, emails, correspondence/goods
- use any school facilities or equipment or confidential information in relation to commitments outside of work

## **12 Gifts and hospitality**

Gifts, hospitality or benefits in kind offered to you must be treated with caution in order to avoid any suggestion of improper motives or conduct.

You must:

- declare to your headteacher, by completing form SCCE4 if you are offered, or wish to offer, any gifts, hospitality or advantage. Your headteacher must give approval before you accept or give such items. This does not include token gifts such as gifts from children at the end of term/Christmas of a nominal value (as agreed by the school)
- use tact and courtesy if you need to refuse a gift or hospitality
- report to your headteacher any gifts which are delivered to your place of work where you may have a problem returning it
- report to your headteacher any approaches made to you which could be viewed as being aimed at obtaining some form of preferential treatment

Where hospitality is offered to individual employees to sporting events or functions then permission to attend should be sought from the headteacher or Chair of the Governing Body where the request is being made by the headteacher. Permission should only be given when the event is seen as part of the life of the community or where it is in the interest of the school to be represented.

If you are unclear what is acceptable, ask your headteacher.

## **13 Handling school money or sponsorship/donations**

The school is a publicly funded organisation and as such, all employees who are authorised to be involved in financial activities and transactions on behalf of the school must be familiar with the school's Financial Procedure Manual.

You must not benefit from any contract or sponsorship that is given to or by the school or show any favour to a partner, spouse, relative, friend or associate. Sponsorship is defined as 'an agreement between the school and the sponsor, where the school receives either money or a benefit in kind for an event, campaign or initiative from an organisation or individual which in turn gains publicity or other benefits.' You must ensure that any sponsorship accepted is related to school business and is approved by your headteacher.

You must:

- use authorised school funds in a responsible, accountable and lawful way
- comply with the school's financial procedures and take legal and financial advice where appropriate
- seek value for money
- comply with relevant policies and procedures when handling money
- disclose any benefit you yourself, partners, relations or close friends relating to any sponsorship the school proposes to make

- if you suspect financial irregularity, bribery, corruption, theft or fraud, contact your headteacher in the first instance. If for any reason this is not appropriate you should contact the Council's Internal Audit team (telephone no: 03000 269645)
- report any possible legal or procurement issues which may be associated with securing sponsorship to your headteacher who may take relevant legal advice

## 14 Intellectual property

Some aspects of the work you carry out, or produce, on behalf of the school may be intellectual property. All creative designs, writings, reports, drawings and inventions produced by you in the course of your duties are the property of the school, unless otherwise agreed in advance with the headteacher.

You must not:

- disclose, publish or otherwise use the work you produce for the school for personal gain or benefit unless you have the express written permission of your headteacher

## 15 Using school equipment, materials and property

School assets and facilities, including computers, laptops, mobile phones, photocopiers, vehicles and offices, must only be used for official school business and not for personal use.

You must comply with health and safety regulations and use personal protective equipment as required. All school resources must be used with care to avoid wastage, loss or damage and, where applicable, returned on leaving employment.

## 16 Declaration forms

Declaration forms (SCCE1 – SCCE4) are to be completed when required as detailed in this Code. A copy of the completed declaration form will also be placed on an employee's personal file within the school. All forms will be acknowledged and recorded whether approved or declined.

The following declaration forms can be downloaded from the Schools Portal. These forms must be completed in full and handed to your headteacher.

Form	Type of declaration
SCCE 1	Declaration of relationship with external contractor or supplier
SCCE 2	Declaration of personal interests
SCCE 3	Request for approval to undertake outside work
SCCE 4	Declaration of offers of hospitality/gifts



# HR Advice and Support

For advice regarding the application of this policy please contact:

HR Advice and Support

[hradvice@durham.gov.uk](mailto:hradvice@durham.gov.uk)

Pay, Reward and Employment Services can be contacted by emailing:

Schools

[PESSchools@durham.gov.uk](mailto:PESSchools@durham.gov.uk)

Further support can be accessed by contacting:

Occupational Health

[occhealthadmin@durham.gov.uk](mailto:occhealthadmin@durham.gov.uk)

Health and Safety

[hsteam@durham.gov.uk](mailto:hsteam@durham.gov.uk)

Employee Assistance Programme

[wisdom.healthassured.org/login](https://wisdom.healthassured.org/login)

Employer Code MHA042951

Tel 0800 0280199

School policies and guidance documents will be reviewed periodically as required, and in accordance with any changes to legislation and best practice.

The school complies with all relevant statutory obligations. The school privacy notice provides more specific information on data collected and how it is handled, a copy of which can be accessed from the school. For more information please contact the school directly.

If you have any concerns about how your data is handled, please contact either the school Data Protection Officer (details available from the school office), or the Information Commissioner's Office

Author	Version	Last review
NM	V 2.10	September 2025