



Code of Conduct

Purpose, scope and principles

This code of conduct applies to all staff employed by the school, all school volunteers, all staff on Elmfield duties whilst out of school (e.g. school trips) and all members of the school's council of management.

Elmfield Rudolf Steiner School can only be successful in providing children with an outstanding Waldorf education through the behaviour of its staff, volunteers and trustees, whether this behaviour is with children, colleagues or external agencies. Just as we want the students to be themselves, to follow their own path and act with integrity, we also want our colleagues to do the same. This is central to any Waldorf School. As such, the work that teachers and other employees carry out must be done out of freedom and trust. Our actions must not only be derived from obligation but also as free acts born from personal integrity and a commitment to the children. However, no organisation or culture can function without some basic agreed principles in place. In this vein, this document aims to set out employees' legal obligations, together with some agreed minimum standards. It is hoped that new staff will find this useful and it will also serve to remind existing staff of minimum standards.

School staff are role models and are therefore in a unique position of influence in terms of setting a good example to all pupils/students within the school. As a member of our school community, each employee has an individual responsibility to maintain their reputation and the reputation of the school. In some circumstances, this applies outside working hours and outside the school premises.

Collegiate and cooperative working

Elmfield Rudolf Steiner School prides itself on its strong Waldorf ethos. Staff strive to work out of principles of anthroposophy. Central to this ethos is collegiate working. Staff are expected to foster trust and professional working relationships by working collaboratively and collegiately with each other. This includes active attendance at and participation in meetings and, where full responsibility teachers are concerned, curriculum development and relevant mandate work.

Where decisions do not fall within the remit of one person, issues will need to be debated in an appropriate forum. Staff need to and should be able to express their positive and negative views during the decision-making process. However, no community can function and develop without its members making some personal sacrifices for the greater good of the school and the principle of collegiate working. In this way, once a decision is reached, all staff therefore need to remain loyal to and adhere to that decision, even if they represented the minority that opposed it.

It is important that wherever possible, we all use the right channels of communication, both to challenge each other and support each other. Policies must be agreed and decisions reached in the appropriate meetings. Staff are expected to uphold school policies and procedures, and raise any concerns about the life or running of the school in a responsible and appropriate way. To challenge colleagues' decisions, the right channel to use is the forum in which the policy or decision was originally agreed or the person who made the decision / wrote the policy. Telling parents or pupils that you do not support a school policy/decision and / or actively not adhering to agreed policies/decisions are both instances of actions which are unacceptable in that they may undermine colleagues or even bring the school into disrepute.

Always check online for the most recent policy.

There may be times when other commitments prevent us from supporting each other, but by and large staff are expected to support each other wherever possible by being flexible, covering colleagues' lessons/duties when they are off sick and taking on occasional additional work.

Where there are disagreements or difficult relationships between people at work, staff are expected to talk to each other informally and professionally to try to resolve the differences, using a colleague as mediator if appropriate. Whilst this is not always possible (e.g. where serious allegations are made or in instances of bullying), it is anticipated that the complaints procedure and staff grievance procedure will be used once informal steps have failed to help matters.

Setting an example

School staff and volunteers set examples of behaviour which can be copied by pupils/students. Imitation features heavily within Waldorf education. All Elmfield staff are therefore expected to use appropriate language and behaviour which they would want to be imitated.

Conduct outside work

As a school that is proud of its heritage, ethos and standing in the community, we take pride in our reputation and expect staff to avoid any actions that may damage the reputation of the school, employees' own reputations or the reputation of other members of the school community. In particular, criminal offences that involve violence, possession or use of illegal drugs or sexual misconduct are likely to be regarded as unacceptable and acts of gross misconduct.

Staff should exercise caution when using information technology and be aware of the risks to themselves and others. Inappropriate use of social network sites may bring staff, the school or the school community into disrepute. For example, being personal friends with a pupil on Facebook or following a student's profile on Twitter are both inappropriate.

Staff may undertake work outside school, either paid or voluntary, provided that it does not conflict with the interests of the school nor be to a level which may contravene the working time regulations or affect an individual's work performance.

Safeguarding pupils/students

Staff have a duty to safeguard pupils/students from: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect. This duty includes reporting concerns about a pupil/student to the school's Designated Person (DP) for Child Protection (the Education Lead). Staff are obliged to read the school's Child Protection Policy and Whistleblowing Policy and must be familiar with these documents. Staff are expected to take reasonable care of pupils/students under their supervision with the aim of ensuring their safety and welfare. Being aware of those children on the medical awareness register is crucial.

Working alone with a student should be avoided if possible. However, it is recognised that this is not always possible. In these instances, you should be seated near an open door, within the line of sight of those walking past the door. It is essential that the environment helps the pupil feel safe and that the potential for allegations is minimised.

Confidentiality

Where staff have access to confidential information about pupils/students or their parents or carers, staff must not reveal such information except to those colleagues who have a professional role in relation to the pupil/student. All issues discussed at college meetings are confidential and should not be discussed with those who are not members of college.

All staff are likely at some point to witness actions which need to be confidential. For example, where a pupil is bullied by another pupil (or by a member of staff), this needs to be reported and dealt with in accordance with the appropriate school procedure. Care should be taken to use the right channels when discussing such cases. Safeguarding investigations should be carried out by one person and staff should only discuss these issues with pupils with permission from the Designated Person or Investigator.

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Staff have an obligation to share with the school's Designated Person any information which gives rise to concern about the safety or welfare of a pupil/student. Staff must never promise a pupil/student that they will not act on information that they are told by the pupil/student.

Pupil/student development

As in all schools, staff must comply with school policies and procedures and collaborate with colleagues and external agencies where necessary to support the development of pupils/students. Staff are expected to follow reasonable instructions or requests that ultimately support the development of pupils/students.

Dignity, diversity and inclusion

As a Waldorf school, we strive to establish a strong community with strong moral values among our staff and pupils. Respect for people from all walks of life is therefore essential, regardless of their age, race, sexuality, gender, marital status, religion, beliefs or transgender status. We also aim to help pupils and students to understand that we live in a multi-cultural society. Staff must support and comply with policies relating to equal opportunity, inclusion, access and bullying, and must help create a fair and inclusive school environment.

Honesty and integrity

As a school we aim to maintain high standards of honesty and integrity. This includes the handling and claiming of money and the use of school property and facilities. 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, 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 school's Whistleblowing Policy. Gifts from suppliers or associates of the school must be declared to the Coordination Group, with the exception of 'one off' token gifts from students or parents. Personal gifts from individual members of staff to students are likely to be seen as inappropriate and could be misinterpreted by the student or student's parents – especially where gifts are repeated or generous.

Health and safety

All staff, council members and volunteers are obliged to familiarise themselves with the health and safety policy and adhere to it.

Disciplinary action, misconduct and convictions

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

As with all environments where children or vulnerable adults are present, staff at Elmfield are obliged to notify the school without delay if they are convicted of a criminal offence, if proceedings are brought against them or a formal accusation is made of a criminal offence.

It should also be noted that employers have to notify the relevant authority when teachers are dismissed or cease employment for reasons of misconduct or incompetence, or where they resign in circumstances where dismissal was a possibility. Where employers judge misconduct to involve a risk of harm to children and young people, they are required to refer cases to the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA). Under the provisions of Home Office Circular 45/86, teaching is a 'notifiable' occupation. This means that the police report any conviction or caution of a teacher to the DBS. Offences involving a risk of harm to children, or to vulnerable adults, are considered by the ISA.

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Lesley Taberer, Bursar

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