



Organisational Development

**PROFESSIONAL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR
STAFF WORKING IN SCHOOLS**

Professional Code of Conduct for Staff Working in Schools

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 All employees should be aware of the **standards of conduct** expected of them by their employer. Although it is impossible to lay down hard and fast rules to cover all eventualities, the Code sets out the principal areas where concerns are likely to arise and staff awareness is necessary. The Code applies to all staff working in schools although particular reference is made to teaching staff.
- 1.2 Staff must comply with requirements placed on them by their **contract of employment**, conditions of service, schools' Articles of Government and relevant policies of Shropshire Council as the Local Authority (LA). The Code is supplementary to documents detailing terms and conditions of employment, including statutory provisions, issued at the time of appointment.
- 1.3 **Failure to observe** the provisions of the Code may be relevant in considering action under disciplinary procedures. Should this occur, full consideration will be given to all the relevant facts and circumstances of the case in accordance with the principles of natural justice and following agreed procedures.
- 1.4 Shropshire schools have a high reputation for the quality of their work and the professionalism of their staff. This Code will serve to confirm the **current good practice** of staff working in Shropshire schools. Should staff have any doubts about the issues raised they should consult their Headteacher or Head of Service.

2. CONDUCT IN RELATION TO PUPILS

- 2.1 The law recognises that staff act **in loco parentis** in respect of pupils in their charge as set out in the Children's Act of 1989 and must act in the role of reasonably parent in the school context. Through their actions staff must act in accordance with this duty of care to ensure at all times that the safety and welfare of pupils is accorded the highest priority. In this and other ways staff should always maintain standards of conduct which sustain their professional standing and that of the school.
- 2.2 **Interaction with pupils** should always be appropriate to their age and gender. Staff should not touch pupils, however casually, in ways or on parts of the body that might be considered indecent, unnecessary or familiar or use inappropriate language. Particular care may be necessary when supervising pupils in out of school activities. Further advice on the practical arrangements applying in this area is available in the Authority's booklet "Guidance for School Visits and Journeys".
- 2.3 **Teaching materials** should be appropriate to the age and gender of pupils. Particular care should be taken that sex or health education materials are appropriate and consistent with the school's and LA's policies.
- 2.4 When holding **meetings with pupils** on sensitive issues, staff should exercise proper professional judgement over the arrangements for the meeting. They should safeguard their own position by, for instance, considering the need for a second adult to be present.

- 2.5 **Corporal punishment** defined as any intentional application of force as punishment is illegal and may render a member of staff liable to criminal action as well as action under the school's disciplinary procedures. Corporal punishment includes any form of physical chastisement.
- 2.6 **Physical intervention** will not constitute corporal punishment where its purpose is to avert an immediate danger of injury to, or an immediate danger to the property of, any person including a pupil. In such circumstances, the element of restraint should be the minimum necessary to prevent injury or remove the risk of harm.
- 2.7 Where **physical contact** is necessary (eg in teaching PE), that contact should be the minimum necessary for the purpose and comply with accepted good practice. Particular care should be taken in helping pupils with physical or other disabilities (eg in lifting). Further guidance is available in Codes of Practice produced by the professional associations and from the Local Authority representing staff in these subject areas.
- 2.8 Each school should have and follow a policy on **first aid** and have sufficient members of staff appropriately trained in its application, and in any event always have a first aider on the premises. The School's policy should indicate the recording process for any incidents or accidents and should be clearly linked to the School's Health and Safety Policy.
- 2.9 Following any incident where a member of staff has reason to believe that their actions may be open to **misinterpretation**, the Head or Head of Service should be immediately notified and a written report submitted as soon as possible following the incident. Heads should contact a senior officer of the LA.
- 2.10 Guidance on procedures regarding **suspected or alleged child abuse** is contained in the Shropshire Safeguarding Committee Child Protection Procedures, available in all schools. In every school, either the Head or another teacher will have designated responsibility for child protection. In the event that a member of staff suspects or receives allegations that a child is the subject of abuse, a report should immediately be made in strict confidence to the designated teacher who will immediately inform the Authority's Initial Assessment Team.
- 2.11 Agreed guidelines on procedures **where staff are accused of physical or sexual abuse** of pupils are contained in the document "Teachers Facing an Allegation of Physical/Sexual Abuse: Guidelines on Practice and Procedure", which is available in all schools and on the Shropshire Learning Gateway.
- 2.12 It is the responsibility of all members of staff working in Schools to use the Shropshire Learning Gateway to ensure that they are up to date on all relevant policies and procedures.

3. CONDUCT IN RELATION TO THE SCHOOL

- 3.1 Staff should make sure that they do not **disclose confidential information** to anyone who has no right to receive it and do not say or write anything that would constitute a breach of confidence. Confidential information relating to employment or the school should only be communicated on a need to know basis or with the specific permission of the Head. Please see the E-Safety Policy on the Shropshire Learning Gateway for advice to staff about the use of social networking.

- 3.2 **Use of materials and equipment** provided by the LA or school should not be used for purposes unconnected with employment. Staff should always use public funds to the best advantage of the school, community and LA and adhere to high standards of probity in their use.
- 3.3 Schools should have their own Codes of Conduct which should describe the requirement to report to the Headteacher or other relevant person any indirect or direct financial interest in any contract or other matter involving the Council or the school. This is particularly relevant in cases of tendering or in the selling of surplus equipment or property. Headteachers should disclose such interest to the Chair of Governors or in case of doubt to a senior officer of the Local Authority.
- 3.4 Staff should not solicit or accept **any gift, loan, fee, hospitality or other reward** which influences the way in which they carry out their duties. They should not influence or be influenced unfairly in the way they carry out their duties by ties of kinship or friendship, or by some other association or loyalty.
- 3.5 Care should be taken to avoid any **conflict of interest** between activities outside the school and professional responsibilities. Staff should not undertake work or engage in activities in their own time through which they seek to exercise unfair advantage by virtue of their position. In no case should outside activities bring the school into disrepute.
- 3.6 Staff should not, without authority, undertake **activities unconnected with their professional role** during working hours. Policies relating to Leave of Absence are laid down in the Personnel Handbook and should be followed.
- 3.7 Staff in full-time employment should inform their Head or Head of Service where they are undertaking **paid work which may impinge on their normal duties**, including activities such as lectures, private tuition, publications, press articles or radio/TV appearances. Where work is undertaken in the employee's own time any fees paid may be retained by the employee. However, where the event, or preparation for it, takes place in working time and/or involves the use of school or LA resources, it is necessary to seek approval to use such resources and agree the proportion of any fee to be paid to the school or LA for such use.
- 3.8 The payment of fees to **teachers acting as examiners or moderators** is covered by the specific provisions of the Burgundy Book and the regulations of Examining Bodies.
- 3.9 In addition to financial interests, staff should exercise professional judgement in disclosing to the Head or their line manager, **non-financial interests** which may conflict with the interests of the school or the LA. Such disclosure will depend upon circumstances (eg in making appointments) and may include personal acquaintances, membership of voluntary or other organisations or any official position or public appointment.