

STAFF CODE OF CONDUCT



Approved by: Penny Harris (Director)
Jane Cox (Director)

Date: 3rd February 2025

Last reviewed on: 1st September 2024

Next review due by: 3rd February 2026

All policies are generated and reviewed with an awareness of equality and diversity in relation to pupils, staff and visitors. All policies are generated and reviewed placing safeguarding and wellbeing at the heart of all that we do.

This policy should be read alongside the On Track Staff Handbook.

There are three issues that are central to the staff code of conduct:

- The very challenging nature of many of the pupils attending On Track makes them appear to be very powerful in some respects. However, staff have much more power relating to decisions made around the pupil within the school day and sometimes beyond. This imbalance of power should be acknowledged and staff must be aware of the many ways in which their actions could influence pupils.
- Staff are not robots and are sometimes experiencing their own difficulties in life. Although these will affect how staff may be feeling, pupils should be shielded from this.
- It is important for staff to constantly review their behaviour in relation to pupils taking into consideration:
 - Am I acting professionally?
 - Am I acting in the interests of the pupil?
 - Am I acting in a way that would be seen as reasonable by anybody observing?
 - Am I acting as a role model to pupils

1. Introduction

- On Track is committed to creating a professional and supportive environment in which staff and pupils can achieve a sense of well-being. To achieve this aim, positive relationships must be fostered between pupils and staff at the same time as setting clear professional boundaries.
- This policy is designed to give clear guidance on the standards of behaviour all staff are expected to observe, both within and outside of work, including online. On Track staff are role models and are in a unique position of influence and must behave in a way that sets a good example to all the pupils within the school and safeguards their interests.
- Staff must maintain high standards of honesty and integrity in their work.
- Staff should be aware that breaches of the law and failure to comply with this policy could result in criminal or disciplinary action being taken against them.

Aims of our Staff Conduct with Pupils Policy

- For staff and pupils to be aware of what professional boundaries are in place.
- For staff to understand what is expected of their own behaviour in order for them to demonstrate high standards of conduct, which will encourage pupils to do the same.
- For staff to avoid putting themselves at risk of allegations of abusive or unprofessional conduct.

2. Safeguarding Pupils

- On Track is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.
- All members of staff must act, and be seen to act, in the child's best interests.
- All members of staff must be familiar with the Safeguarding and Child Protection and Whistleblowing Policies and Keeping Children Safe in Education, Part 1
- All members of staff must report any concern about a child to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy.
- All members of staff must raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice in regard to children.
- All staff must maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here' where safeguarding is concerned.

3. Low Level Concerns, Allegations of Harm and Whistleblowing

- A low-level concern is a behaviour towards a child by a member of staff that does not meet the harm threshold, is inconsistent with this staff code of conduct, and may be as simple as causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt'.
- Low-level concerns can include inappropriate conduct inside and outside of work.
- All staff should share any low-level concerns they have using the reporting procedures set out in our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. We also encourage staff to self-refer if they find themselves in a situation that could be misinterpreted. If staff are not sure whether behaviour would be deemed a low-level concern, we encourage staff to report it.
- All reports will be handled in a responsive, sensitive and proportionate way.
- Unprofessional behaviour will be addressed, and the staff member supported to correct it, at an early stage.
- This creates and embeds a culture of openness, trust and transparency in which our values and expected behaviour are constantly lived, monitored and reinforced by all staff, while minimising the risk of abuse.
- Reporting and responding to low-level concerns is covered in more detail in our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.
- Our procedures for dealing with allegations will be applied with common sense and judgement.
- Our Whistleblowing Policy should be followed for any concerns related to wrongdoing that it is "in the public interest" to report.
- Allegations that may meet the harm threshold in part 4 of Keeping Children Safe in Education will be dealt with under our Dealing with Allegations Against Staff Policy.

4. Confidentiality

- Where staff have access to confidential information about pupils or their parents/carers, staff must not reveal such information except to those colleagues who have a professional role in relation to the pupil and the information should not be discussed outside of school.
- All staff are likely, at some point, to witness actions which need to be confidential. For example, where a pupil is bullied by another pupil, this needs to be reported and dealt with in accordance with the appropriate procedures. It must not be discussed outside the school.
- All staff have an obligation to share with the Designated Safeguarding Lead any information that gives rise to concern.
- Staff must never promise a pupil that they will not act on information that they are told them; the pupils must not be promised confidentiality.

5. Communication

- All staff should log into their On Track email account daily, should only use this for school purposes and should be mindful of only sending emails to specific people at a recognised email address.
- When a staff member communicates individually with parents and/or pupils (by phone, text, in person, by email or letter), this communication must be recorded on an MIS contact form, for inclusion in the pupil file.

6. Favouritism

- Care must be taken to avoid favouritism, or the appearance of favouritism shown towards pupils- Staff may find it easier to be with some pupils than with others, but this should never be reflected in the quality of support or amount of attention offered.
- Support should be given according to the needs of the pupil as outlined in the pupil's plans.
- Staff should exercise care when selecting pupils for specific activities or privileges to avoid perceptions of favouritism or unfairness. Methods and criteria for selection should always be transparent and subject to scrutiny.

7. Approach

- All interactions with pupils or colleagues should take place within a framework of respect.
- Any behaviour which could be seen as verbally or physically aggressive or abusive would be a serious breach of professionalism and could lead to disciplinary or criminal action.
- Tact, empathy and a good knowledge of the needs of the pupil should be evident in all interactions.
- Interactions should be non-confrontational and supportive at all times.
- Staff should always be prepared to admit errors or lack of knowledge.
- Staff should not disclose their own personal, sexual, family or employment concerns, or other private matters to pupils.
- Staff should always be careful not to prejudge, label or stereotype pupils or colleagues.
- Staff should be familiar with, and act within, the plans for each pupil.

8. Gossip/Discussing Other People

- Gossip relating to the private matters of pupils or colleagues should not be part of the culture of the school and must be actively discouraged.
- Staff should never share the personal details of colleagues with pupils.
- Staff should never discuss other staff members with pupils, other than in terms of their educational/support needs.
- Staff should never discuss one pupil with another in a 'gossipy' sense.

9. Providing Advice

- When pupils ask for advice, this should be given in as non-directive way as possible, providing a range of options to allow the pupil to make an informed choice.
- If a pupil is being supported through a process of decision making, this should be documented and the staff member should discuss the matter with a member of the senior leadership team.
- Staff should be mindful of areas where they are not qualified to give advice, or where they feel it is not appropriate, or where the area under discussion is not one where they feel comfortable. If this is the case, the pupil should be directed towards another sympathetic staff member or outside agencies with suitable expertise.
- Generally the request for advice should come from the pupil, but if a staff member is concerned about something about which advice has not been requested (e.g. a potentially exploitative relationship away from the school), the information should be provided to the Head teacher/DSL.
- Staff should not make promises to pupils or parent/carers which they are not authorised to deliver or are not agreed with the senior leadership team.

10. Use of Language

- At On Track all staff are expected to be good role models who actively promote and use language to demonstrate good communication and build self-esteem in pupils and colleagues. This relates to all forms of communication.
- Staff should take care never to discuss personal matters in front of pupils or in circumstances where they can be overheard.
- When working with pupils, staff should always be looking for actions, behaviour and work which can be verbally praised.
- Where actions, behaviour or work fall short of expectations, pupils should never be told that they, or their work, are 'no good', 'a waste of time' or other such judgements which criticise the person or their work. Correction needs to be managed sensitively.
- Staff must not swear in front of the pupils.

- Staff must not use derogatory terms, sexual banter, and innuendo or sarcasm with, or in front of, pupils.
- Staff must not ridicule pupils or colleagues.
- Instructions given positively are more likely to be followed.
- Use of racist, sexist or homophobic language from pupils should be addressed consistently in line with school practice.
- Only a small percentage of communication comes from what is actually said, so staff need to be mindful of body language, tone of voice, facial expression etc.

11. Dress and Appearance

- Staff should take care to ensure they are dressed appropriately for the tasks and the work they undertake.
- Staff are expected to dress professionally with awareness that they are working in a school.
- Staff should avoid dressing in a manner which could be considered as inappropriate or could be viewed as offensive, revealing or sexually provocative.
- Cleanliness is important and it is expected that clothing will be clean and personal hygiene will be of a good standard, with an awareness that some pupils find personal odours, even perfume, difficult.
- Staff are discouraged from wearing expensive jewellery.
- Keys must not be left visible or available to pupils.

12. Nicotine Products

- Smoking is prohibited at work and all On Track premises are non-smoking.
- Staff members must not give or purchase nicotine products for pupils.
- Staff must not smoke in front of pupils.
- Staff must not vape in front of pupils.

13. Social Networking, Messages and Emails

- Staff should not be in contact with pupils, past or present, on social networking sites or using their personal mobile phones, messenger apps or email accounts.
- Staff should not request, or respond to, any personal information from the pupil, other than that which might be appropriate as part of their professional role.
- Staff should ensure that all communications are transparent and open to scrutiny.
- Social media is a rapidly expanding area with new ways of communication arising all the time, but the principles set down in this policy should be assumed to apply to every means of communication and all personal devices.
- If at any point staff find they have been drawn into unwanted communication, they should immediately tell their senior leader.

14. Use of Mobile Phones, Tablets, Cameras etc

- Personal mobile phone use should not take place during the working day, unless it involves an emergency. This may necessitate asking for cover to ensure that pupils remain supervised.
- Personal phones should not be used to make calls or texts to pupils or any member of their family, nor should staff give their personal phone number to pupils or families.
- Staff should not lend any phone or device to pupils, without prior senior leadership approval.
- Photos of work completed by pupils is good working practice, but care must be taken before taking a photo of a pupil and the parent consent form maintained on the pupil's file must be checked. Even if the parent/carer has agreed that a photo can be taken, the pupil's permission should be sought.
- All photos should be taken, and maintained, on the school's equipment.

15. Personal Devices

- Personal devices should not be used during the working day, unless it involves an emergency.
- Personal devices should be stored away securely, be password protected and the passwords should not be shared with any other staff member or pupil.
- Staff should ensure that any personal device brought into school contains no material that will bring their professional role into disrepute or which could be considered offensive, illegal or discriminatory.
- No information relating to pupils can be maintained on a personal device.

16. Contact with Pupils Outside School Hours

- Contact with pupils out of school hours should be avoided and should never be initiated by staff members. Although staff establish friendly, professional relationships with pupils, this is not to be confused with a friendship, which serves the needs of both parties. Any out of hours contact due to unusual or unforeseen circumstances must be carefully documented and the senior leader informed. Care must be taken to ensure absolute transparency in these circumstances to protect both the pupil and the staff member.
- If a pupil or parent seeks to establish social contact, or if this occurs coincidentally, the staff member should exercise her/his professional judgement in making a response but should always discuss the situation with their senior leader.

17. Staff Conduct Outside School Hours

- Staff should be aware that their conduct both within and outside of the workplace (including online) may have implications for the safeguarding of children.
- Staff must not engage in conduct outside of work which could seriously damage the reputation of the school or the employee's own reputation or the reputation of other members of the school community.
- Staff behaviour that results in a loss of faith in the integrity of the staff member will result in disciplinary action.
- In particular, criminal offences that involve violence or possession or use of illegal drugs or sexual misconduct will be regarded as unacceptable.
- Staff must reveal all new criminal convictions during the course of their employment with the organisation.
- Staff must exercise caution when using information technology, including social media, and be aware of the risk to themselves and others.
- Staff using social networking sites must ensure that, if adding personal news items, they do not include reference to the Company by name or by photograph, or to any employee, client, customer or any other person or organisation connected with the Company, or any of their relations or friends.
- Any use of social networking sites that brings the Company into disrepute, or breaches the equality and diversity policy or harassment policy, will be regarded as gross misconduct and will result in summary dismissal.
- 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 regulation or affect an individual's work performance. (See Contract of Employment)

18. Giving and Receiving of Gifts

- The giving of gifts or rewards to pupils should be part of an agreed plan, recorded and discussed with a member of senior leadership and the parent or carer. Personal gifts or financial help to pupils are not permitted.
- There are occasions when pupils or parents wish to pass small tokens of appreciation to staff e.g. on special occasions or as a thank-you and this is acceptable. However, it is unacceptable to receive gifts on a regular basis or of any significant value. All gifts from pupils or parents should be reported to a senior leader.

19. Physical Contact

- There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate for staff to have some physical contact with the pupil with whom they are working. However, it is crucial that in all circumstances, staff should only touch pupils in ways which are appropriate to their professional role and responsibilities.
- Not all pupils feel comfortable about physical contact, and staff should not make the assumption that it is acceptable practice to use touch as a means of communication. Permission should be sought from a pupil before physical contact is made.
- When physical contact is made with a pupil this should be in response to their needs at the time, of limited duration and appropriate to their age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity and background. It is not possible to be specific about the appropriateness of each physical contact, since an action that is appropriate with one pupil in one set of circumstances may be inappropriate in another, or with a different pupil. Staff, nevertheless, should use their professional judgement at all times, observe and take note of the pupil's reaction or feelings and use a level of contact and/or form of communication which is acceptable to the pupil for the minimum time necessary.

20. Taking Pupils to a Staff Member's Home or Other Private Residences.

- There are rare occasions when it may be appropriate for a pupil to be taken to a staff member's home or another private residence e.g. if the staff member has a smallholding and is able to offer to pupils opportunities in line with their learning package, which cannot be found elsewhere. This should only happen when it has been fully discussed with the senior leadership team in advance and a Director has given specific permission for the activity to take place. This should never involve lone working i.e. at least one other staff member must be present. The Risk Assessment for such activities must include all aspects of the pupil's behaviour and should not take place if there has been any history of allegation against staff. There are no occasions when a pupil can be taken to a staff member's home without full planning and discussion.

21. Medication

- If a staff member is taking any medication, it must be kept locked away in such a way that it would not be possible for a pupil to gain access to it. It must not be taken within the view of pupils.

22. Disciplinary Action

- All staff need to recognise that failure to meet these standards of behaviour and conduct may result in disciplinary action, including dismissal.

23. External Support

- On Track has an employee assistance programme through BUPA which provides confidential, impartial advice and support 24/7. BUPA can be accessed on:
Freephone: 0800 269 616
www.bupa.co.uk/eaponline

24. Policy Review

In order to ensure that this policy is relevant, if you have any comments to make, or suggestions for additions or amendments, please email directors@ontrackededucation.com

Appendix 1 to Staff Code of Conduct Policy

This policy should be read alongside:

The Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

The Whistleblowing Policy

Keeping Children Safe in Education (2021) – Part 1

In signing below you are saying that you have read and understood all four documents, which can be found on the resources gateway.

If you have any concerns or feel that you need additional training to fully understand any or all of these documents, please do not sign, but refer directly to the Head teacher, who will provide or arrange training.

I have read and understood the Staff Code of Conduct and associated paperwork:

Name:

Signature:

Date: