

# Thomas Telford School



## Thomas Telford School Code of Conduct for Staff, Governors and Volunteers

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## **1. Aims, scope and principles**

This policy aims to set and maintain standards of conduct that we expect all staff at Thomas Telford School to follow.

By creating this policy, we aim to ensure our school is an environment where everyone is safe, happy and treated with respect.

Many of the principles in this code of conduct are based on the [Teachers' Standards](#).

Thomas Telford School staff have an influential position in the school and will act as role models for students by consistently demonstrating high standards of behaviour.

At Thomas Telford School we expect that all teachers will act in accordance with the personal and professional behaviours set out in the Teachers' Standards.

At Thomas Telford School we expect all support staff, governors and volunteers to also act with personal and professional integrity, respecting the safety and wellbeing of others.

Thomas Telford School Governing Board will foster a culture of the highest professional standards.' This Code of Conduct sets out standards expected and the duty upon staff, Governors and volunteers to abide by them. All staff, Governors and volunteers have a duty to keep students and themselves safe and to protect them from physical and emotional harm. This duty is, in part, exercised through the development of respectful, caring and professional relationships between adults and students and behaviour by adults which, demonstrates integrity, maturity and good judgement. Following this Code of Conduct will help to safeguard staff, Governors and volunteers from falsely or mistakenly being suspected or accused of professional misconduct in relation to students.

Failure to follow the code of conduct may result in disciplinary action being taken, as set out in our staff disciplinary procedures.

Please note that this code of conduct is not exhaustive. If situations arise that are not covered by this code, staff will use their professional judgement and act in the best interests of the school and its students.

## **2. Legislation and guidance**

In line with the statutory safeguarding guidance [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#), we should have a staff code of conduct, which should cover low-level concerns, allegations against staff and whistle-blowing, as well as acceptable use of technologies (including the use of mobile devices), staff/student relationships and communications, including the use of social media.

This policy also complies with our scheme of government.

## **3. General obligations**

Staff set an example to students. They will:

- Maintain high standards in their attendance and punctuality
- Never use inappropriate or offensive language in school
- Treat students and others with dignity and respect
- Show tolerance and respect for the rights of others
- Not undermine fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs

- Not express personal beliefs in a way that exploits students' vulnerability or might lead them to break the law
- Understand the statutory frameworks they must act within
- Seek to work in partnership with parents/carers, respecting views, promoting understanding and cooperation to support students learning and well-being
- Adhere to the Teachers' Standards

#### **4. Safeguarding**

Staff at Thomas Telford School have a duty to safeguard students from harm, and to report any concerns they have. This includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse, and neglect.

Staff will familiarise themselves with our child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures, and the Prevent initiative, and ensure they are aware of the processes to follow if they have concerns about a child.

Our child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures are on the website and present in the safeguarding section of the staffshare area. New staff will also be given copies on arrival.

##### **4.1 Allegations that may meet the harm threshold**

This section applies to all cases in which it is alleged that anyone working in the school, including a supply teacher, volunteer or contractor, has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child, and/or
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, and/or
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children, and/or
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children – this includes behaviour taking place inside or outside of school

At Thomas Telford School we will deal with any such allegation quickly and in a fair and consistent way that provides effective child protection while also supporting the individual who is the subject of the allegation.

A 'case manager' will lead any investigation. This will be the Headmaster, or the chair of governors where the Headmaster is the subject of the allegation.

##### **4.2 Low-level concerns about members of staff**

A low-level concern is a behaviour towards a child by a member of staff that does not meet the harm threshold, is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, and may be as simple as causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt'. For example, this may include:

- Being over-friendly with children
- Having favourites
- Taking photographs of children on a personal device
- Engaging in 1-to-1 activities where they can't easily be seen
- Humiliating students

Low-level concerns can include inappropriate conduct inside and outside of work.

All staff should share any low-level concerns they have using the reporting procedures set out in our child protection and safeguarding policy. We also encourage staff to self-refer if they find themselves in a situation that could be misinterpreted. If staff are not sure whether behaviour would be deemed a low-level concern, we encourage staff to report it.

All reports will be handled in a responsive, sensitive and proportionate way.

Unprofessional behaviour will be addressed, and the staff member supported to correct it, at an early stage.

This creates and embeds a culture of openness, trust and transparency in which our values and expected behaviour are constantly lived, monitored and reinforced by all staff, while minimising the risk of abuse.

Reporting and responding to low-level concerns is covered in more detail in our low-level concerns policy and our child protection and safeguarding policy. This is available on our website and in the staffshare area.

Our procedures for dealing with allegations will be applied with common sense and judgement.

### **4.3 Whistle-blowing**

Whistle-blowing reports wrongdoing that it is “in the public interest” to report. Examples linked to safeguarding include:

- Students’ or staff members’ health and safety being put in danger
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation or statutory requirement
- Attempts to cover up the above, or any other wrongdoing in the public interest

Staff at Thomas Telford School are encouraged to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible. Their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated, and their confidentiality will be respected.

Staff should consider the examples above when deciding whether their concern is of a whistle-blowing nature. Consider whether the incident(s) was illegal, breached statutory or school procedures, put people in danger or was an attempt to cover any such activity up.

Staff should report their concern to the headmaster or DSL. If the concern is about the headmaster or it is believed they may be involved in the wrongdoing in some way, the staff member should report their concern to the chair of the governors.

Concerns should be made in writing wherever possible. They should include names of those committing wrongdoing, dates, places and as much evidence and context as possible. Staff raising a concern should also include details of any personal interest in the matter.

For our school’s detailed whistle-blowing process, please refer to our whistle-blowing policy.

## **5. Staff-student relationships**

Staff at Thomas Telford School will observe proper boundaries with students that are appropriate to their professional position. They will act in a fair and transparent way that would not lead anyone to reasonably assume they are not doing so.

If staff members and students must spend time on a one-to-one basis, staff will ensure that:

- This takes place in a public place that others can access
- Others can see into the room
- A colleague or line manager knows this is taking place

Staff should avoid contact with students outside of school hours if possible.

Personal contact details should not be exchanged between staff and students. This includes social media profiles.

While we are aware many students and their parents may wish to give gifts to staff, for example, at the end of the school year, gifts from staff to students are not acceptable.

If a staff member is concerned at any point that an interaction between themselves and a student may be misinterpreted, or if a staff member is concerned at any point about a fellow staff member and a student, this should be reported in line with the procedures set out in our child protection and safeguarding policy.

## **6. Communication and social media**

Communicating with parents, families and students plays a key role in developing an effective learning platform for all students in the school. The means of communication can come in a variety of ways but must remain professional at all times and aim to establish an effective partnership with all agencies and parents/carers. Staff are encouraged to communicate via telephone where possible, but preferably face to face, especially when dealing with more challenging issues. When using email as a form of communication staff must continue to use formal ways of addressing all involved and refrain from becoming “over-familiar” with the families. It is expected that staff will address parents in a formal manner, establishing professional boundaries and creating a dialogue that relates to the educational values of the School. Staff are encouraged not to exchange Christian names over formal school matters. These relationships built between staff and families are invaluable in creating a caring and productive environment for all involved. These must remain formal and professional at all times. Any staff concerned about this element must discuss directly with their line manager and seek advice. Staff should communicate via the school email system where possible.

School staff’s social media profiles should not be available to students. If they have a personal profile on social media sites, they should not use their full name, as students may be able to find them. Staff should consider using a first and middle name instead, and set public profiles to private.

Staff should not attempt to contact students or their parents via social media, or any other means outside school, in order to develop any sort of relationship. They will not make any efforts to find students’ or parents’ social media profiles.

Staff will ensure that they do not post any images online that identify children who are students at the school without their consent.

Staff **must not** post material which damages the reputation of Thomas Telford School of which causes concern about their suitability to work with children and young people.

Staff should be aware of the school’s online safety policy.

Staff should communicate via the school email system where possible. There will be times where this is not deemed appropriate due to the response time needed in certain situations. In these instances, staff are encouraged to use the Microsoft Teams chat platform. This is due to the platform being fully controlled and monitored by the school. Certain social media platforms are not GDPR compliant and therefore staff are advised to avoid WhatsApp groups for school conversations, using a Microsoft teams group chat is an effective alternative. These will be managed and monitored by line managers.

## **7. Acceptable use of technology**

Staff at Thomas Telford School will not use technology in school or belonging to the school to view material that is illegal, inappropriate or likely to be deemed offensive. This includes, but is not limited to, sending obscene emails, gambling and viewing pornography or other inappropriate content.

Staff at Thomas Telford School will not use personal mobile phones and laptops, or school equipment for personal use, in school hours or in front of students. They will also not use personal mobile phones or cameras to take pictures of students.

We have the right to monitor emails and internet use on the school IT system.

## **8. Conduct on School Trips/Excursions**

School trips are an essential part of the educational package that the School provides. The giving of their time by staff is greatly appreciated, but it is important that staff conduct on these trips complies with the expectations set out by this document.

Under no circumstances should alcohol be consumed by staff who are responsible for children and young adults on school trips and excursions organised by the School. With all trips, understandably there may be risks and staff must not be under the influence of alcohol, which may impair their judgement when having to deal with difficult or challenging situations. Students who are 18 years of age or older are not allowed to consume alcohol on these educational visits.

## **9. Confidentiality**

In the course of their role, members of staff at Thomas Telford School are often privy to sensitive and confidential information about the school, staff, students and their parents.

This information should never be:

- Disclosed to anyone unless required by law or with consent from the relevant party or parties
- Used to humiliate, embarrass or blackmail others
- Used for a purpose other than what it was collected and intended for

This does not overrule staff's duty to report child protection concerns to the appropriate channel where staff believe a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm, as detailed further in our child protection and safeguarding policy.

## **10. Honesty and integrity**

Staff should maintain high standards of honesty and integrity in their role. This includes when dealing with students, handling money, claiming expenses and using school property and facilities.

Staff will not accept bribes and are encouraged to use professional judgement to declare and record gifts and to their line manager.

Staff will ensure that all information given to the school is correct. This should include:

- Background information (including any past or current investigations/cautions related to conduct outside of school)
- Qualifications
- Professional experience

Where there are any updates to the information provided to the school, the member of staff will advise the school as such as soon as reasonably practicable. Consideration will then be given to the nature and circumstances of the matter and whether this may have an impact on the member of staff's employment.

## **11. Dress code**

Staff at Thomas Telford School will dress in a professional, appropriate manner.

Outfits will not be overly revealing, and we ask that tattoos are covered up.

Clothes will not display any offensive or political slogans.

## **12. Use of Personal Equipment**

Staff should not use personally owned devices, such as mobile phones or cameras, to take photos or videos of students and will only use work-provided equipment for this purpose. (Please see computer services for support with equipment). Where staff members are required to use a mobile phone for school duties, for instance in case of emergency during off-site activities, or for contacting students or parents, then a school mobile phone will be provided and used. In an emergency where a staff member doesn't have access to a school-owned device, they should use their own device and (by inputting 141) their own mobile number for confidentiality purposes.

Departments are actively encouraged to promote the school via the various social media platforms. In order for this to be effectively managed all information must go through the web development team for approval and posting. This will then posted at the earliest convenience. Staff must present the exact information in order for the web development team to be able to post the correct information.

## **13. Physical Intervention and Personal Privacy**

There are occasions when it is entirely 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 student's individual needs and any agreed care plan. Staff should remain self-aware at all times that their actions could not be a subject to misinterpretations. Not all children feel comfortable about certain types of physical contact; this should be recognised and, wherever possible, adults should seek the student's permission before initiating contact and be sensitive to any signs that they may be uncomfortable or embarrassed. Staff should acknowledge that some students are more comfortable with touch than others and/or may be more comfortable with touch from some adults than others. Staff should listen, observe and take note of the child's reaction or feelings and, so far as is possible, use a level of contact and/or form of communication which is acceptable to the student. It is not possible to be specific about the appropriateness of each physical contact, since an action that is appropriate with one student, in one set of circumstances, may be inappropriate in another, or with a different child. Any physical contact should be in response to the child's needs at the time, of limited duration and appropriate to their age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity and background. Adults should therefore, use their professional judgement at all times.

- When a member of staff has a particular concern about the need to provide care/reassurance they must seek further advice from a member of Thomas Telford School SMT.
- If a student has a specific care plan to support their physical and intimate needs, contact should be in line with the students plan and medical policy.
- In certain subjects such as Physical Education and Music staff, will on occasion, have to initiate contact with students to demonstrate the use of a particular piece of equipment / instrument or assist them with



an exercise. This must be done with the students' agreement. This should take place in an open environment with minimum contact to complete the exercise.

- Students are entitled to privacy when changing. However there needs to be an appropriate level of supervision in order to safeguard students, Health and Safety and appropriate behaviour. This supervision should be appropriate to the needs and sensitive to the potential embarrassment.

#### **14. Conduct outside of work**

Staff will not act in a way that would bring the school, or the teaching profession, into disrepute. This covers conduct including but not limited to relevant criminal offences, such as violence or sexual misconduct, as well as negative comments about the school on social media.

#### **15. Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed annually, but can be revised as needed. It will be approved by the headmaster and governing board.

Our governing board will ensure this code of conduct is implemented effectively, and will ensure appropriate action is taken in a timely manner to safeguard children and deal with any concerns.

#### **16. Links with other policies**

This policy links with our policies on:

- Staff disciplinary procedures, which will be used if staff breach this code of conduct. It also sets out examples of what we will deem as misconduct and gross misconduct
- Staff grievance procedures
- Low-Level Concerns
- Child protection and safeguarding
- Online safety
- Whistle-blowing