Code of Conduct for School based Staff and Volunteers

Alleyn's Hampstead Senior School

ENGLAND

2026

Registered in England & Wales - Cognita Schools Limited No. 02313425
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COGNITA

THRIVE IN A RAPIDLY EVOLVING WORLD

1. 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, and contract staff
- young people and other adults on work experience placements
- non-school based Cognita staff and any other staff working at the school
- volunteers working in school; and
- the Proprietor and their representative/s

For ease, the above group will be referred to as 'staff' throughout this policy.

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. Staff have crucial roles to play in the lives of pupils. Their welfare is paramount: this Code of Conduct helps establish the safest possible learning and working environment which safeguards pupils and reduces the risk of staff being falsely accused of improper or unprofessional conduct.

1.5. 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.

1.6. The Headteacher/Principal/Line Manager/Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) must provide this Code to all staff 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. Staff 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.

1.7. 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 their suitability to work with children and young people. Should safeguarding concerns be raised about an staff member's conduct, then the procedures outlined in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy will be followed.

1.8. 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.

1.9. 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 (FGM) appears to have been carried out on a girl under the age of 18, they must report this to the Police, with the guidance and knowledge of the DSL and the Headteacher/Principal. Other staff, who are not teachers, must report any concerns about FGM to the DSL Headteacher/Principal 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.

2.2. Staff may undertake work outside school, either paid or voluntary, subject to the contractual obligations and written consent from the Headteacher/Principal which will not be unreasonably withheld.

2.3. Staff **must** inform the Headteacher/Principal (or in their absence the ER Manager (ERM) and Regional Safeguarding Lead (RSL)) immediately if they are arrested by the Police and/or subject to a criminal conviction or caution. Where safeguarding concerns arise, in line with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, the Headteacher/Principal, ERM and RSL will make further decisions. The Headteacher/Principal/DSL will inform the local authority Designated Officer (LADO) as advised by the RSL. Further information which is relevant can be found in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

2.4. Staff **must** inform the Headteacher/Principal (or in their absence the ER Manager (ERM) and Regional Safeguarding Lead (RSL)) immediately if they have local authority children's Social Care involvement for their own children/any other children in a child protection capacity. This is so that any transfer of risk can be assessed, and the staff member can be supported. In line with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, the Headteacher/Principal, ERM, and RSL will make further decisions. The Headteacher/Principal DSL may consult with the designated officer of the Local Authority ("Designated Officer") when advised to do so by the RSL. Further information which is relevant can be found in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

3. Setting an Example

3.1. All staff who work in schools set examples of behaviour and conduct which may be used as a model by other staff and by pupils. All staff must, therefore, demonstrate the highest standards of conduct. All staff must behave in a way that cannot risk giving rise to allegations of abusive or unprofessional conduct. This Code is intended to support all staff 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. Staff 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, staff must bear in mind how an action might reasonably be regarded by a third party, and the impact on the pupil.

5. Safeguarding Pupils

5.1. Staff 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 have a duty to keep pupils safe and do their utmost to protect them from abuse/exploitation perpetrated by both adults (sexual, physical, emotional, and neglect), but also other pupils (child-on-child abuse). Pupils have a right to be safe and to be treated with respect and dignity. It follows that trusted staff 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 local

authority's Designated Officer/Police - see the Safeguarding and Child Protection 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 staff and pupils, and behaviour by staff that demonstrates a duty of care, integrity, maturity and good judgement.

5.3. All staff must be familiar with and adhere to the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and must have read at least Part One of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) (latest version).

6. Relationships in School

6.1. 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 staff 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 they must seek advice from the DSL/Headteacher/Principal.

- 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/carers must not contain these personal details. If a current or former pupil locates these contacts by any other means and attempts to contact or correspond, the staff member must not respond, and must report the matter to the DSL/Headteacher/Principal 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, and only when authorised by the Headteacher/Principal and in keeping with the Educational Visits Policy.

- Staff must not ever be with pupils outside of the school site on a one-to-one basis unless this is in exceptional circumstances and agreed by the Headteacher/Principal in writing (see below).
- Staff must never contact or visit pupils at home without prior written agreement of their Headteacher/Principal, and the pupil's parents/carers. They must keep a record of any such occasion and ensure they are never alone with the pupil if they visit them at home home. In safeguarding situations, the DSL **must** take advice from the Regional Safeguarding Lead prior to undertaking a home visit; home visits are not usually allowed under these circumstances and a safeguarding risk assessment must be completed. Two members of staff must always be present.
- 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-staff 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 (only), 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/Principal must agree in writing to the staff member that this meeting can take place prior to this happening.

7.3. Members of staff who are parents of pupils, friends with parents/carers 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 must 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 and Child Protection Policy for further details, and seek advice whenever needed from the Headteacher/Principal/DSL only).

7.4. There are occasions when staff deliberately set out to groom pupils (and colleagues) where the sole purpose is to gain their trust and manipulate that relationship in order that sexual abuse of the pupil can take place (contact or non-contact). This frequently starts with staff who are known to them in a 'position of trust', as defined under the Sexual Offences Act (2003 sections 16–19, 22A) and the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act (2022). 'Position of trust' applies to staff who are responsible for caring for, training, supervising, or being in sole charge of a child under 18.

7.5. Staff should be aware that consistently conferring special attention and favour upon a pupil (s) might be construed as being part of a grooming process and as such would be treated as unacceptable conduct (see the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy for further details).

7.6. It is accepted that the effective use of technology brings benefits to learning. Staff must ensure that they establish and adhere to safe and responsible practices. All staff must

adhere to the stated 'IT Policy', and the 'Social Media Policy'. Communication between pupils and staff, by whatever method, must take place within clear and explicit boundaries. This includes the wider use of technology and social networking. Staff should ensure that all communications are transparent and open to scrutiny. Staff 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 pupil outside agreed protocols are prohibited, and will lead to investigation (see Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy) and following this, may lead to disciplinary processes. In some situations, the local authoritity Designated Officer (LADO) may be involved and/or the Police who may undertake criminal investigations.

7.7. Staff 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', 'follower' or similar must be declined immediately and no further contact should be made. The incident must be reported to the Headteacher/Principal/DSL who will make decisions about the further action needed, according to the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. If staff have existing links with parents/carers 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 and Child Protection 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, critical, demeaning or inappropriate language in front of or towards pupils/staff
- seek to convince pupils that a particular position on a topic is necessarily correct or try to impose their own views on pupils
- use language which is discriminatory or demeaning in relation to the protected characteristics e.g. gender (including gender reassignment), religion/faith/belief, race, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability or age
- use language and activities which repeat or enforce gender stereotypes and be mindful to avoid any suggestion to pupils that social transition is a simple solution to feelings of distress or discomfort
- 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** conducted with pupils where necessary from a

safeguarding perspective by a member of the safeguarding team. Any concerns arising from such discussions must be reported to the DSL and/or Headteacher/Principal.

Certain conversations must only occur with the consent, and possible attendance of the pupil's parents/carers (DSLs should seek advice from the RSL as required).

9. Physical Contact

For more detailed information, please see the Use of Reasonable Force, Restrictive Interventions, and/or Restraint, incorporating Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy.

9.1 Whilst this is not a no-contact policy, there are few occasions when it is appropriate for staff to have physical contact with pupils. 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.

9.2 Any physical intervention/contact must be in response to the pupil's needs at the time, with their consent (unless being restrained to prevent harm/danger to themselves or others – in these situations staff should state clearly to the pupil what physical actions are going to occur).

Intervention/contact must be of limited duration and appropriate to the age and stage of development of the pupil. All restrictive interventions, including restraint, must have a staff witness, the pupil's parents/carers informed immediately, and a recording of the intervention must be completed (using Appendix A in the Use of Reasonable Force, Restrictive Interventions, and/or Restraint, incorporating Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy). All Appendix A forms must be sent to the RSL for review.

9.3 Comforting a distressed pupil

Physical contact between a staff member and a pupil may be appropriate where a pupil is in distress and seeks comforting. This is sometimes unavoidable with young pupils who can intiate comfort trhough physical contact. Staff should listen, observe and take note of the pupil's reaction or feelings and, so far as possible, use a level of contact and/or form of communication which is brief but signals emotionally availability. Staff **must not ever** kiss pupils, and should sit with a pupil to their side, not on their lap.

9.4 First Aid

Parents/carers must always be informed when first aid has been administered to their child. 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 using the school medical system for future reference, and any witnesses also recorded as having been present.

9.5 PE/Music/Drama

In certain curriculum areas, such as PE, music, drama, staff may need to initiate some physical contact with pupils, for example, to demonstrate a technique in the use of equipment or an instrument. Physical contact should only take place when it is absolutely 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 the pupil's age and understanding. Staff should remain sensitive to any physical discomfort/emotional distress expressed verbally or non-verbally by the pupil during such contact, and inform their DSL.

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/carers and pupils informed of the extent and nature of any staff physical contact may also prevent misunderstanding and potential allegations.

9.6 Intimate Care and Toileting

In certain circumstances intimate physical contact with pupils may be necessary, for example, when assisting younger pupils with toileting, and/or providing intimate care for pupils with disabilities. When administering intimate care, staff **must** apply the principles set out above and be particularly alert to pupil's rights to safety, privacy, and dignity. As with other types of physical contact, the responses of the pupil 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 Interventions, and/or Restraint

For more detailed information, please see the Use of Reasonable Force, Restrictive Interventions, and/or Restraint, incorporationing Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy.

10.1 By law, any member of staff put in charge of pupils by the Headteacher/Principal may **ONLY** reasonably intervene to prevent a pupil 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 staff 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 restrictive intervention, including seclusion, removal and restraint is only appropriate where no other form of control is available and where it is necessary to intervene to keep the pupil or others safe, including staff. Any force used must always be the minimum needed, and for the briefst time to achieve the desired result and must be appropriate for the age, sex and understanding of the pupil. It must be the last resort **after all escalation strategies have been explored.**

10.3 Before intervening, a member of staff must 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 the intervention 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 inappropriate or could cause physical harm. Staff must always follow the Use of Reasonable Force, Restrictive Intervention, and/or Restraint incorporating Searching, Screening, and Confiscation Policy.

10.5 Physical contact with pupils must never be secretive, for the gratification of the staff, or represent a misuse of authority. If a member of staff believes that an action *by themselves* could be misinterpreted, the incident and circumstances must be verbally and immediately reported to the DSL, and a Self Report form completed (in line with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy).

10.6 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 Headteacher/Principal 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 being raised. The member of staff who completed the intervention must always provide a written report* as soon as possible afterwards and the parents/carers **must** be informed of any intervention and why this occurred by a senior member of staff.

*This form is included in the Use of Reasonable Force, Restrictive Intervention, and Restraint, incorporating Searching Screening and Confiscation Policy – Appendix A.

All Appendix A forms must be sent to the RSL for review.

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

11. Searching Pupils

Please see the Use of Reasonable Force, Restrictive Intervention, and/or Restraint incorporating Searching, Screening, and Confiscation Policy.

11.1 Staff have powers to search pupils (including their personal phones to tackle cyber-bullying/exploitation) when they have cause to believe the pupil has a prohibited/concealed illegal item (s). Staff must only use this power under the specific authority of the Headteacher/Principal (only) and where there is justified and good reason to do so i.e. that something, if not found, could be used to/pose harm pupils or staffs, disrupt teaching or break the school rules.

11.2 No staff member will search pupils in a blanket way and any search **must** be witnessed by another staff member. Staff must always seek to carry out any exceptional search of pupils with prior consent of the pupil and their parents/carers, where appropriate, and in keeping with the law.

11.3 All searches **must** be recorded* in writing including the rational for the search and the outcome.*This form is included in the Use of Reasonable Force, Restrictive Intervention, and Restraint, incorporating Searching Screening and Confiscation Policy – Appendix A.

All Appendix A forms must be sent to the RSL for review.

12. 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 pupil **must** be with a named staff member, and with the written agreement of the Headteacher/Principal and the parent/carers's knowledge.

12.2 Headteachers/Principals/Line Managers **must** undertake a generic risk assessment in relation to the nature and implications of one-to-one working in the school. Individual staff risk assessments **must** be carried out prior to pupil contact in respect of those for whom lone working is an integral part of their role/the situation.

12.3 Clear arrangements must be stated in risk assessments and these 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 pupil and staff member.

12.4 If any staff is alone with a pupil, in an agreed one to one situation (as outlined above) they **must** ensure that any such meeting or lesson is visible and that it takes place in public or semi-public places such as the library or classrooms.

12.5 Staff must ensure that the door to the room/area they are using for any one to one session has a glass panel which is not obscured and/or the door is left open (see below 12.7). If this is not possible then another staff must be within **visibility** and know that this staff is one to one with a pupil. 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 pupil.

12.6 Staff working in one-to-one situations with pupils 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.

12.7 Staff **must never** be behind a locked door/other barrier with a pupil.

12.8 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 pupil/staff 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 Headteacher/Principal, and written consent from the pupil's parents/carers.

12.9 Staff must always report any incidents or concerns in relation to one to one working to the DSL or Headteacher/Principal, including concerns about another staff members conduct (see Safeguarding and Child Protection 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 in a school are in a 'position of trust' in relation to the pupils on roll (see above). The relationship between a person working with pupils is one where staff has a position of power or influence. It is vital for all staff 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 all pupils, but particularly those who are vulnerable, means that staff 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/carers well by encouraging situations in which pupils/parents/carers develop excessive reliance on individual members of staff.

13.3 All staff 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 will likely lead to an investigation (see Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy), 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. It is a criminal offence for staff to involve a pupil under 18 in a sexual activity regardless of whether or not the pupil consents to that activity (see above). 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 encouraging pupils to engage in or watch sexual activity or the production of child abuse imagery/videos.

Keeping Children Safe in Education 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 staff member to continue working with children and young people.

14. Conduct

14.1 Corporal punishment, or the threat of corporal punishment, is not acceptable and is unlawful. Staff **must** never:

a. hit/strike/smack/grab (with their hand or any other object) or otherwise physically hurt a pupil
b. enforce/deprive food or drink, or the use of the toilet
c. shout at pupils (other than as a warning in an emergency situation).
d. prevent contact by telephone to parents/carers or any independent listener or helpline
e. use sarcasm or demeaning comments towards pupils (see above)
f. withhold any aids or equipment needed by the pupil (although this is legal if the pupil is behaving in a way that can cause danger/harm to others)
g. impose any punishment which is intended to distress or humiliate a pupil

Staff should try to diffuse situations before they escalate and seek support where needed. All of the above may be managed as an allgeation (please see the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy),

15. Confidentiality and Data Protection

15.1 Staff must respect the privacy of pupils, parents/carers and colleagues and must not ever pass confidential or sensitive information to any third parties, including Police and/Social Care (including addresses or telephone numbers), without checking first with the person concerned (**unless** there is a safeguarding concern-see below). This includes when parents/carers request information for their legal representatives/the courts/authorities.

Staff **must always** seek the advice from their DSL/RSL (and the Cognita Data Protection Officer (DPO) in their absence) with regards to sharing safeguarding - related information (see 15.7).

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 best interests of the pupil. Police and Social Care must submit data requests to the school when wishing for information to be shared; the school will pass these requests to

the RSL and DPO before sharing data. In child protection situations where there is imminent risk of harm or where harm has already occurred (only), information may be shared so as not to jeopardise agency enquiries. However, the school must pass these requests to the RSL and DPO prior to sharing data.

Further information which is relevant can be found in the Confidential Information Policy.

15.3 Information about pupils, parents/carers, or staff must **never** be disclosed to telephone enquirers; this includes whether a pupil is on roll or a staff member works at the school.

Staff should ask the enquirer to put their request in writing so that it can be dealt with appropriately. All safeguarding enquiries from Police or Social Care must be managed by the DSL/Headteacher/Principal.

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 (as amended, extended, re-enacted and/or updated). All staff 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. Cognita also has a central Data Protection Officer (DPO).

15.5 If a staff member is in any doubt about whether to share information about a pupil or keep it confidential, they should seek guidance from the DSL/RSL and/or DPC, and/or seek advice from the DPO where needed. Any actions should be in line with locally agreed information sharing protocols.

15.6 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, demean, or embarrass the pupil. Confidential information, for example safeguarding information, must never be used casually in conversation or shared with any person other than on a need-to-know basis.

15.7 There are circumstances in which the school may be expected to share information about a pupil, for example when abuse is alleged or suspected (see above). 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 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 not** ever make comments to or about pupils which could be taken to have sexual overtones, including information about their private life. 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 must 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. Staff 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 pupil (s). This is because in certain situations, the parents/carers 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 will not express extreme views or seek to convince pupils that a particular position on a topic is necessarily correct or try to impose their own views on pupils. Staff should be particularly mindful that beyond the facts and the law about biological sex and gender reassignment there is significant debate, and staff must be careful not to endorse any particular view or teach it as fact. For example, staff will not teach as fact that all people have a gender identity.

16.4 The use of sarcastic, critical, demeaning, and/ or insensitive comments towards pupils is very damaging and must not be used. In particular, staff must not make any racist, sexist, homo, bi or trans- phobic, or otherwise discriminatory comments. Where an staff is suspected of the above, and/or promoting extreme political, religious, or extremist views either formally through the curriculum or informally, this will be managed under the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy (and advice will be sought from the Prevent Officer in the local authority (UK) where needed).

17. Infactuations and Crushes

a. These can involve pupils and staffs of any age, those who are questioning their gender, 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 pupils involved and have been known to provoke false accusations against staff.

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 to the pupil which could be construed as encouraging the crush or making jokes about the situation. In such situations the advice of the DSL or Headteacher/Principal/Line Manager must be sought. It would be appropriate for affected staff to complete a Self-Report in these situations (see Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy).

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 pupil, and the risk to the staff member concerned. Should a staff member

have concerns about a colleague's behaviour towards a pupil, they must complete a Low-Level Concern in these situations (see Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy).

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.

e. 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 Headteacher/Principal and must ensure that the relationship does not develop further and have no one-to-one sessions with the pupil.

17. Out of School and After School Activities

17.1 Staff must take particular care when supervising pupils in the less formal atmosphere of a residential setting, educational visit, and/or after-school activity. The more relaxed staff-pupil relationships that may promote successful activities can be misinterpreted by pupils but also give opportunity to staff with inappropriate intentions.

17.2 It is important for the Headteacher/Principal / 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.

18. Transporting Pupils

18.1 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.

18.2 Staff must **never** transport pupils in their own vehicles/hire cars on trips or alone unless this is unavoidable in rare **exceptional and/or extreme circumstances**; in which case specific approval from the Headteacher/Principal /DSL **must** be obtained in advance. Another staff member must also be present in the vehicle. The incident must be reported parents/carers of the pupil as soon as possible.

18.3 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 staff 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 pupils being cared for.

19. Personal Letters, Gifts and Electronic Communication

a. 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.
b. Staff must never give presents, personal notes, or other gifts, including food items to pupils (including gifts to whole groups) outside of the agreed written school rewards system, unless prior written permission is given by the Headteacher/Principal (only). The Headteacher/Principal **must** get written permission from their Managing Director if they personally wish to give an individual pupil a note or gift, with the parents/carers informed in writing of the reason and what has been given.
c. Staff need to be aware that the giving of presents, personal notes or other gifts can be misinterpreted by others as a gesture either to bribe or groom a pupil and/or their parents/carers. Further information which is relevant can be found in the Anti-Bribery and Corruption Policy, and the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
d. There are occasions when pupils or parents/carers wish to pass small tokens of appreciation to staff 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 on behlf of the pupil/parent/carer, they should refer this matter to the Headteacher/Principal as stated above. However, it is unacceptable to receive gifts on a regular basis or of any significant value as this could be misused or misconstrued.
e. All staff using e-mail should be aware of the less formal style that can characterise this form of communication and should ensure that their e-mails do not convey an inappropriate or overly familiar tone.

20. Socialising, Alcohol and Drugs

a. Staff have a professional duty to set a responsible example to pupils. Staff must not put themselves in a position which may compromise their professional status. Staff should bear in mind that pupils, despite policy, may have concealed recording and photographic technology, and be aware of the potential this has for their comments or actions to be recorded out of context (see Behaviour Policy for Mobile Phones in schools).

b. On occasions when staff 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 staff become aware that pupils are socialising in the same venue as pupils, 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. Staff 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.
d. Use of or being under the influence of 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 drugs in the community would raise serious concerns

about the suitability of the staff member to continue working with children and young people.

e. Use of/ or being under the influence of alcohol is strictly prohibited, including on school trips (whether a day trip or residential visit), unless at an approved school function with the written agreement and oversight of the Headteacher/Principal. It is advisable to avoid situations that could be misconstrued.
f. Smoking or vaping/other products on the school site is strictly prohibited.

Any breach of these rules or of the Drug and Alcohol Policy will render the user liable to dismissal for gross misconduct under the Disciplinary Policy

21. Child Sexual Abuse Imagery/ Videos (including those that are AI generated) plus Pornography

CSA Material (CSAM)

a. Whether using the school or personal equipment, there are **no circumstances** that will justify staff making, accessing, downloading, possessing, storing, disseminating, or distributing child sexual abuse imagery/videos, including those that are AI generated **This is illegal.**

b. If such content or behaviours as outlined above are found to be discovered to occur at the school, and/or are found on the school's equipment and/or reported by a pupil/parent/carer/other staff member, or a child/adult from outside the school, **an immediate referral** will be made by the DSL/DDSL to the Police and the local authority Designated Officer who will investigate the matter. Immediate measures will be taken by the school to ensure that the staff member is not placing any pupils at school at risk whilst the above agencies are investigating the concerns (see Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy).

c. Should a staff member receive such content as described above (from a pupil/parent/carer/other staff member) they must inform their Headteacher/Principal/DSL **immediately**. They must **not** view the images/videos, forward the email/images/videos or delete the email/images/videos as **this is illegal**. No contact must be made with the sender of the images/videos until the Headteacher/Principal/DSL has been informed and safeguarding decisions made, including but not limited to involving the above agencies.

Pornography

Pornography (porn) is explicit content including images or videos used for sexual arousal (NHS Inform).

Whilst some pornography is legal, some is also illegal e.g. extreme pornography (sexual content that is considered violent or life-threatening) and revenge porn.

d. Under no circumstances must any staff use school equipment to access *any form* of pornography nor access *any form of* pornography on their personal device whilst on the school site/when undertaking school duties off site.

Personal equipment containing pornography or links to it must never be brought into or used in the workplace. Staff must never sell or distribute pornography to pupils, parents/carers or colleagues. It is illegal to do this to under 18s.

All of the above would raise serious concerns about the suitability of the staff member to continue working and will be managed under the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

22. Photography, Videos and Other Images

22.1 Staff must **never** use their own personal equipment to take images of pupils at or on behalf of the school whether on or off site, including on educational visits. Schools must provide school cameras/devices, 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 Headteacher/ Principal (only) prior to being used. Staff must ensure that there is parental consent in place for any pupil photographed.

22.2 Students must not be given the school camera / equipment to take photos of themselves, peers or staff.

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

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

23. Dress and Appearance

23.1 Staff 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 (see Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy)

24. Acceptable Use of IT

a. The IT Policy (and the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy) define and describe the acceptable use of technology and devices for all staff. Their purpose is to establish clear expectations about the safe use of technology for staff and pupils.

All staff are **prohibited** from having/using any personal device capable of capturing or sharing imagery/videos and/or data **in the presence/close vicinity of pupils whether on/off site**: this includes mobile phones, tablets, any Smart devices (including, but not limited to; phones, watches, glasses, and rings/jewellery), hearables/wearables (small electronic devices designed to be worn on the body, often close to the skin, to monitor and relay information about the wearer or their environment in real time). Hearables/wearables also pose risks (other than those related to safeguarding as outlined above) in terms of potential data breaches including 'hacking', unauthorized access, and privacy violations such as surveillance and stalking.

Currently health-related wearables* may potentially be worn, as long as the functionality regarding imagery/videos is disabled whilst the staff member is in school/with pupils off site. Note this position may change with technology advances.

Wearables for medical conditions* will be permitted but must also have the functionality to take imagery/videos disabled.

*Staff using a wearable as outlined above for health reasons /medical conditions must complete a Self-Report (see below) detailing the specific name of the wearable and the reason for requiring it.

Headteachers/Principals **must** confirm in writing (on the SR) that the individual member of staff can use the stated wearable.

Permission to wear such a device will be rescinded if the staff member deviates from the above advice regarding disabling functionality to take imagery/videos.

b. Communication and correspondence with parents/carers of pupils must only occur using a work email address or work telephone number. No personal emails or devices must be used.

There must be no communication or correspondence with parents/carers of pupils 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.

25. Curriculum

Please see the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, and the RSE Policy for further information.

25.1 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/carers of curriculum content and to review the curriculum regularly. Schools should keep a record of this consultation and must always consult on the RSE Policy.

25.2 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 these must be noted.

25.3 The curriculum can sometimes include or lead to unplanned discussion about subject matter of a sexually explicit, political or otherwise sensitive nature. Responding to pupils' questions requires careful judgement and staff should take guidance from the DSL.

25.4 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 must also comply at all times with the RSE Policy.

26. Reporting of Concerns

Please ee Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy for further details

26.1 If a staff member has any concerns about a pupil, they must complete a 'Cause for Concern'. For schools operating an Electronic Case Management System, staff should input their concern onto the system directly.

26.2 Where a staff member has a concern (whether Low-Level Concern or Allegation) about another staff member or wishes to Self-Report, they must follow the procedure set out in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. As set out in this policy, all Low-Level Concerns and Self-Reports should be made to the DSL or Headteacher/Principal on the day of the concern, and all Allegations must be made to the Headteacher/Principal immediately and verbally in the first instance. If they are not available, staff should raise their concerns immediately to their MD, RSL and the ERM. There must be no delay.

26.3 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 pupils may be at risk.

26.7 Note: under the Crime and Policing Act (2026) there is now a **mandatory reporting duty** for staff in regard to reporting concerns about child sexual abuse. The duty requires those taking part in regulated activity to make a report if they:

- are told about child sexual abuse, either by a child or an adult involved
- witness child sexual abuse in person
- see or hear it in the form of images, videos or audio recordings

27. Whistleblowing

27.1 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.

28. Supervision of Changing Rooms

Staff must always change or shower privately, and never at the same time as pupils.

Staff should make it clear to pupils where they are in the vicinity of the changing room without being inside (this does not apply to age-related support for younger pupils).

However, staff must 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, and pausing before entry

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.

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