



Staff Code of Conduct Policy

12 October 2026

About this Document

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History

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This document provides a guide for staff, volunteers and visitors working in the school about acceptable and desirable conduct to protect both adults and students. It refers to and complements other policies and guidance in The Vine Christian School including:
 - i. Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy including Online E-Safety
 - ii. Appointment of Staff and Safer Recruitment
 - iii. Whistleblowing Policy
 - iv. Behaviour Policy
 - v. Restrictive Interventions and Reasonable Force Policy
 - vi. Low Level Concerns Policy
 - vii. Online Safety Policy
 - viii. Mobile Phone Policy
 - ix. Procedures for Managing Allegations Against Adults
 - x. Searching and Confiscation Policy
 - xi. Sharing of Nudes and Semi-Nudes Policy
 - xii. Guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings
 - xiii. Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026
- 1.2. All school staff are role models and are in a unique position of influence and must adhere to behaviour that sets a good example to all the students within the school. As a member of a school community, each staff member has an individual responsibility to maintain their reputation and the reputation of the school, whether inside or outside working hours.
- 1.3. A culture of vigilance is critical within the school. All concerns about adults, including concerns that do not meet the harm threshold, must be shared responsibly with the appropriate person, recorded and dealt with in accordance with KCSIE 2026, the Low-Level Concerns Policy and the Procedures for Managing Allegations Against Adults. An open and transparent culture enables the school to identify concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour early, minimise the risk of abuse and ensure that adults working in or on behalf of the school understand and maintain professional boundaries.
- 1.4. Any behaviours that fall short of the guiding principles in Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Those Working with Children and Young People in Education Settings must be shared responsibly with the appropriate person. Concerns that do not meet the harm threshold must be recorded and dealt with appropriately as low-level concerns in accordance with KCSIE 2026 and the school's Low-Level Concerns Policy.
- 1.5. This Code of Conduct applies to all employees of the school. This Code of Conduct does not form part of any employees' contract of employment.

2. Setting An Example

- 2.1. All personnel who work in schools set examples of behaviour and conduct which can be copied by students. Staff must therefore for example, avoid using inappropriate or offensive language at all times.
- 2.2. All staff must, therefore, demonstrate high standards of conduct to encourage our pupils/students to do the same.
- 2.3. All staff must also avoid putting themselves at risk of allegations of abusive or unprofessional conduct.
- 2.4. All staff should maintain professional standards of behaviour and appropriate boundaries at all times in relationships with pupils and with parents/carers and avoid behaviour that could reasonably be misinterpreted by others. Staff must report any incident, concern, or self-reflection about their own conduct in accordance with the Low-Level Concerns Policy or the Procedures for Managing Allegations Against Adults. This is as relevant online as it is in person; staff engaging with pupils and/or parents or carers online have a responsibility to model safe and professional practice at all times.
- 2.5. This Code helps all staff to understand what behaviour is and is not acceptable, regard should also be given to the disciplinary rules set out in the Schools' Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.
- 2.6. All staff are expected to familiarise themselves and comply with all school policies and procedures.

3. Safeguarding Students

- 3.1. Staff have a duty to safeguard students from abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect.
- 3.2. Concerns about the safety or welfare of a pupil must be reported without delay to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL. Safeguarding concerns or allegations about an adult working in or on behalf of the school must be reported in accordance with the Procedures for Managing Allegations Against Adults and the Low-Level Concerns Policy, normally to the Headteacher.
- 3.3. The school's DSL is Mrs. René Esterhuizen.
- 3.4. Staff must be familiar with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Procedures for Managing Allegations Against Adults, Low-Level Concerns Policy and Whistleblowing Policy.
- 3.5. Staff must also understand the distinction between concerns about a child, which are reported to the DSL or Deputy DSL, and concerns about an adult, which follow the school's adult-concern procedures.
- 3.6. Staff must not intimidate, humiliate, discriminate against, sexualise or form inappropriate emotional dependencies with pupils. They must avoid favouritism and conduct that could reasonably be perceived as grooming, coercive or exploitative. Racism, faith-targeted abuse and other prejudice-based or discriminatory behaviour must be challenged and reported where it raises a safeguarding concern.
- 3.7. Staff should not demonstrate behaviours that may be perceived as sarcasm, making jokes at the expense of students, embarrassing, or humiliating students, discriminating against, or favouring students.
- 3.8. Staff must take reasonable care of students under their supervision with the aim of ensuring their safety and welfare.

4. Safer Working Practices

- 4.1. The school has regard to the Guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings 2022 underpinning principles as follows:
- i. The welfare of the child is paramount.
 - ii. Staff should understand their responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils.
 - iii. Staff are responsible for their own actions and behaviour and should avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions.
 - iv. Staff should work, and be seen to work, in an open and transparent way including self-reporting if their conduct or behaviour falls short of these guiding principles.
 - v. Staff should acknowledge that deliberately invented/malicious allegations are extremely rare and that all concerns should be reported and recorded.
 - vi. Staff should discuss and/or take advice promptly from the headteacher if they have acted in a way which may give rise to concern.
 - vii. Staff should apply the same professional standards regardless of culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief, and sexual orientation.
 - viii. Staff should not consume or be under the influence of alcohol or any substance, including prescribed medication, which may affect their ability to care for children.
 - ix. Staff should be aware that breaches of the law and other professional guidelines could result in disciplinary action being taken against them, criminal action, and/or other proceedings including barring by the Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) from working in regulated activity, or for acts of serious misconduct prohibition from teaching by the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA).
 - x. Staff and managers should continually monitor and review practice to ensure this guidance is followed.
 - xi. Staff should be aware of and understand their establishment's child protection policy, arrangements for managing allegations against staff, staff behaviour policy, whistleblowing procedure and their local authority safeguarding procedures.

5. Disqualification

- 5.1. The Childcare (Disqualification) and Childcare (Early Years Provision Free of Charge) (Extended Entitlement) (Amendment) Regulations 2018 apply to staff who work in relevant childcare provision, or who are directly concerned in the management of that provision. Relevant staff include those working with reception-age children at any time and those working with children older than reception age but under eight outside normal school hours.
- 5.2. Relevant staff must inform the school if they are disqualified from providing or being directly concerned in the management of relevant childcare.
- 5.3. Under the 2018 Regulations, schools are not required to establish whether a member of staff is disqualified by association because of another person living or working in the same household.

- 5.4. All staff must nevertheless inform the school where their relationships or associations, within or outside the workplace including online, may have implications for the safeguarding of children or for their suitability to work with children.
- 5.5. If circumstances change, staff must inform the Headteacher, including any previously undeclared change of name or any matter relevant to childcare disqualification or safeguarding suitability.

6. Relationships With Students

- 6.1. Staff must declare any relationships that they may have with students outside of school; this may include mutual membership of social groups, tutoring, or family connections. Staff should not assume that the school is aware of any such connections. A declaration form may be found in appendix 1 of this document.
- 6.2. Relationships with pupils must be professional at all times. Staff must never establish or seek to establish a sexual or otherwise inappropriate intimate relationship with a pupil. Staff must be aware of the position-of-trust provisions of the Sexual Offences Act 2003, under which sexual activity with a child under 18 may constitute a criminal offence even where the child appears to consent.
- 6.3. Contact with pupils must be through school-authorised communication channels. Personal telephone numbers, personal email addresses, personal social-media accounts or other personal messaging accounts must not be used to communicate with pupils unless a specific school procedure expressly permits this for a defined purpose.
- 6.4. If contacted by a pupil through an inappropriate or unauthorised route, staff should not continue the communication and must report the contact promptly to the Headteacher or DSL, as appropriate to the safeguarding context.

7. Student Development

- 7.1. Staff must comply with school policies and procedures that support the well-being and development of pupils/students.
- 7.2. Staff must co-operate and collaborate with colleagues and with external agencies where necessary to support the development of students.
- 7.3. Staff must follow reasonable instructions that support the development of students.

8. Honesty And Integrity

- 8.1. Staff must maintain high standards of honesty and integrity in their work. This includes the handling and claiming of money and the use of school property and facilities.
- 8.2. All staff 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, or accept, or receive a bribe from another person. If you believe that a person has failed to comply with the Bribery Act, you should refer to the Whistleblowing procedure for schools..

- 8.3. Gifts from suppliers or associates (including students or parents) of the school must be declared to the Headteacher, apart from “one off” token gifts from students or parents. Personal gifts from individual members of staff to students are inappropriate and could be misinterpreted and may lead to disciplinary action. A record will be kept of all gifts received.

9. Conduct Outside of Work

- 9.1. Staff must not engage in conduct outside of work, including online conduct, which could seriously damage the reputation or standing of the school, undermine professional trust or indicate that they may pose a safeguarding risk or be unsuitable to work with children.
- 9.2. Staff must promptly disclose to the Headteacher any arrest, charge, conviction, caution, investigation, relationship, association or other change in circumstances that may have implications for safeguarding or their suitability to work with children, subject to applicable law and school procedures.
- 9.3. Staff may undertake work outside school, either paid or voluntary, if 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 in the school.
- 9.4. Outside employment, volunteering, private tutoring, relationships and online activity must not compromise professional boundaries or create an unmanaged safeguarding conflict. Any relevant conflict or safeguarding implication must be declared to the Headteacher.

10. Online Safety, Technology and Communications

- 10.1. Staff must use technology in a safe, responsible and professional manner and comply with the school's Online Safety Policy, Acceptable Use arrangements, data-protection requirements and any mobile-phone policy or procedures. This applies to school and personal devices, online services, messaging, social media, artificial intelligence tools and other current or emerging technologies. Staff must not enter confidential, personal or safeguarding information into a generative AI service unless its use has been expressly approved by the school for that purpose.
- 10.2. Staff must not use social media, messaging services or other online platforms in a way that breaches confidentiality, professional boundaries, safeguarding expectations or the law, or that could reasonably bring the school or professional role into disrepute. Staff should use appropriate privacy and security settings on personal accounts but must recognise that online activity may still become public.
- 10.3. Staff must maintain professional boundaries in all online activity, including posts, comments, reactions, images, video, livestreaming, dating services and other digital interactions. Staff must not seek out, follow, connect with or communicate privately with pupils through personal accounts. Any accidental or inappropriate online contact with a pupil must be reported in accordance with school safeguarding procedures.
- 10.4. Electronic communication with pupils and parents/carers must use school-approved accounts, systems and devices where required by school policy. Staff must model and support the school's mobile-phone arrangements and should use personal devices during the school day only in accordance with school policy and for authorised purposes.

- 10.5. Images, audio or video of pupils may only be created for authorised school purposes, using school-approved equipment or systems and in accordance with the school's Online Safety Policy, privacy information and data-protection arrangements. Staff must not use personal devices to create or store images of pupils unless expressly authorised by a school procedure. Images and recordings must be stored, shared and deleted only through approved school systems and in accordance with the school's lawful basis and retention arrangements.

11. Confidentiality

- 11.1. Where staff have access to confidential information about students or their parents or carers, it must only be shared on a lawful and need-to-know basis and in accordance with the school's safeguarding, information-sharing and data-protection procedures.
- 11.2. Confidentiality must never prevent appropriate safeguarding action. Staff must not discuss sensitive information with people who do not need to know it, but the DSL, Headteacher or another authorised person may share information with parents or carers, other professionals or agencies where this is appropriate and lawful. Data-protection law does not prevent the sharing of information for the purpose of keeping children safe.
- 11.3. Staff must share any information that gives rise to concern about the safety or welfare of a pupil with the DSL or Deputy DSL without delay. Staff must never promise a pupil absolute confidentiality and should explain that information may need to be shared with people who can help keep them safe.

12. Dress And Appearance

- 12.1. All staff must dress in a manner that is compliant with professional standards and promotes a positive professional image.
- 12.2. Staff should dress in a manner that is not likely to be viewed as offensive, revealing or sexually provocative.
- 12.3. Staff should dress in a manner that does not distract, cause embarrassment or give rise to misunderstanding.
- 12.4. Staff should dress in manner that is absent from political or other contentious slogans, and in a way that is not considered discriminatory.
- 12.5. In online engagement, clothing should be similar to the clothing worn on a normal school day.

13. Allegations and Concerns About Adults

- 13.1. Any safeguarding concern or allegation that an adult working in or on behalf of the school may have harmed a child, may have committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, may pose a risk of harm to children, or may not be suitable to work with children must be reported without delay in accordance with the school's Procedures for Managing Allegations Against Adults.
- 13.2. Concerns about another adult should normally be reported to the Headteacher. Where the concern relates to the Headteacher, it must be reported to the Chair of Governors and Trustees. Where the

Headteacher is also the sole proprietor, or there is a conflict of interest, the concern should be reported directly to the LADO.

- 13.3. Concerns that do not meet the harm threshold must be managed in accordance with the Low-Level Concerns Policy. If there is any doubt about whether the harm threshold is met, advice should be sought from the LADO.

14. Whistleblowing

- 14.1. All staff and volunteers should feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe safeguarding practice and potential failures in the school's safeguarding arrangements. Such concerns will be taken seriously and managed in accordance with the Whistleblowing Policy.
- 14.2. Where a member of staff feels unable to raise a safeguarding concern internally or believes that a genuine concern is not being addressed, they should use the alternative whistleblowing routes identified in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Whistleblowing Policy.

15. Disciplinary Action

- 15.1. Staff should be aware that a failure to comply with this Code of Conduct could result in disciplinary action including but not limited to dismissal.

16. Compliance

- 16.1. All staff must complete the form in appendix 2 to confirm they have read, understood, and agreed to comply with the code of conduct. This form should then be signed and dated.

17. Professional Responsibilities for Technology and Communications Professional Responsibilities

- 17.1. When using technology or communicating online in school or outside school, staff must maintain the same professional standards and safeguarding boundaries that apply in person.
- 17.2. Staff must:
- Ensure all electronic communication with pupils, parents/carers, staff and others is compatible with their professional role and in line with school policies.
 - Avoid discussing confidential school matters or pupils online and do not present personal views as those of the school unless authorised to do so.
 - Not post, share, create or endorse online content that is discriminatory, abusive, sexually inappropriate, unlawful, confidential or otherwise incompatible with their professional role and safeguarding responsibilities.
 - Use school-approved systems, accounts and devices for school business where required by school policy and keep professional and personal communications appropriately separate.

- v. Keep passwords, authentication codes and other security credentials confidential, use multi-factor authentication where required and ensure personal data is accessed, stored and shared securely.
- vi. Only create or use images, audio or video of pupils or staff for authorised professional purposes and in accordance with school policy.
- vii. Not browse, create, download, upload, generate or distribute material that is unlawful, discriminatory, abusive, sexually inappropriate or otherwise prohibited by school policy, including through the use of artificial intelligence tools.
- viii. Ensure that online activity, both in and outside school, maintains professional boundaries and does not undermine safeguarding, confidentiality or trust in the professional role.
- ix. Follow the school's expectations for monitoring authorised communication channels and respond to safeguarding matters without delay.
- x. Report any online-safety, data-security or technology-related incident that may affect a pupil, the staff member, professional conduct or the school, in accordance with the Online Safety Policy and safeguarding procedures.

18. Low Level Concerns

- 18.1. Staff must report concerns, no matter how small, about their own behaviour or that of another member of staff, supply teacher, trainee teacher, volunteer, contractor or other person working in or on behalf of the school.
- 18.2. A low-level concern is any concern, no matter how small, even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt', that a person working in or on behalf of the school may have acted in a way that:
- i. Is inconsistent with the Guidance for Safer Working Practice, including inappropriate conduct outside work or online; and
 - ii. Does not meet the harm threshold or is otherwise not serious enough to require management under the Procedures for Managing Allegations Against Adults.
- 18.3. Reporting low-level concerns:
- i. Low-Level concerns should normally be reported to the Headteacher as soon as reasonably possible. It is never too late to share a low-level concern that has not previously been reported.
 - ii. Where the Headteacher is unavailable, the concern should be reported to the DSL or Deputy DSL, who will inform the Headteacher as soon as possible.
 - iii. Low-level concerns about the DSL should be reported to the Headteacher. Concerns about the Headteacher must be reported to the Chair of Trustees.
 - iv. Where the Headteacher is the sole proprietor, or where there is a conflict of interest in reporting the matter internally, the concern should be reported directly to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).
- 18.4. If there is any doubt about whether the harm threshold is met, the Headteacher should seek advice from the LADO.

Appendix 1

Relationships with students outside of work declaration

It is recognised that there may be circumstances in which employees of the school are known to pupils outside work. Examples include membership of churches, sports clubs, family connections or private tutoring.

Staff must declare any relationship or regular contact outside school that they may have with pupils and must maintain the same professional boundaries and safeguarding expectations that apply in school. It is recognised that there may be circumstances whereby employees of the school are known to students outside of work. Examples include membership of churches, sports clubs, family connections, or private tutoring.

Staff must declare any relationship outside of school that they may have with students.

Employee Name	Student Name	Relationship

I can confirm that I am fully aware of the code of conduct relating to contact out of school with students in line with this policy.

If I am tutoring a student outside of school, I am aware that the following must be adhered to: -

- I emphasise to parents that this is done completely independently of the school.
- No monies come through the school at any point, informally (e.g., via the child) or formally.
- No private tutoring is to take place on the school premises, unless expressly authorised by the school.
- All communication, images, transport arrangements and one-to-one contact connected with private tutoring must maintain professional boundaries and comply with the school's safeguarding expectations. Personal communication routes must not be used with a pupil where this would conflict with school policy.

I confirm that if these circumstances change at any time, I will complete a new form to ensure the school is aware of any relationships.

Signed Date

Once completed, signed, and dated, please return this form to the Headteacher.

Appendix 2

Confirmation of compliance

I hereby confirm that I have read, understood, and agree to comply with the school's Code of Conduct.

Name

Position/Post Held.....

Signed

Date

Once completed, signed, and dated, please return this form to the Headteacher.