

Stowe School

Academic & Pastoral Staff Code of Conduct Policy



All staff have a role to play in safeguarding our pupils. Staff should follow this Code of Conduct to militate against the potential of placing pupils at risk of harm, and to protect themselves from a potential allegation of causing harm to a pupil.

Every member of staff should read and sign this policy on initial employment and again on any significant changes that might be made to the policy. The policy should be read in conjunction with the Staff Handbook which contains all related and relevant policies.

For teaching staff, this policy has been written with regard for the Teachers' Standards (July 2011): 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, by:

- Treating pupils with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observing **proper boundaries** appropriate to a teacher's professional position;
- having regard for the need to safeguard pupils' well-being, in accordance with statutory provisions;
- ensuring that personal beliefs are not expressed in ways which exploit pupils' vulnerability or might lead them to break the law;
- having an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of Stowe School.

1. Safeguarding and Child Protection

Staff should do all that they can to help create and maintain a culture of vigilance with regard to safeguarding pupils. All staff have a duty to safeguard our pupils' welfare and must therefore familiarise themselves and comply at all times with our Safeguarding and Child Protection policy and procedures.

1.1 Communication with Pupils

Communication between pupils and staff, by whatever method, must always be professional in nature and motivation and within clear and explicit professional boundaries. Whilst employed by Stowe School, staff are required not to 'befriend' or communicate with pupils on social network sites or through personal email accounts, home or personal mobile telephone numbers, unless the need to do so is agreed in writing with the Second Master. This includes letters, notes and the wider use of digital technology such as text messaging, apps, digital cameras, videos, web-cams, websites, online gaming and blogs.

If a member of staff receives inappropriate correspondence or communication from a pupil, or any communication to a personal rather than School address, they must report it immediately to the Second Master or DSL.

Staff should be circumspect in all communications with pupils so as to avoid any possible misinterpretation of their motives or any behaviour which could be construed as grooming. Staff should ensure that all communications are transparent and open to scrutiny. School mobile phones are always available in North

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Hall for staff taking trips who wish to give out a contact number to pupils. Any communication between a member of staff and a pupil outside this policy may lead to disciplinary and/or criminal proceedings.

Anyone offering **confidentiality** to a child would be promising to keep the content of his or her conversation completely secret and discuss it with no one. Promises of confidentiality by staff must not be made whilst in contact with children. **All child disclosures of a safeguarding and child protection concern must be referred to the DSL immediately.**

1.2 Communication with Ex-Pupils

Whilst employed by Stowe school, staff are required not to 'befriend' former pupils on social network sites OR communicate with alumni through personal email accounts **until the ex-pupils have reached the age of 21**. This restriction only applies to personal social media and email accounts and is not intended to prevent alumni and staff communicating via their Stowe School email account or the Stowe alumni office.

1.3 Conduct with Children

Infatuations on adults are quite common and are a normal part of adolescent development. Clearly, they need to be handled very sensitively by staff to avoid any possible allegations of exploitation or grooming. Such situations require the highest possible level of professionalism on the part of staff. Staff hold a uniquely influential role in pupils' lives, pupils must therefore be able to view staff as role models in the way they behave. If any member of staff suspects a pupil might have developed an attachment to them or towards any other member of staff, they should do the following:

- ☐ Bring the situation to the attention of **the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** and **Second Master** at the earliest opportunity.
- ☐ Staff should avoid being alone with pupils who may have developed a crush on them.
- ☐ If a pupil sends any form of personal communication to a member of staff, this should be passed on to the DSL and Second Master at the earliest opportunity and a record should be kept.
- ☐ Any discussion about the crush with the pupil involved will only take place after discussion with the DSL, Second Master and the relevant Head of Department.

It is the responsibility of staff to guard against any perception of misconduct that could be interpreted as 'grooming'. 'Grooming' is when someone builds an emotional connection with a child to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse, exploitation or radicalisation. It is imperative therefore that staff are not seen to encourage or engage in behaviour that could be deemed flirtatious with pupils or be construed as favouritism. Staff must be circumspect at all times and consider how their behaviour and remarks may be interpreted by a child.

Any sexual relationship between a staff member and a pupil is unacceptable. Under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 it is a **criminal offence** for an adult employed by Stowe School to have a sexual relationship (kissing, touching, sexual intercourse) with a **child under 18** where that person is **in a position of trust in respect of that child**, even if the relationship is consensual.

It is forbidden therefore for staff to:

- ☐ Engage with and/or share sexually suggestive or provocative communications (including online) with a child/pupil
- ☐ Make sexual remarks to or about a child/pupil or another member of staff
- ☐ Discuss their own sexual relationships in the presence of children



If an adult employed by Stowe School engages in sexual relations with a current **pupil aged 18 or under** (or with an ex pupil within three years of leaving the School) the member of staff will be subject to disciplinary procedures for professional misconduct.

1.4 One to One situations

Members of staff are likely to find themselves in one to one situations with a pupil. There are instances where an academic clinic or during pastoral mentoring a one to one meeting is required. We all have a responsibility to ensure our behaviour is beyond reproach, and that is not likely to lay us open to allegations of misconduct and abuse. It is best practice to: avoid one to one meetings with pupils in remote or secluded areas of the school; consider the time of the meeting, avoiding late working; wherever possible, ensure that others are within earshot; use a room with windows or leave the door open (unless there are good reasons why the conversation has to be had in confidence). Staff must report to the DSL or Headmaster any one to one situations in which a pupil or staff member may have become uncomfortable or ill at ease.

Pre-arranged meetings with pupils away from the school premises are not permitted unless approval has been obtained from the Headmaster.

2. Pupils

All staff should put the safety, development and progress of all pupils first by:

- being aware that they are in a position of trust and that this position must never be used to bully, humiliate, intimidate, coerce or threaten pupils
- being familiar with Stowe's Safeguarding policy and procedure
- taking all reasonable steps to ensure the safety and well-being of pupils under their supervision
- using their professional judgement and experience for the best interest of pupils under their supervision
- taking responsibility for their own behaviour and being self-aware of the potential impacts of their behaviour upon pupils
- 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
- raising concerns about the behaviour of any other staff which might place pupils at risk

2.1 Physical Contact with a Pupil

Staff should read this section in conjunction with the Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy and the Restraint Policy.

Occasions may arise when it is entirely appropriate and proper for staff to have physical contact with pupils (such as providing first aid to an injured pupil or comforting a distressed pupil), but they should only do so in ways that are appropriate to their professional role. A member of staff can never take the place of a parent in providing physical comfort and all staff should be cautious of any demonstrations of affection. Staff should, therefore, exercise their professional judgement at all times and, if in doubt, should err on the side of caution and not have physical contact with a pupil.

Staff who teach subjects such as Sports Science, Music, Drama and outdoor activities may need to initiate physical contact with pupils for example; to demonstrate technique, adjust posture, prevent injury or

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support a pupil so that they can perform an action safely. Such activities should be carried out in accordance to the guidelines that their relevant Head of Department deems best practice and in line with guidance and protocols provided by sports governing bodies or professional organisations.

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 nature of the incident and the circumstances in which it arose should be recorded as soon as possible and passed on to the DSL and Second Master.

2.2 Transporting Pupils

Staff should read this section in conjunction with the Staff Handbook.

Unless a staff member is a Designated Medical Driver and/or has been required to take a pupil to the medical centre, an appointment or to hospital, staff should not give a lift in a car to a pupil alone. Staff should also not provide transport for pupils to and from the Bourbon in private vehicles unless there is a medical emergency and a pupil needs to be transported to the Medical Centre.

2.3 Educational trips and off-site activities

Staff should read this section in conjunction with the Off-Site Activity Policy and guidance.

The guidance within this policy applies to all School activities that take place off-site. Staff should take particular care when supervising pupils on visits and tours, where the setting may be less formal than in School. Staff are still in a position of trust and need to ensure that their conduct remains within clearly defined professional boundaries.

3. Collegiality

Colleagues should always be courteous to one another and should show special consideration to new colleagues, for whom the School's traditions, manners and routines can be confusing. All staff should feel included rather than excluded. Colleagues who are seriously concerned for a staff member's welfare should encourage their colleague to approach the Second Master and/or avail themselves of the Schools' counselling team. An atmosphere of mutual support and respect should prevail and staff must therefore refrain from discussing colleagues with pupils save in the briefest, most complimentary way.

All staff should work as part of a unified and purposeful common room by:

- doing all that they can to co-operate diligently; developing productive and supportive relationships with colleagues;
- exercising any line management responsibilities in a respectful, inclusive and fair manner;
- when requests for information or documentation are received, we should respond to them punctually;
- appreciating what other colleagues are doing; the care we offer our pupils to flourish can only be met with the active assistance of all staff;
- communicating appropriately and professionally with all pupils, parents and guardians;
- addressing issues of discrimination and bullying whenever they might arise;
- complying with all School policies and procedures.



3.1 Language

All staff should avoid using inappropriate language at all times. Examples of inappropriate language might include:

- Language that is racist, homophobic or sexist
- Language which is offensive on religious grounds or to those with disability
- Staff should also not promote extremist views but should instead endeavour to reflect the fundamental British values of individual freedom, tolerance and the rule of law
- Aggressive or threatening language
- Swearing or blaspheming within earshot of pupils
- Using derogatory language when speaking to pupils
- Making unprofessional personal comments about other members of staff, volunteers, parents, visitors and/or pupils

4. Confidentiality

It is imperative that information gained whilst an employee of Stowe School is only ever to be disclosed on a **'need to know'** basis. The DSL will determine the extent of the information to be shared and identify staff who may 'need to know' sensitive welfare and child protection information. **Information should not be shared without prior consultation with the DSL.** The unnecessary discussion of any information about pupils or staff is **prima facie gossip**; this is true even if the identities of the pupils or staff at issue are not disclosed. Stowe School staff will thus be guarded in what they say about individuals and events at Stowe.

The relationship between teachers and parents should be formal. All parents must be treated equally and with respect irrespective of personal relationships with individual members of staff. Under no circumstances should staff breach confidentiality; in addition to their professional responsibilities, staff must bear in mind the provisions of the Data Protection Act.

5. Security

Staff should read this section in conjunction with the E-safety and Acceptable Usage Policies.

All staff should wear/carry their identity card with them whilst in School and should produce it upon request. Staff should take particular care with confidential pupil information and data and should also ensure that they are using effective passwords and protocols to protect access to their computers and their School email accounts. Password encrypted memory sticks are available to all staff from the ICT support team.

Staff should not mention or participate in discussions about Stowe School on social media.

6. Dress

Staff should read this section in conjunction with the Staff Handbook.

When staff are, or could be in contact with pupils, staff are expected to dress appropriately for their role and in a professional manner. Teaching staff are expected to wear smart business attire unless stated otherwise e.g. non-uniform days. It is the responsibility of line managers to have a quiet word with any colleague whom they feel is not dressed appropriately for the work environment.



Staff should also be aware of their professional role in its wider sense so should consider carefully what they wear to social events where pupils and/or parents are present (e.g. Leavers' Ball and Speech Day).

7. Alcohol Consumption by Staff

Staff should read this section in conjunction with the Alcohol and Drugs at Work Policy.

As a boarding school, Stowe is home to a large number of staff as well as pupils, so the guidance for staff on their consumption of alcohol is based on common sense and reflects the guiding principles outlined at the start of this code of conduct.

Staff conduct and performance must not be adversely affected by alcohol when undertaking their duties, as they could be called upon at short notice.

It is not appropriate for staff who are resident in boarding houses to hold private parties or functions which might disturb pupils or other resident staff. In any event, it is expected that any resident staff wishing to hold such a party during term time will seek permission from their Housemaster or from the Deputy Head (Pastoral), as appropriate. It would be better for all concerned if such parties were reserved for Exeats, half-terms and holidays when pupils cannot be disturbed.

8. Smoking by Staff

Staff should read this section in conjunction with the Smoking Policy in the Staff Handbook.

In order to promote a healthy and pleasant working environment and because of the fire risk, smoking is not permitted anywhere on the School site except in the designated smoking area, which is currently near the swimming pool on the North Front.

Resident staff should read the relevant section of the Staff Handbook for further information about smoking in private residences.

9. Staff in Boarding Accommodation

Staff should read this section in conjunction with the Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy, the Staff Handbook and their Service Occupancy Agreements.

All staff who reside in accommodation that is provided by the School for the proper/better performance of their duties, must be aware of the following:

- If accommodation is within a residential facility occupied by pupils, staff are required to have the specific permission of the Housemaster/Housemistress or the Deputy Head (Pastoral) in advance for all occupiers, visitors and overnight visitors (of whatever duration) to the Accommodation during term time.
- Visitors who are intending to stay with staff in the Accommodation for 7 consecutive days or longer require the prior written permission of the Deputy Head (Pastoral) and the Operations Director, such consent not to be unreasonably withheld. DBS checks are likely to be obtained for any visitors staying for more than 7 days during term-time.
- Staff accept that you are responsible for the behaviour and conduct of visitors or occupiers of the Accommodation and that the School has the right to require any person to leave the

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Accommodation at any time. Staff are responsible for ensuring as far as is reasonably possible that any occupiers and visitors do not have unsupervised contact with pupils.

- Staff shall not allow or permit any occupier of, or visitor to, the Accommodation to cause a nuisance disturbance or annoyance to any other person and, if in the reasonable opinion of the Deputy Head (Pastoral) and the Operations Director such occurs, on written notice you shall forthwith deliver up the Accommodation.
- Pupils should not be invited into the personal living space of any member of staff unless this has previously been agreed with the relevant Housemaster in conjunction with the relevant section of the staff handbook.
- Pupils should never be asked to assist with chores or tasks in the personal living space of any member of staff.

10. Reporting an allegation about another member of staff

Staff should read this section in conjunction with the Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy and Whistleblowing Policy.

Any concerns of inappropriate staff conduct with a child should be referred to the **Headmaster and/or DSL immediately**. If an allegation is about the Headmaster, the Chair of Governors should be contacted.

In addition, many Stowe School parents develop friendships with Stowe staff and in the community. As a staff member of Stowe School your standing as a member of the wider community is open to scrutiny by members of the School, other parents and the general public who you may come into contact with. Colleagues should evaluate each social situation sensibly and with caution, never putting themselves in a position where their actions could be misconstrued by others.

Staff who are also parents of Stoucs can be placed in a difficult situation if they observe practices that other parents and children tolerate, but which are not in accordance with this policy or professional ethics. **All staff must place their professional duties before all other considerations and they must not under any circumstances condone or ignore unprofessional or unethical behaviour of staff at Stowe School.**

11. All staff have a duty to inform the Second Master should they receive a caution or charge from the police (national or international) or Court Order (in relation to conduct with children) during their time of employment at the School. It is the responsibility of all employees to inform Human Resources of changes in their circumstances that may affect their suitability to work with children.