



Staff Code of Conduct Policy

Purpose of the policy

This policy aims to provide a clear outline of the expectations Wildwood Nature School has for all of its members of staff so that our ethos is upheld at all times. This *Code of Conduct* is designed to be supportive and aims to help employees to maintain professional standards of behaviour and protect themselves from misunderstanding or criticism. The purpose of this *Code of Conduct* is to provide a framework for safe professional practice and effective partnerships between staff, leaders and families.

New members of staff will be asked to sign this code of conduct, as well as our online acceptable use agreement (see Appendix 1), to show they accept and fully understand its conditions. Breaches of this agreement will lead to disciplinary measures as described below. This *Code of Conduct Policy* applies to all employed staff, volunteers and visitors.

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1. Our ethos

Creating a safe and secure community founded upon the principles of respect and compassion is one of our values at Wildwood Nature School. Everything we do must reflect this value and our other values including ensuring the well-being of the children and families in our care, empowering our children, inclusivity, play and connection to nature.

Staff who are employed to work at Wildwood Nature School are undertaking far more than just a normal teaching role: we have very high expectations that all adults working at the school prioritise their own well-being, the well-being of the children they teach, as well as communicating with their colleagues, the children and families with the utmost respect and compassion. In their interactions with children, members of staff must be prepared to challenge conventional ideas of adult:child interactions. We are creating a culture where children are given the safe container within which they can be empowered to make decisions about their own lives, rather than always being told what to do by an adult.

It is vital that members of staff read this *Code of Conduct Policy*, as well as all of our policies, in particular our *Behaviour Policy*, *Anti-Bullying Policy* and *Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy* so that they fully understand the Wildwood Nature School ethos and commit to upholding its values at all times.

2. Responsibilities

The points below describe the expected responsibilities of members of staff at Wildwood Nature School. All staff are expected to:

- Safeguard and promote the welfare and well-being of all pupils in line with the Children Act 1989, Education Act 2002, and Education and Inspections Act 2006;
- Put the needs of the children above all other considerations;
- Perform all the duties stated in their specific job description and statement of terms;
- Follow the [Teachers' Standards](#), whether or not they have Qualified Teacher Status (any staff member with teaching and learning responsibilities);
- Be reliable and punctual. If being late is unavoidable, the head of school must be telephoned;
- Not to bring the reputation of the school into disrepute;
- Report to the appropriate manager any impropriety or breach of procedure (please see our [Whistleblowing Policy](#));
- Whenever possible, leave their personal problems for out of work time. Be present for the children first and foremost.

3. Conduct towards children

The points below describe the expected conduct of members of staff at Wildwood Nature School in relation to their interaction with the children who attend the school:

- Treat children with respect at all times;
- Value children as individuals who know themselves better than anyone else, and can communicate their needs and wishes;
- Treat all children equally irrespective of background, gender or any other differences;
- Be enthusiastic and proactive with children, inspire them with your passion and interest;
- Deal positively with any behaviour incident following the guidelines set out in our *Behaviour Policy*,
- Never belittle, berate or shout at children;
- Model the use of compassionate, nonviolent communication (Giraffe language) when interacting with children;
- Keep relationships with children professional at all times. No member of staff will enter into extra or private tuition or childcare (including babysitting) arrangements with families. Staff should notify the head of school of any existing or previous family or social relationship with a child attending the school or any of their family members;
- When physical contact is made with pupils, it should be in response to their needs at that time, of limited duration and appropriate to their age and stage of development. Physical contact should never be secretive, for the gratuity of the adult or represent a misuse of authority. Staff should always ask the child first before initiating physical contact;
- All adults should clearly understand the need to maintain appropriate boundaries in their contacts with children. Intimate relationships between children and the adults who work with them will be regarded as a grave breach of trust. Allowing or encouraging a relationship to develop in a way which might lead to an inappropriate relationship is also unacceptable;
- If physical handling is necessary to keep children safe, the guidelines for safe protective physical handling as outlined in the school's [Behaviour Policy](#) should always be used;
- Staff working individually with children should recognise the potential vulnerability of pupils and adults in such situations and ensure that they manage these situations with regard for the safety of both the child and themselves.

4. Safeguarding

The points below describe the expected conduct of members of staff at Wildwood Nature School in relation to safeguarding children from harm:

- Be aware of and understand the Wildwood Nature School [Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy](#);
- Be aware of the name of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) (and their deputy) and understand their responsibilities under the [Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy](#);
- Report and log all safeguarding concerns;
- Be aware of the need for confidentiality in professional practice. Information about the school and children who attend the school should not be discussed in public. Confidential information received should not be disclosed unless required by law or to protect the interest or welfare of the child;
- Be professional and discrete in personal use of social media; never share photos or information about the school or any child outside of the agreed school channels;
- Be aware of and understand the health and safety policies, emergency procedures policy and missing child policy;
- Report and log all accidents;
- All first aid will be administered only by suitably trained and accredited staff except in an emergency where the illness or injury is such that to delay assistance might cause harm to the child.

5. Conduct towards families

The points below describe the expected conduct of members of staff at Wildwood Nature School in relation to their interaction with the family members of children who attend the school:

- Always treat families with respect and communicate using compassionate language;
- Be enthusiastic and proactive in communicating with families;
- Maintain professional boundaries with families i.e. only using work phones to call them rather than personal phones, respecting the school's policy on not carrying out tuition or babysitting;
- Be sensitive and understand and respect the family's points of view; remember that they know their children best and we need to work collaboratively to ensure the best for the children;
- Respect families' own choices around parenting styles. Do not make judgements based on opinion unless you feel it is a safeguarding concern;

- Never discuss our children or families outside work. When discussing with other colleagues it is important to be discreet and avoid using names.

6. Conduct towards colleagues

The points below describe the expected conduct of members of staff at Wildwood Nature School in relation to their interaction with other colleagues - those who work at the school and those from outside the school:

- Be sensitive and understand and respect others points of view;
- Always treat colleagues with respect and communicate clearly using compassionate language;
- Understand that we are creating a culture where it is safe to politely remind our colleagues about e.g. using Giraffe language or of the procedures outlined in our *Behaviour Policy*. We must all agree that such comments come from an intention to improve each other's practice and ensure the best for the children attending Wildwood Nature School, rather than from a negative or critical place;
- Be reliable and do what you say you will do. This means staying aware of your competencies and limitations so you do not overpromise and are able to deliver on commitments and balance competing priorities;
- Address any concerns directly with the person/people it relates to, rather than discussing things behind anyone's back;
- Try to extend the most generous interpretation to the intentions, words and actions of others;
- Recognise if you have made a mistake, apologise and make amends;
- Do not share information or experiences that are not yours to share;
- Understand the stresses of the job and support colleagues when they need it;
- Maintain professional boundaries and refrain from any behaviour that could be construed as flirting or harassment. Any workplace relationships must be declared to the leadership team and trustees.

7. Internet and social media

The points below describe the expected conduct of members of staff at Wildwood Nature School in relation to how they use the internet and social media:

- All members of staff must sign the *Acceptable use agreement* in the appendix of this policy;

- Members of staff must ensure that written permission has been given by parents/carers before taking photographs or videos of children to publish on the internet (e.g. on Wildwood Nature School's social media accounts or website);
- All photos and videos must be stored appropriately and securely and only used by those authorised to do so;
- Must not download, store, display, view, retrieve or send electronic material that uses unauthorised encryption, contains programme files, is obscene, indecent, sexist, racist, defamatory, abusive, in breach of copyright, confidential, may constitute harassment, violate an individual's dignity, or create an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or otherwise inappropriate environment;
- It is unacceptable to use social media in a manner that would generally be accepted as a hostile attempt to hurt, upset or embarrass another person, or groups of people, associated with the school;
- In personal social media use, never refer to any child or member of staff at the school in a way that can identify them;
- Maintain boundaries between your personal and professional lives, including customising your privacy settings and avoiding inappropriate personal information becoming visible to children who attend the school or their families.

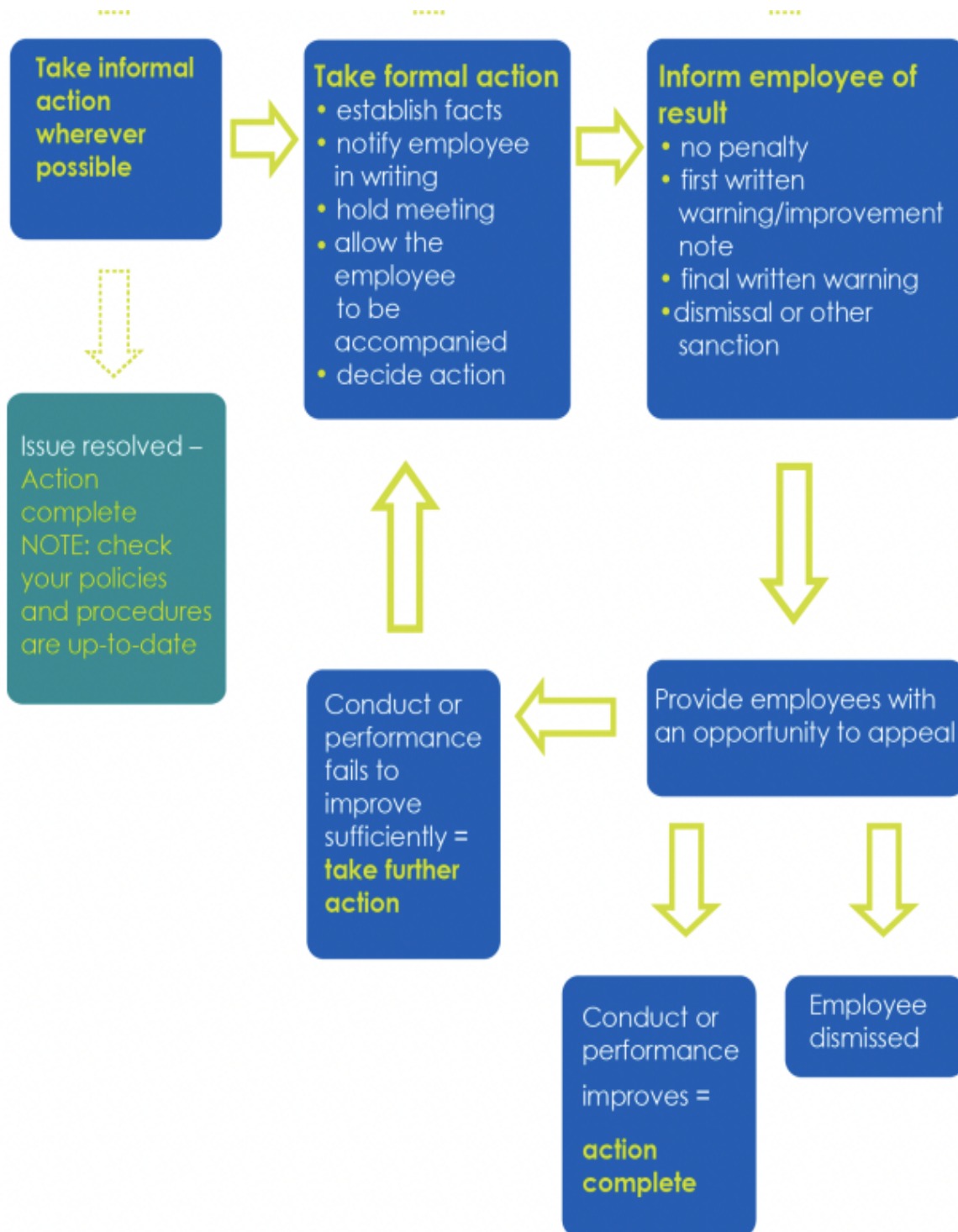
8. Disciplinary procedure

Members of staff are expected to meet the responsibilities set out in their specific job description and statement of terms and the above general code of conduct. Failure to do so will be considered poor performance or misconduct. Such incidents will be treated as disciplinary matters, and will be handled using the guidelines set out by ACAS in [Discipline and grievances at work: The Acas guide](#).

Wildwood Nature School will follow the disciplinary procedures set out below, as outlined from ACAS:

Disciplinary Procedures Flowchart

Source: *Discipline and grievances at work: The Acas guide*, p7



9. Gross misconduct

Gross misconduct is generally seen as misconduct serious enough to overturn the contract between the employer and the employee thus justifying summary dismissal. All the examples of gross misconduct detailed in [Discipline and grievances at work: The Acas guide](#) will be treated as gross misconduct at Wildwood Nature School.

In addition, the following may be deemed as gross misconduct:

- failure to follow the safety practices detailed in the *Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy, Health and Safety Policies* and *First Aid, Accident and Emergency Policy*;
- deliberately causing harm to any of the children who attend Wildwood Nature School;
- failure to notify the DSL of a significant child protection concern;
- any abusive treatment (including bullying) of anyone connected to Wildwood Nature School.

Policy review

Policy created: February 2023

Last reviewed:

Last modified: June 2023

Next review date: February 2025

Acceptable use agreement for staff and trustees

Access and professional use

- All computer networks and systems belong to the school and are made available to staff and trustees for educational, professional, administrative and governance purposes only.
- Staff and trustees are expected to abide by all school online safety rules and the terms of this acceptable use policy. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action being taken against staff or trustees being removed.
- The school reserves the right to monitor internet activity and examine and delete files from the school's system.
- Staff and trustees have a responsibility to safeguard children in their use of the internet and reporting all online safety concerns to the online safety lead.
- Copyright and intellectual property rights in relation to materials used from the internet must be respected.
- E-mails and other written communications must be carefully written and polite in tone and nature.
- Anonymous messages and the forwarding of chain letters are not permitted.
- Staff and trustees will have access to the internet as agreed by the school but will take care not to allow children to use their logon to search the internet.
- Staff and trustees will follow good practice advice at all times and will ensure online activity meets the standards expected of professional conduct.

Data protection and system security

- Staff and trustees should ensure that any personal data sent over the internet will be encrypted or sent via secure systems. Where personal data is taken off the school premises via laptops and other mobile systems, the information must be encrypted beforehand.

- Use of any portable media such as USB sticks is permitted where virus checks can be implemented on the school ICT system.
- Downloading executable files or unapproved system utilities will not be allowed and all files held on the school ICT system will be regularly checked.
- Staff and trustees will not allow others to access their individual accounts. Sharing and use of other people's log-ins and passwords is forbidden. Users should ensure that they log-out when they have finished using a computer terminal.
- Files should be saved, stored and deleted in line with the school policy.
- Care will be taken to check copyright and not publish or distribute others' work without seeking permission.

Personal use

- Staff and trustees should not browse, download or send material that could be considered offensive to colleagues and children or is illegal.
- Staff and trustees should not allow school equipment or systems to be used or accessed by unauthorised persons and keep any computers or hardware used at home safe.
- Staff and trustees should ensure that personal websites or blogs do not contain material that compromises their professional standing or brings the school's name into disrepute.
- School ICT systems may not be used for private purposes without permission from the head of school.
- Use of school ICT systems for financial gain, gambling, political purposes or advertising is not permitted.

I have read the above policy and agree to abide by its terms.

Name:

School:

Signed:

Date: