

COGNITA



Code of Conduct for School based Staff and Volunteers UK

September 2025-26

Introduction

- 1.1 Cognita is required to set out a Code of Conduct for all school-based staff and volunteers, as well as all Cognita regional office staff.
- 1.2 This Code of Conduct applies to:
 - all staff who are employed by Cognita including those in the Early Years
 - all temporary and agency staff, peripatetic staff, contract staff
 - young people and other adults on work experience placements
 - non-school based Cognita staff and any other adults working at the school
 - volunteers working in school; and
 - the Proprietor and their representative/s.
- 1.3 This Code of Conduct should be read and understood in the context of:
 - an agreed job description or contract
 - appropriate professional standards
 - school and Cognita policies and procedures; and
 - statutory requirements, legislation, and regulations that apply to schools - in particular safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in schools.
- 1.4 Adults have crucial roles to play in the lives of children. The welfare of children and young people is paramount: this Code of Conduct helps establish the safest possible learning and working environment which safeguards children and reduces the risk of adults being falsely accused of improper or unprofessional conduct. The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to provide a clear framework of expected and appropriate standards and behaviour to which all staff, volunteers and proprietors are required to adhere and to raise awareness of illegal, unsafe and inappropriate conduct.

This Code is not an exhaustive list of unacceptable or inappropriate behaviours but is designed to provide guidance and raise awareness of issues and situations which may arise. There will therefore be times when staff are required to exercise their professional judgement in situations not covered explicitly by this Code. In such cases, staff are expected to provide the highest possible standards at all times, consistent with this policy.
- 1.5 The Head / Line Manager must provide this Code to all staff and volunteers on induction and must notify staff of the expectations therein. This document is provided so that those individuals mentioned in 1.2 are clear about professional conduct and boundaries. School staff and volunteers are in a unique position of influence and must adhere to behaviour that maintains public trust and set good example to other staff and to all the pupils within the school.
- 1.6 This document is intended to help ensure that Cognita schools are safe places for pupils, provide clarity as regards expectations of staff and avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intention. Deviation by a member of staff from this guidance may bring into question the staff member's suitability to work with children and young people.

- 1.7 References made to 'child' and 'children' refer to children and young people under the age of 18 years. However, the principles apply to professional behaviours towards all pupils, including those over the age of 18 years. 'Child' should therefore be read to mean any pupil at the school.
- 1.8 References to adults and staff refer to all those who work in a paid or unpaid capacity in a school. This also includes those who visit the school, e.g. sports coaches, contractors, supply staff and Cognita personnel.
- 1.9 Staff are reminded that under section 16 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003, it is a criminal offence for a person aged 18 or over to have a sexual relationship with children under 18 where that person is in a position of trust in respect of that child; even if the relationship is consensual or where the person does not teach the child (see also Personal and Professional Boundaries Policy).
- 1.10 If a teacher (anyone engaged to carry out teaching work) in the course of their work discovers that an act of Female Genital Mutilation appears to have been carried out on a girl under the age of 18 the teacher must report this to the Police, with the guidance and knowledge of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)/Head / Line Manager unless they have a significant reason not to. Other adults, who are not teachers, should report any concerns about FGM to the DSL immediately.

2 Conduct Outside Work

- 2.1 Staff must not engage in conduct (including through other employment) outside school which could reasonably be expected to damage the reputation and standing of the school, Cognita and/or other members of the school community. Staff must exercise caution when using information technology, including social networking sites, messaging apps, and be aware of the risks to themselves and others. Staff may undertake work outside school, either paid or voluntary, subject to the contractual obligations and written consent from the Head / Line Manager which will not be unreasonably withheld.
- 2.2 Staff must inform the Head / Head of HR(HofHR) and Regional Safeguarding Lead (RSL) immediately if they are arrested by the Police or subject to a criminal conviction or caution. Where safeguarding concerns arise, in line with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, the Head must notify the HoHR and RSL, who, as a group will make further decisions. The Head/DSL will inform the designated officer of the Local Authority ("Designated Officer") as advised. Further information which is relevant can be found in the Safeguarding Policy.

3 Setting an Example

- 3.1 All adults who work in schools set examples of behaviour and conduct which may be used as a model by other staff and by pupils. All adults must, therefore, demonstrate the highest standards of conduct. All adults must behave in a way that cannot risk giving rise to allegations of abusive or unprofessional conduct. This Code is intended to support all adults to understand what behaviour is and is not acceptable.

4 Making Professional Judgements

- 4.1 This guidance cannot provide a complete checklist of what is, or is not, appropriate behaviour for staff. It does highlight, however, some examples of behaviour that is unlawful, inappropriate, and/ or inadvisable. There will be rare occasions and circumstances in which staff have to make decisions or take action in the best interests of the pupil which are not dealt with in this guidance. Individuals are expected to make professional judgements in order to secure the best interests and welfare of the pupils in their charge. Such judgements should always be shared with a senior member of staff, who may inform the child's parent/carer. Adults must always consider whether their actions are warranted, proportionate, safe, and applied equitably.
- 4.2 Although this Code of Conduct gives advice and instruction on how to deal with specific situations, it should not replace professional common sense and good judgement. In all matters relating to pupil/staff relationships, adults must bear in mind how an action might reasonably be regarded by a third party, and the impact on the child.

5 Safeguarding Children

- 5.1 Teachers and all other adults working in the school are accountable for the way in which they exercise authority, manage risk, use resources, and protect pupils from discrimination and from the risk of harm. All staff, whether paid or voluntary, have a duty to keep children safe and do their utmost to protect them from abuse/exploitation perpetrated by both adults (sexual, physical, emotional, and neglect), but also other children (child-on-child abuse). Children have a right to be safe and to be treated with respect and dignity. It follows that trusted adults are expected to take reasonable steps to ensure the safety and well-being of pupils. Failure to do so may be regarded as professional neglect or misconduct and may result in investigation (and potential contact with the authorities (Designated Officer/Police-see the Safeguarding Policy for more detail).
- 5.2 The safeguarding culture of a school is, in part, exercised through the development of respectful, caring, and professional relationships between adults and pupils and behaviour by adults that demonstrates a duty of care, integrity, maturity and good judgement. All staff and volunteers should be familiar with and adhere to the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and must have read at least Part One of KSCIE (KLS in Wales).

6 Relationships in School

Relationships between staff and pupils should be positive and mutually respectful. This Code has been formulated in order to help staff to maintain this balance. The purpose of the Code is to:

- confirm and reinforce the professional responsibilities of staff
- clarify the legal position in relation to sensitive aspects of staff/pupil relationships; and
- set out the expectations of standards to be maintained within the school.

It is hoped that staff will be reassured by this Code. Its purpose is to promote the highest standards of care for pupils and to protect teachers and other adults from making professional misjudgements and from the potentially devastating consequences of actual/false allegations, without compromising bona-fide school activities.

7 Staff/Pupil/Former Pupil Contact

7.1 As a general rule, staff should avoid contact with pupils outside school.

If staff are in any doubt regarding appropriate contact with a current or former pupil you must seek advice from a member of the leadership team.

- Staff must not give pupils their personal contact details (including but not limited to mobile phone numbers, social media/messaging apps account details, and personal email addresses). Thank you letters to pupils or parents must not contain these personal details. If children locate these contacts by any other means and attempt to contact or correspond, the staff member must **not** respond and must report the matter to the DSL who will advise. Please see below with regards to contact made on social media/messaging app accounts (7.7)
- Staff must not make arrangements to meet pupils, individually or in groups, outside school other than during school visits authorised by the Head / Line Manager and in keeping with the Educational Visits Policy.
- Staff must never contact or visit pupils at home without prior agreement of their Line Manager or Head / Line Manager. They must keep a record of any such occasion and ensure they are never alone with the pupil if they visit the pupil's home. In safeguarding situations, the DSL must take advice from the Regional Safeguarding Lead; home visits are **not** allowed under these circumstances.
- Staff must not attend private pupil parties and must be aware of their professional standing and responsibilities when attending external events at which pupils are also present.

7.2 Some pupils may be reluctant to end the pupil-adult relationship they have enjoyed with members of staff in school. When a pupil leaves school the professional duty of care ends. However, it is important to continue to maintain professional standards of behaviour. Although current and former pupils may request meetings with staff for help with university applications, gap year advice, or references for future careers, these meetings and any associated correspondence must be conducted on the school site, only within office hours, during term -time, and in a professional manner. The Headteacher must agree in writing to the staff member that this meeting can take place,

7.3 Members of staff who are parents of pupils, friends with parents of pupils, or who, for example, are voluntary workers in youth organisations attended by pupils, will of course have contact with pupils outside school. However, they should still use their professional judgement to respect the spirit of this Code. In certain situations, these specific staff members may be required to complete a Self-Report (see the Safeguarding Policy for further details and seek advice whenever needed from the Head/DSL only).

7.4 There are occasions when adults deliberately set out to groom children (and colleagues) where the sole purpose is to gain the trust of a child and manipulate that relationship so sexual abuse can take place (contact or non-contact). This frequently starts with adults who are known to them in a position of trust such as those working in the school. Adults should be aware that consistently conferring special attention and favour upon a child might be construed as being part of a grooming process and as such would be treated as unacceptable conduct (see the Safeguarding Policy for further details).

- 7.5 It is accepted that the effective use of technology brings benefits to learning. Adults must ensure that they establish and adhere to safe and responsible practices. All adults must adhere to the stated 'IT Policy, and the 'Social Media Policy'. Communication between pupils and adults, by whatever method, must take place within clear and explicit boundaries. This includes the wider use of technology and social networking. Adults should ensure that all communications are transparent and open to scrutiny. Adults should be circumspect in their communications with pupils to avoid any possible misinterpretation of their motives or any behaviour which could be construed as grooming. Staff must not request or respond to any personal information from children other than that which may be necessary in their professional role. They should ensure that their communications are open and transparent and avoid any communication which could be interpreted as 'grooming behaviour'. Emails or text communications, or social media/messaging apps contact between staff member and a student outside agreed protocols may lead to investigation and following this, may lead to disciplinary processes. In some situation, the authorities (Designated Officer) may be involved involving and/or the Police who may undertake criminal investigations.
- 7.6 Staff and volunteers using social media/messaging apps should be aware of privacy settings and understand that they could easily be identified as employees of the school. Staff who use social media sites should ensure maximum privacy settings. Staff must **not** be friends with or follow current/former pupils on social media and should avoid other similar links. Any invitation to become a friend or similar must be declined immediately. The incident should be reported to the Head/DSL so that they can make a decision as to whether a record should be made and/or any further action taken. If staff have links with parents on social networking sites, they should ensure that their privacy settings are such as to prevent friends' friends (who may be current pupils) from accessing their profile or other data. Further information which is relevant can be found in the Safeguarding Policy, the Personal & Professional Boundaries Policy, and the IT Policy.

8 Language

Staff must not swear, blaspheme, and/ or use any sort of offensive, belittling, or inappropriate language in front of or towards pupils/staff. They must not use language which is discriminatory or demeaning in relation to gender (including gender reassignment), religion, race, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability or age. Staff must not make sexual remarks or innuendos, patronise or humiliate pupils/staff. Discussion of issues of a sexual nature (other than in the context of the curriculum as specified in schemes of learning) must only be conducted with pupils where necessary from a safeguarding perspective by a member of the safeguarding team. Any concerns arising from such discussions should be reported to the DSL and Head. Certain conversations must only occur with the consent, and possible attendance of the child's parents/carers (please seek advice from the RSL as required).

9 Physical Contact

There are few occasions when it is appropriate and proper for staff to have physical contact with children. However, it is crucial that they only do so in ways appropriate to their professional role and in relation to the school's known assessment of a pupil's welfare needs and/or any agreed care plan.

9.1 Physical intervention to keep a child/other individuals safe:

Any physical intervention/contact must be in response to the child's needs at the time, with their consent (unless being restrained to prevent harm to themselves or others – in these situations staff should state clearly to the child what physical actions are going to occur). Intervention/contact must be of limited duration and appropriate to the age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity and teaching context. All restraint contact must have a staff witness, the child's parents informed immediately, and a recording of the intervention must be completed (see below for Reasonable Force).

9.2 Comforting a distressed child:

Physical contact may be appropriate where a pupil is in distress and needs comforting. This is sometimes unavoidable with young children. Staff should listen, observe and take note of the child's reaction or feelings and, so far as possible, use a level of contact and/or form of communication which is acceptable to the pupils and job role. Staff must not ever kiss children, and should sit with a child to their side, not on their lap.

9.3 First Aid:

Parents must always be informed when first aid has been administered. Staff should use their own professional judgement when they feel a pupil needs this kind of support and should be aware of any special circumstances relating to the pupil. Particular care must be taken in instances which involve the same pupil over a period of time. All first aid interventions must be recorded for future reference, and any witnesses also recorded as having been present.

9.4 PE/Drama:

In certain curriculum areas, such as PE, music, drama, staff may need to initiate some physical contact with children, for example, to demonstrate a technique in the use of equipment or an instrument. Physical contact should only take place when it is necessary in relation to a particular activity; other staff should be used in PE demonstrations. The extent of contact should be made clear and undertaken with the permission of the pupil. Contact should be relevant to their age and understanding. Adults should remain sensitive to any discomfort expressed verbally or non-verbally by the pupil.

It is good practice if all parties clearly understand at the outset, what physical contact is necessary and appropriate in undertaking specific activities. Keeping parents and pupils informed of the extent and nature of any physical contact may also prevent misunderstanding and potential allegations.

9.5 Intimate Care and Toileting:

In certain circumstances intimate physical contact with children may be necessary, for example, when assisting young children with toileting, and/or providing intimate care for children with disabilities. When administering intimate care staff should apply the principles set out above and be particularly alert to children's rights to safety, privacy, and dignity. As with other types of physical contact, the responses of the child should be carefully and sensitively observed, and where necessary, any safeguarding concerns passed to the DSL (see Intimate Care and Toileting Policy for further details).

10 **Use of Reasonable Force, Restrictive Intervention, and/or Restraint**

10.1 By law, any member of staff put in charge of pupils by the Head / Line Manager may ONLY reasonably intervene to prevent a child from:

- hurting themselves or others (including staff)
- damaging property
- causing disorder

The law allows anyone to defend themselves or another person against an attack made in **self-defence or in an emergency** provided they act within the law in using reasonable force.

This applies when a teacher/staff member, or other adult is on school premises **and** when they are in charge of the pupil elsewhere, for example, on a field/residential trip or other authorised out of school activity.

- 10.2 Reasonable force during a physical intervention, including restraint is only appropriate where no other form of control is available and where it is necessary to intervene to keep the child or others safe, including staff. Any force used must always be the minimum needed to achieve the desired result and must be appropriate for the age, sex and understanding of the pupil and in keeping with the school's Behaviour Policy.
- 10.3 Before intervening physically, a member of staff must, wherever practicable, tell the pupil to stop and what will happen if they do not. The member of staff must continue attempting to communicate with the pupil throughout the incident and must make it clear that physical contact or restraint will stop as soon as it ceases to be necessary.
- 10.4 Staff must always avoid touching or holding a pupil in a way that might be considered indecent or could cause harm. Staff should follow the Use of Reasonable Force, Restrictive Intervention, and/or Restraint incorporating Searching, Screening, and Confiscation Policy.
- 10.5 Physical contact with children must never be secretive, for the gratification of the adult, or represent a misuse of authority. If a member of staff believes that an action by them or a colleague could be misinterpreted, the incident and circumstances must be verbally and immediately self-reported to the DSL / in line with the Safeguarding Policy.

Any member of staff who is involved with, or witnesses use of force on a pupil (including where it is used to restrain or control the pupil) must inform the DSL or Head immediately following the incident. This is to help prevent any misunderstanding or misrepresentation of the incident, and it will be helpful in the event of a complaint. The member of staff who were involved must always provide a written report as soon as possible afterwards and the parents **must** be informed of any intervention and why this occurred by a senior member of staff.

Should a member of staff witness a physical intervention happening and consider that the level of force used by a colleague is unreasonable, they should intervene to support their colleague and end the force used, ensuring the safety of all children. If they consider that the level of force was unreasonable, then they must inform the Head/DSL **verbally and immediately**; this will be managed as an allegation (see Safeguarding Policy)

11 Searching Pupils

- 11.1 Staff have powers to search pupils including to tackle cyber-bullying and the use of prohibited items. Staff must only use this power under the specific authority of the Head / Line Manager only and where there is justified and good reason to do so, i.e. that something, if not found, could be used to harm children or adults, disrupt teaching or break the school rules. No staff member will search pupils in a blanket way and any search **must** be witnessed by another staff member. Staff would always seek to carry out any exceptional search of pupils with prior consent of the child and their parents, where appropriate, and in keeping with the law. Any search **must** be recorded in writing including the rationale for the search and the outcome. Please see the Use of Reasonable Force, Restrictive Intervention, and/or Restraint incorporating Searching, Screening, and Confiscation Policy.

12 Isolation and One to one working

- 12.1 **All** one-to-one working and/or support for welfare (including wellbeing check-ins at school and on educational visits/residentials) with a child **must** be with a named staff member, and with the written agreement of the Head / Line Manager and parent's knowledge. If an adult is alone with a pupil, they must ensure that any such meeting or lesson is as visible as possible and that it takes place in public or semi-public places such as the library or classrooms. As such, they must ensure that the door to the room/area has a glass panel which is not obscured and/or the door is left open. If this is not possible then another adult must be within eye/earshot and know that this adult is one to one with a child. Furniture/items must also be positioned to allow easy access to see into, around or out of the room/area and none must obscure vision to the child.
- 12.2 Staff working in one-to-one situations with children and young people may be more vulnerable to allegations and pupils may be more vulnerable to harm by those seeking to abuse their trust. All staff should recognise this possibility and plan and conduct such meetings or lessons accordingly. Every attempt should be made to ensure that the safety and security needs of both staff and pupils are met. Head / Line Managers/DSLs must undertake a risk assessment in relation to the nature and implications of one-to-one working and individual risk assessments must be carried out prior to contact in respect of adults for whom lone working is an integral part of their role/the situation. Clear arrangements must be stated and should be reviewed on a regular basis. It may be necessary to amend these to take account of particular pupil needs or situations such as residential trips. This does not mean that working one-to-one is unacceptable; it just requires a proportionate and safe risk assessment to protect both the child and staff member
- 12.3 No member of staff must ever be behind a locked door/other barrier with a pupil. Staff must **never** arrange to have/have a one-to-one meetings in a remote or secluded area (inside or outside of the school building or inside/outside of a residential setting; this includes children's bedrooms when off site on a trip) Any meetings which take place outside agreed working arrangements must not take place without the written agreement of the Head / Line Manager, and written consent from the child's parents. Staff must always report any incidents or concerns to the DSL or Head, including concerns about another staff members conduct (see Safeguarding Policy for further details)

13 Relationships

- 13.1 As a result of their knowledge, position and/or the authority invested in their role, all those working with children in a school are in a position of trust in relation to the pupils on roll. The relationship between a person working with children is one where the adult has a position of power or influence. It is vital for all adults to understand this power; that the relationship cannot be one between equals and the responsibility they must exercise as a consequence. The potential for exploitation and harm of vulnerable pupils means that adults have a responsibility to ensure that an unequal balance of power is not used for their personal advantage or gratification.
- 13.2 We best serve the pupils in our care by a pastoral and safeguarding approach that is concerned, collective and thorough, but professionally detached. We do not serve pupils or parents well by encouraging situations in which pupils develop excessive reliance on individual teachers or members of staff.

- 13.3 All teachers and adults in school have a relationship of trust with all pupils by virtue of their position and the work they undertake. This relationship of trust must not be distorted by fear or favour and those in positions of trust must exercise responsibility as a consequence of the power they have over those they teach and/or care for. Where a relationship of trust exists, allowing a relationship to develop with a pupil in a way that might lead to an emotionally dependency/sexual relationship is wrong, and could lead to an investigation, followed by disciplinary action up to and including dismissal (see Disciplinary Policy), as well as notification to the authorities (Designated Officer and/or Police).
- 13.4 It is unacceptable for a member of staff to have any kind of sexual or intimate relationships/contact with a pupil of any age or to encourage such relationships/contact. Such relationships/contact are a serious breach of trust and professional standards even where the pupil is over 18. The Sexual Offences Act 2003 makes it a criminal offence for a teacher to involve a pupil under 18 in a sexual activity regardless of whether or not the pupil consents to that activity. The sexual activity referred to does not just involve physical contact including penetrative and non-penetrative acts. It may also include non-contact activities, such as causing children to engage in or watch sexual activity or the production of pornographic material. Keeping Children Safe in Education and KLS (Wales), defines sexual abuse as, "Forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening".
- 13.5 It is also unacceptable for a member of staff to have any kind of emotional/sexual or intimate relationships/contact with a pupil of any age in attendance at another school (not limited to a school in the Cognita Group). Members of staff are also prohibited from forming any kind of sexual or intimate relationships/contact with an individual under the age of 18, who is no longer in school attendance. This would raise serious concerns about the suitability of the adult to continue working with children and young people.

14 Conduct

All staff must follow the agreed Behaviour Policy and Anti-Bullying Strategy.
Corporal punishment, or the threat of corporal punishment, is not acceptable and is unlawful.

Staff **must** never:

- 10.1 hit/strike/smack /grab (with their hand or any other object) or otherwise physically hurt a pupil
- deprive a pupil of food or drink, or the use of the toilet
 - enforce food or drink
 - shout at children (other than as a warning in an emergency situation).
 - prevent contact by telephone to parents or any independent listener or helpline
 - use sarcasm or demeaning comments towards children
 - withhold any aids or equipment needed by the pupil or impose any punishment which is intended to distress or humiliate a pupil.

Staff should try to diffuse situations before they escalate (e.g. by distraction) and seek support where needed.

15 Confidentiality and Data Protection

- 15.1 Staff must respect the privacy of pupils, parents and colleagues and must not ever pass confidential or sensitive information to any third parties (including addresses or telephone numbers), without checking first with the person concerned **unless** there is a safeguarding concern. This includes when parents/carers request information for their legal representatives/the courts/ authorities. Staff **must always** seek the advice from their DSL/RSL with regards to sharing safeguarding/safeguarding -related information (see 15.6).
- 15.2 In some circumstances staff may have access to confidential information relating to pupils. These details must be kept confidential at all times and only shared when legally permissible and in the interests of the child. Further information which is relevant can be found in the Confidential Information Policy.
- 15.3 Information about pupils, parents or colleagues must never be disclosed to telephone enquirers. Staff should ask the enquirer to put the request in writing so that it can be dealt with appropriately.
- 15.4 The storing and processing of personal information about pupils and staff is governed in accordance with data protection legislation, namely, the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 (as amended, extended or re-enacted from time to time). All employees and volunteers must adhere to the Data Protection Policy. Each school has a designated Data Protection Coordinator (DPC); this is the person responsible for data protection compliance within the school.
- 15.5 If a staff member is in any doubt about whether to share information or keep it confidential, they should seek guidance from the DSL/RSL and/or DPC. Any actions should be in line with locally agreed information sharing protocols. Staff should never use confidential or personal information about a pupil or their family for their own, or others advantage. Information must never be used to intimidate, humiliate, or embarrass the child. Confidential information must never be used casually in conversation or shared with any person other than on a need-to-know basis.
- 15.6 There are circumstances in which the school may be expected to share information about a pupil, for example when abuse is alleged or suspected. In such cases, individuals have a responsibility to pass information on without delay, but only to those with **designated safeguarding responsibilities**. The school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures must always be followed. Fears about sharing information cannot be allowed to stand in the way of the need to promote the welfare and protect the safety of children.

16 Comments and Discussions with Pupils

- 16.1 Staff must avoid comments to or about pupils which could be taken to have sexual overtones. It is equally unacceptable for staff to encourage debate and discussion between groups of pupils, which could be interpreted as having sexual overtones, which are not justified in the context of the teaching programme. Schemes of Learning should highlight particular areas of risk and sensitivity. Specific guidance may be needed to assist newly qualified or other staff who are new to this area of work. This will call for the exercise of careful judgment in responding to questions raised by pupils.

- 16.2 Notwithstanding the advice given above, it is recognised that, in order to discharge particular pastoral responsibilities, staff may from time to time need to engage in conversation with pupils which cover sensitive matters. Teachers and other adults must use their professional judgement to ensure that they are not drawn into areas inappropriate to their duties or their relationship with the pupils concerned. Staff must also use their discretion to ensure that, for example, any probing for details cannot be construed as unjustified intrusion. Where matters relating to sexual activity are needed to be discussed with a pupil, the DSL should seek the advice from the Regional Safeguarding Lead prior to talking the child. This is because in certain situations, the parents will need to be contacted prior to any discussion with their child and may be required to give their consent, unless to do so would heighten the risk to the child.
- 16.3 Staff must respect the rights of others and respect those with different beliefs. Staff must not express extreme views without balance on sensitive topics such as sexual orientation, gender questioning, or religious belief. The use of sarcastic, demeaning or insensitive comments towards young people can also be potentially very damaging and must be avoided. In particular, staff must not make any racist, sexist, homo, bi or trans- phobic or otherwise discriminatory comments. Where an adult is suspected of promoting extreme political, religious, or extremist views either formally through the curriculum or informally, advice will be sought from the Prevent officer in the local authority (UK).

17 Infatuations and Crushes

- a. These can involve pupils and adults of any age, those who are gender questioning, and/or with another individual of any sexual orientation. All situations need to be handled sensitively. Careless and insensitive reactions may cause distress to those involved and have been known to provoke false accusations.
- b. It is in the interests of all parties to avoid adding to the problem. Any staff member finding themselves in this situation must not do or say anything which could be construed as encouraging the crush or making jokes about the situation. In such situations the advice of the DSL or Head / Line Manager must be sought.
- c. Other members of staff have a part to play in alerting a colleague to the possibility of an infatuation by a pupil in order that appropriate steps can be taken to minimise hurt and distress to the child, and the risk to the adult concerned.
- d. Whilst the risk of infatuation is not limited to any particular group of members of staff, new staff and volunteers must recognise their particular vulnerability to pupil infatuation. If a member of staff is concerned that they are developing a relationship with a pupil which would have the potential to become unacceptable/emotional dependent, they must seek guidance from the DSL or Head / Line Manager and must ensure that the relationship does not develop further.

18 Out of School and After School Activities

- 18.1 Staff must take particular care when supervising pupils in the less formal atmosphere of a residential setting or after-school activity. The more relaxed adult-pupil relationships that may promote successful activities can be misinterpreted by young people and give opportunity to staff with inappropriate intentions. It is important for the Head / Line Manager/ DSL to emphasise prior to any trip, that the standards of professional conduct and behaviour expected of staff outside and after school are no different from those which apply within school. Staff should be aware of the particular care which should be taken with older, more mature pupils in these circumstances.

19 Transporting Children

- 19.1 A designated member of staff in school is appointed to plan and provide oversight of all transport arrangements and respond to any difficulties that may arise. Staff must never transport pupils in their own vehicles/hire cars on trips or alone unless this is unavoidable in **exceptional and/or extreme circumstances**; in which case specific approval from the Head / Line Manager/DSL must be obtained in advance, or as soon as possible thereafter. Another adult must also be present in the vehicle. The incident must be reported parents of the child as soon as possible.
- 19.2 Staff should ensure that their behaviour is safe and that the transport arrangements and the vehicle meet all legal requirements. They should ensure that the vehicle is roadworthy and appropriately insured for business purposes and that the maximum capacity is not exceeded. All adults, whether staff or volunteers, in regulated activity must have undergone an enhanced DBS with barred list check. People whose suitability has not been checked will not have unsupervised contact with children being cared for.

20 Personal Letters, Gifts and Electronic Communication

- 20.1 Staff must only write letters or send emails to individual pupils about routine matters of academic study, congratulations on recent achievements, or other purely professional issues.
- 20.2 Adults must never give presents, personal notes or other gifts to pupils (including gifts to whole groups) outside of the school rewards system, unless prior written permission is given by the Head / Line Manager. The Head / Line Manager must get written permission from their General Manager/other line manager if they are to give an individual child a note or gift, with the parents informed in writing of the reason and what has been given.
- 20.3 Adults need to be aware that the giving of gifts can be misinterpreted by others as a gesture either to bribe or groom a young person. Further information which is relevant can be found in the Anti-Bribery and Corruption Policy and the Safeguarding Policy.
- 20.4 All staff using e-mail should be aware of the less formal style that can characterise this form of communication and should ensure that e-mails do not convey an inappropriate or overly familiar tone. There are occasions when children, young people or parents wish to pass small tokens of appreciation to adults e.g. on special occasions or as a thank you and this is acceptable, although if the member of staff feels that this may indicate a crush or infatuation, they should refer this matter to the DSL or Head / Line Manager. However, it is unacceptable to receive gifts on a regular basis or of any significant value as this could be misused or misconstrued.

21 Socialising, Alcohol and Drugs

- a. Adults have a professional duty to set a responsible example to pupils. Adults must not put themselves in a position which may compromise their professional status. *Adults should bear in mind that most pupils have mobile recording and photographic technology to hand, and the potential this has for comments or actions to be recorded out of context.*

- b. On occasions when adults are socialising in groups, in public locations, it is important that professional standards are maintained, and that no opportunity is given to pupils to compromise these. If adults become aware that pupils are socialising in the same venue, staff are encouraged to consider changing their plans. There may be times when this is difficult, for example at a restaurant, and in these circumstances, staff are strongly advised to moderate their behaviour accordingly.
 - c. Adults must maintain the highest professional standards at school social events, and they must not continue to socialise with pupils after the official finishing time or at alternative locations. Adults must not drink alcohol on school premises, unless at an approved school function with the written agreement and oversight of the Head / Line Manager. It is advisable to avoid situations that could be misconstrued.
- 10.1 Use of or being under the influence of illicit drugs on school property is strictly prohibited and will render the user liable to dismissal for gross misconduct under the Disciplinary Policy. Evidence of use or possession of illicit substances in the community would raise serious concerns about the suitability of the staff member to continue working with children and young people. Use of/ or being under the influence of alcohol is strictly prohibited, including on school trips (whether a day trip or residential visit). Any breach of these rules or of the Drug and Alcohol Policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Smoking or vaping/other products on the school site is strictly prohibited.

22 Use of Images / videos

- d. There are **no circumstances** that will justify adults making, downloading, possessing or distributing indecent images, videos or pseudo-images of children (child abuse images). Accessing these images/videos, whether using the school or personal equipment, on or off the premises, or making, storing or disseminating such material is illegal.
- e. If indecent images of children are discovered at the establishment or on the school's equipment or reported by a child/parent/other staff member, an immediate referral will be made by the DSL/DDSL to the (Local Authority) Designated Officer and reported to the Police who will investigate the matter. Measures will be taken by the school to ensure that the staff member is not placing any children at school at risk whilst the Police are investigating the concerns (see Safeguarding Policy)
- f. Should a staff member receive such images (from a child or adult) they must inform their Head/DSL **immediately**. They must not view the images/videos, forward the email/images/videos or delete the email/images/videos. No contact should be made with the sender of the images/videos until the Head/DSL has been informed and safeguarding decisions made.
- g. Under no circumstances must any adult use school equipment to access pornography. Personal equipment containing pornography or links to it must never be brought into or used in the workplace. This would raise serious concerns about the suitability of the adults to continue working with children and young people.

23 Photography, Videos and Other Images

Staff **must never** use their own personal equipment to take images of pupils at or on behalf of the school. Schools must provide school cameras, alongside encrypted memory cards and sticks, to only be used on school cameras for taking photos to be uploaded on social media or for school records. These school cameras and memory devices must be signed in/out and their use agreed in writing by the Head / Line Manager prior to being used. Staff must ensure that there is parental consent in place for any child photographed.

Students must not be given the school camera / equipment to take photos.

Staff should follow the school's agreed policy on photography and use of images. Whilst images are regularly used for very positive purposes, adults need to be aware of the potential for these to be taken and/or misused or manipulated for pornographic or 'grooming' purposes. Particular regard needs to be given when images are taken of young or vulnerable children who may be unable to question why or how the activities are taking place.

Images must not be used in the public domain unless parental permission and, where the child is over 13, pupil consent has been given.

24 Dress and Appearance

- 24.1 Adults should dress and present with appearance appropriate to their professional role; this may be different to that adopted in their personal life. Staff should ensure they are dressed smartly, decently, safely and appropriately for the tasks they undertake. Those who dress or appear in a manner which could be viewed as offensive or inappropriate will render themselves vulnerable to criticism or allegation.

25 Acceptable Use of IT

- a. The IT Policy defines and describes the acceptable use of technology and mobile devices for all staff. Its purpose is to establish clear expectations about the safe use of technology for staff and pupils. Cognita does not permit the use of personal mobile phones, Smart devices and cameras by staff where children are present.
- b. Communication and correspondence with parents/carers of students must only occur using a work email address or work telephone number. No personal emails or devices must be used.
- c. There must be no communication or correspondence with parents/carers of students using messaging apps e.g. WhatsApp or through social media platforms e.g. Facebook/Instagram. Further information can be found in the Personal & Professional Boundaries Policy.

26 Curriculum

- 26.1 The use of teaching resources of an explicit or sensitive nature, particularly in relation to language or sexual behaviour, must be given careful consideration to ensure that its selection is not subsequently misinterpreted. There must always, therefore, be a clear link with the scheme of work. A conversation about the use of such resources should take place beforehand with a member of the school's leadership team. Best practice is to consult with, and inform, the parents of curriculum content and to review the curriculum regularly. Schools should keep a record of this communication.

- 26.2 Some areas of the curriculum can include or raise subject matter which is sexually explicit or of a political or sensitive nature. Care should be taken to ensure that resource materials cannot be misinterpreted and clearly relate to the learning outcomes identified by the scheme of work or lesson plan. This can be supported by developing ground rules with pupils to ensure sensitive topics can be discussed in a safe environment. The plan should highlight particular areas of risk and plans for how to address should be noted.
- 26.3 The curriculum can sometimes include or lead to unplanned discussion about subject matter of a sexually explicit, political or otherwise sensitive nature. Responding to children's questions requires careful judgement and staff should take guidance from the DSL.
- 26.4 Care should be taken to comply with the school's policy on Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Education which will make explicit reference to the adoption of our core values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and for those without faith. Staff should also comply at all times with the policy for Sex and Relationships Education (SRE).

27 Reporting of Concerns (see safeguarding Policy for further detail)

- 27.1 If staff member has any concerns *about* a child, they must complete a 'Cause for Concern' form and hand it to the DSL or in their absence to the DDSL. For schools operating an Electronic Case Management System, staff should input their concern onto the system directly unless the school is transitioning to a ECMS and using a hybrid recording process. Where an adult has a concern (whether low level or allegation) *about another adult* or wishes to self-report, they must follow the procedure set out in the Safeguarding Policy. As set out in this policy, all low-level concerns and self-reports should be made to the DSL or Headteacher on the day of the concern, and all allegations must be made to the Headteacher **verbally** in the first instance. If they are not available, staff should raise their concerns immediately to the Regional Safeguarding Lead and the HofHR. There should be no unreasonable delay.
- 27.2 Staff should recognise their individual responsibilities to bring matters of concern to the attention of senior management and/or relevant external agencies and that to not do so may result in charges of serious neglect on their part where the welfare of children may be at risk.

28 Whistleblowing

Any genuine concerns that employees have where they believe the concerns amount to a protected disclosure (e.g., fraud, criminal activity, deliberate concealment of wrongdoing) should be raised through the Group Whistleblowing Policy.

29 Supervision of Changing Rooms

Adults must always change or shower privately, never in the same space as children.

Staff should make it clear to children where they are in the vicinity of the changing room without routinely being inside (this does not apply to age-related support for younger children). Staff should be outside of the changing room; in case they are needed in an emergency. If staff need to enter the changing room in an emergency, they must alert pupils to this by announcing this clearly beforehand.

Where operationally possible, female staff should supervise girls and male staff should supervise boys. Each school should assess their arrangements regularly.

Where pupils need support getting changed, the Intimate Care and Toileting Policy should be followed. .

Ownership and consultation	
Document Sponsor	Group Legal Counsel
Document Author / Reviewer	Group Director of Education European Director of Education Regional Safeguarding Lead (RSL) ER Manager RSL and ER Manager review June 2023 RSL review June 2024 RSL review May 2025
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Related documentation	Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy Use of Reasonable Force, Screening, Searching, and Confiscation Policy Cognita Europe & North America Regional IT Policy School Behaviour Policy Disciplinary Policy Personal & Professional Boundaries Policy Drug and Alcohol Policy Anti-bribery and Corruption Policy Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)(England) Keeping Learners Safe (KLS) (Wales) Working Together to Safeguard Children, as amended. Independent School Standards (Regulations) – for schools in England, as amended. Independent School Standards (Regulations) – for schools in Wales, as amended

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Code of Conduct for Staff and Volunteers

Next Review Date	September 2026	
Signed		Sarah Ibbotson Headteacher