



Staff Code of Conduct Policy

Professional. Boundaried. Accountable.
For implementation from September 2026

Policy statement

This policy sets out the professional standards, boundaries and expectations for staff at Thamesfield College. It supports a calm, safe and ambitious school culture in which adults model integrity, respect and perseverance.



Staff Code of Conduct Policy

Changing Lives | Creating Futures

Thamesfield statement

At Thamesfield College, adults set the tone. Our pupils need calm, consistent professionals who model Integrity, Respect and Perseverance, protect safeguarding, maintain boundaries and help every pupil become ambitious for the next stage of their life or education.

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1. Purpose, scope and principles

This policy sets out the standards of conduct expected from all adults working for or on behalf of Thamesfield College. It applies to employees, supply staff, agency workers, volunteers, contractors, trainees, Management Committee members and any other adult working in the school or representing the school.

Thamesfield College is a Pupil Referral Unit. Our work is relational, specialist and demanding. This means staff must be calm, consistent, bounded and professionally curious. Staff do not lower standards because pupils have experienced difficulty; they teach, model and uphold the standards pupils need for their next stage.

This code is not exhaustive. Where a situation is not covered, staff must use professional judgement, act in the best interests of pupils, protect safeguarding and seek advice from SLT where needed.

Core expectation

Staff must model the standards they expect from pupils. At Thamesfield this means right time, right place, right thing; calm communication; clear boundaries; professional appearance; safe relationships; and a willingness to be held accountable.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy has been written with regard to relevant legislation and guidance, including:

- The School Staffing (England) Regulations 2009, including regulation 7 on conduct and discipline of staff;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education;
- Teachers' Standards;
- Education Act 2002;
- Equality Act 2010;
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR;
- Working Together to Safeguard Children;
- Health and safety legislation and associated school policies.

Staff must also comply with their contract of employment, professional standards, relevant school policies and reasonable management instructions.

3. Professional expectations and Thamesfield values

Staff are role models. The way adults speak, dress, respond, record, challenge and repair sets the culture of the school. All staff are expected to uphold the school values.

Value	What this means for staff
Integrity	Do the right thing at the right time, in the right place. Be honest, reliable and accountable.
Respect	Treat pupils, colleagues, parents/carers and visitors with dignity. Be calm, professional and fair, even when situations are difficult.
Perseverance	Do not give up on pupils who are trying. Stay consistent, follow up properly and keep working towards repair and improvement.

Staff will:

- maintain high standards of attendance, punctuality and professional reliability;
- use professional language and never use offensive, discriminatory or humiliating language;
- challenge poor behaviour calmly without mirroring it;
- act with fairness and without favouritism;
- follow safeguarding procedures immediately and accurately;
- follow reasonable instructions from leaders and work within agreed policies;
- maintain confidentiality and protect pupil and staff information;
- avoid conduct that could undermine the school, the profession or public trust.

4. Safeguarding, allegations, low-level concerns and whistle-blowing

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Staff must read and follow the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, know who the DSL and DDSs are, understand how to record and report concerns, and act immediately where they believe a child is at risk of harm.

Staff must report safeguarding concerns in line with school procedures. This includes concerns about abuse, neglect, exploitation, radicalisation, peer-on-peer harm, harmful sexual behaviour, online risk, attendance concerns, mental health concerns and any behaviour or situation that creates a safeguarding concern.

Allegations that may meet the harm threshold

An allegation may meet the harm threshold where someone working in or on behalf of the school has behaved in a way that has harmed a child or may have harmed a child; may have committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm; or behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

Any such allegation must be reported immediately to the Headteacher. If the concern is about the Headteacher, it must be reported to the Chair of the Management Committee. Where an allegation may meet the harm threshold, the school will follow safeguarding procedures and seek advice from the LADO where appropriate.

Low-level concerns

A low-level concern is any concern, however small, that an adult may have acted in a way that is inconsistent with this code of conduct, even if it does not meet the harm threshold. Examples may include being over-friendly with pupils, showing favouritism, using inappropriate language, humiliating pupils, taking photographs on a personal device, or placing themselves in situations that could be misinterpreted.

Staff are expected to share low-level concerns and are encouraged to self-refer where they have acted in a way that could be misinterpreted. Raising concerns early supports a culture of openness, learning and safeguarding.

Whistle-blowing

Staff should raise concerns about wrongdoing, unsafe practice or attempts to cover up wrongdoing. This includes concerns about safeguarding, health and safety, discrimination, financial irregularity, breach of legal duty or behaviour that places pupils, staff or the school at risk. Concerns should normally be raised with the Headteacher. If the concern is about the Headteacher, it should be raised with the Chair of the Management Committee. Where the concern relates to safeguarding practice or an allegation against an adult, advice may also be sought from the LADO.

5. Sexual harassment, discrimination and dignity at work

Thamesfield College will not tolerate sexual harassment, discrimination, bullying, victimisation or degrading behaviour. This applies to staff conduct towards pupils, colleagues, parents/carers, visitors and members of the wider community.

Sexual harassment includes unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature, including sexual comments or jokes, unwanted touching, sexualised messages, displaying or sending offensive material, suggestive behaviour, sexual propositions or any conduct that violates dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Staff are expected to challenge and report sexual harassment, discriminatory behaviour and bullying. Witnesses and those raising concerns will be supported and protected from victimisation.

6. Staff-pupil relationships and professional boundaries

Strong relationships are central to Thamesfield. However, relational practice must never become informal, secretive or personally dependent. Staff must maintain clear professional boundaries with pupils at all times.

Staff will:

- work with pupils in visible, appropriate and professionally accountable ways;
- avoid unnecessary one-to-one situations where they cannot be seen or accessed by others;
- ensure a colleague or line manager knows where planned one-to-one work is taking place;
- not share personal contact details, personal social media accounts or private messaging routes with pupils;
- not meet pupils outside school unless this is a planned, authorised school activity;
- not give personal gifts to pupils; rewards must be part of agreed school systems;
- report any interaction that could be misinterpreted or any concern about another adult's relationship with a pupil.

Staff must not transport pupils in personal vehicles unless this has been authorised by SLT, risk assessed and agreed in line with school procedures.

7. Physical contact, personal space and restrictive intervention

Thamesfield position

Staff must not put their hands on pupils to gain compliance, move them on, make them work, stop them leaving a room or manage refusal. Physical contact is only appropriate where there is an immediate risk of harm to the pupil or another person and no safer alternative is available.

Staff must not shout and scream, crowd pupils, stand over pupils, deliberately enter personal space to force a response, block doors or exits, or use their body as a barrier. If a pupil wants to leave a room, staff must allow them to leave, keep calm supervision where safe, and alert pastoral staff, SLT or the DSL as appropriate.

Where a pupil leaves site without permission, staff must not chase the pupil down the road because this may increase risk to the pupil and to staff. Staff must inform SLT/DSL immediately, follow the pupil's risk assessment and safeguarding procedures, contact parents/carers, and contact the police/report the pupil missing where the pupil's safety cannot be confirmed.

All staff must read and follow the Restrictive Intervention Policy. Physical intervention must never be used as punishment, threat, deterrent or convenience.

8. Communication, social media and online conduct

Staff must maintain professional boundaries in all communication. Communication with pupils and parents/carers must take place through approved school systems and must be necessary, appropriate and recorded where required.

- Staff must not contact pupils through personal social media, personal email, private messaging apps or personal phone numbers.
- Staff should not search for pupils or parents/carers on social media or engage with their personal profiles.
- Staff social media accounts should be secure and must not contain material that could undermine safeguarding, professional standards or the reputation of the school.
- Staff must not post images, comments or information that identifies pupils or shares confidential school information.
- Staff must not make negative or inappropriate comments about the school, colleagues, pupils or families online.

9. Acceptable use of technology, personal devices and AI

Staff must use technology responsibly, lawfully and professionally. School systems, devices and accounts are provided for school business and may be monitored in line with relevant policies and legal requirements.

Staff must not use school technology to view, store, create or share illegal, inappropriate, offensive or unsafe material. Staff must not use personal phones or cameras to take photographs, videos or recordings of pupils.

Personal mobile phones must not be used in front of pupils unless there is a clear professional, safeguarding or emergency reason. Some staff carry phones as part of their role; where this is necessary, staff must use them discreetly and sensibly around pupils. Personal use should take place away from pupils and should not interfere with duties or supervision.

Staff must not take photographs or recordings of pupils on personal devices. Pupil photographs or recordings must only be taken on school devices or school phones, for a clear school purpose and in line with consent, safeguarding and data protection expectations. Staff should avoid capturing obvious pupil faces wherever possible, particularly given the safeguarding risks linked to image sharing and AI image manipulation.

Use of AI tools

AI tools may support planning, administration and resource creation, but staff remain professionally responsible for anything they create, adapt or share. Staff must check accuracy, appropriateness, bias, safeguarding risk and copyright before using AI-generated material.

Staff must not enter personal, confidential, safeguarding, health, behaviour, SEND or identifiable pupil/staff information into AI tools unless the tool has been approved for that purpose and appropriate data protection safeguards are in place. Where in doubt, staff must ask SLT before using AI with school information.

10. Confidentiality, information sharing and data protection

Staff have access to sensitive and confidential information about pupils, families, staff and the school. This information must be handled securely and only used for legitimate school purposes.

- Information must not be disclosed unless there is a lawful reason, safeguarding reason or appropriate consent.
- Information must not be used to embarrass, humiliate, blackmail or disadvantage anyone.

- Staff must not discuss confidential matters where they can be overheard by pupils, parents/carers or visitors.
- Safeguarding concerns must always be reported through the correct safeguarding route; confidentiality must never prevent a child protection concern being shared appropriately.
- Staff must follow data protection expectations when using email, documents, cloud storage, AI tools and messaging systems.

11. Honesty, integrity, gifts and hospitality

Staff must act with honesty and integrity in all aspects of their work. This includes accurate record keeping, expenses, attendance, qualifications, recruitment information, handling money and using school property, facilities and resources.

Staff must inform the Headteacher promptly of any change in circumstances that may affect their suitability to work with children or their professional role. This includes relevant criminal investigations, cautions, convictions, professional conduct matters or other information that may affect safer working practice.

As a maintained school, Thamesfield College follows the Surrey County Council Gifts and Hospitality Policy. Staff should normally refuse offers of gifts and hospitality unless there are exceptional circumstances. The key principle is openness: staff must avoid any actual or perceived conflict of interest, preferential treatment or sense of obligation.

Small tokens of goodwill may be accepted where refusal may offend or distress the giver, particularly in a school context, provided the gift is not of significant value and does not create a real or perceived obligation. Examples may include a small box of chocolates, flowers or similar token of thanks.

Cash, cheques, vouchers or monetary gifts must not be accepted. Gifts beyond a small token of goodwill should be politely declined unless there is a clear justification, Headteacher approval has been obtained in advance wherever possible, and the offer has been recorded in line with Surrey procedures.

Offers of hospitality should normally be refused unless there is a clear business need, the level of hospitality is proportionate, attendance adds value to the school or council, and it could not reasonably be seen to influence a decision. Staff must take particular care with contractors, suppliers, services, procurement or anyone who may appear to be seeking influence.

Offers of gifts or hospitality, whether accepted or declined, must be recorded where required under Surrey procedures. Staff should speak to the Headteacher if they are unsure. Gifts or hospitality offered to a spouse, partner or family member because of a staff member's role should also be refused and recorded where required.

12. Dress code and professional presentation

Staff are expected to look smart, professional and appropriate to their role within the school. Thamesfield College does not require daily business wear for normal pupil-facing work, but staff are expected to maintain a professional standard of presentation and dress in a way that supports safety, dignity and credibility with pupils, families, colleagues and visitors.

Area	Expectation
Everyday expectation	Staff should wear smart, professional clothing appropriate to their role within the school. Clothing must be clean, tidy, in good repair and suitable for movement around the site.
Shirts and branded clothing	Staff may wear approved Thamesfield branded polo shirts, quarter-zips or outerwear. Staff wearing shirt/trouser combinations should wear a shirt unless wearing an approved Thamesfield branded polo. T-shirts and non-Thamesfield branded polo shirts are not appropriate for normal pupil-facing work.
Denim	Jeans and denim clothing are not appropriate for work. This includes blue, black or coloured denim.
Suits and ties	Staff may choose to wear a suit if they wish. Business suits are not required day to day and may not always be the most appropriate clothing for the setting. They may be appropriate for higher-level meetings, local authority meetings, formal panels, external visits, interviews, inspections, dignitary visits or similar formal occasions. Ties are optional.
Footwear	Staff should wear shoes, boots or other smart/professional footwear suitable for safe movement around the site. Trainers, open-toed footwear, flip flops or footwear that prevents safe movement are not appropriate for normal school wear.
Hot weather	Tailored shorts may be permitted during periods of adverse hot weather where the Headteacher has announced a temporary adjustment to the dress code. Shorts must remain smart, professional and appropriate for work.
Active or practical work	PE, outdoor learning, DofE, messy tasks, practical work or trips may require appropriate clothing, footwear or protective equipment. Staff should change back where appropriate once the activity is finished.
Not appropriate	Revealing clothing, clothing exposing underwear, ripped or excessively worn clothing, clothing with offensive, political or contentious slogans, unsafe jewellery, trainers, denim, or clothing that prevents safe movement or professional practice.

Tattoos and appearance	Visible tattoos are acceptable where they are not offensive or inappropriate. Tattoos on hands are not appropriate unless already agreed with the Headteacher or linked to a medical, cultural or religious consideration. Staff should maintain good personal hygiene and a professional appearance.
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The school will take account of disability, pregnancy, religion, culture, menopause, medical needs and role-specific requirements. Staff should speak to their line manager where an adjustment is needed.

If clothing is not appropriate, staff may be asked to resolve this discreetly. Repeated failure to follow the dress code may be addressed through line management or disciplinary procedures.

13. Conduct outside work

Staff must not act in a way inside or outside work that could bring the school, the profession or their suitability to work with children into question. This includes relevant criminal conduct, violence, sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment, online conduct, breach of confidentiality or public comments that damage trust in the school.

Staff must consider that Thamesfield pupils, families and partner schools may see staff in the local community and online. Staff are not expected to have no private life, but they are expected to maintain conduct that is compatible with their role and the trust placed in them.

14. Attendance, punctuality and professional reliability

Staff are expected to attend work punctually, be ready for duties and lessons, follow absence reporting procedures, meet deadlines, complete records promptly and communicate professionally. At Thamesfield, adult reliability directly affects pupil safety, routines and culture.

Staff should arrive prepared for the day, attend briefings/debriefs where required, carry out duties, follow agreed supervision arrangements and inform leaders promptly if they are unable to fulfil a responsibility.

15. Monitoring, breaches and links with other policies

The Headteacher is responsible for the implementation of this policy. The Management Committee is responsible for approval and oversight. Concerns about staff conduct will be dealt with fairly, proportionately and in line with relevant HR, safeguarding and disciplinary procedures.

A breach of this code may result in management action or disciplinary action, depending on the seriousness and circumstances. Where a concern may be safeguarding related, it will be managed through the school's safeguarding procedures.

This policy links with:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy;
- Behaviour, Relationships and Culture Policy;
- Restrictive Intervention Policy;
- Whistle-blowing Policy;
- Low-level Concerns procedures;
- Online Safety and Acceptable Use policies;
- Data Protection Policy;

- Staff Disciplinary and Grievance procedures;
- Gifts and Hospitality / Finance procedures;
- Health and Safety Policy;
- SEND Policy.

Final note

The purpose of this code is not to catch staff out. It is to make professional expectations clear, protect pupils and staff, strengthen safeguarding and ensure that Thamesfield adults model the culture we expect pupils to learn.



Staff Expectations at a Glance

Use this summary alongside the full Staff Code of Conduct Policy.

Be calm. Be professional. Be boundaried. Be accountable.

Professional conduct ▪ Model integrity, respect and perseverance. ▪ Use professional language and good judgement. ▪ Be punctual, prepared and reliable.	Dress and presentation ▪ Dress smartly and appropriately for your role within the school. ▪ No denim or trainers; shoes, boots or smart footwear only. ▪ Wear a shirt or approved Thamesfield branded polo; hot-weather adjustments are Headteacher approved.
Boundaries with pupils ▪ Keep relationships warm, visible and professionally accountable. ▪ No personal social media, messaging or contact details. ▪ Do not give personal gifts to pupils outside agreed school systems.	Phones, photos and AI ▪ Do not use personal phones in front of pupils unless there is a clear work or safety reason. ▪ Pupil photos must only be taken on school devices; avoid obvious faces where possible. ▪ Do not upload confidential or identifiable information into AI tools.
Safeguarding and concerns ▪ Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. ▪ Report concerns immediately and record them properly. ▪ Low-level concerns should be shared with the Headteacher.	Physical contact ▪ Do not put hands on pupils unless there is an immediate risk of harm. ▪ Do not block doors, crowd pupils or deliberately escalate situations. ▪ Follow the Restrictive Intervention Policy and record incidents properly.
Conduct and integrity ▪ Keep information confidential and use school systems appropriately. ▪ Declare gifts or hospitality in line with Surrey procedures. ▪ Never accept cash or anything that could be seen as influence.	When in doubt... ▪ Ask: is it safe, professional, respectful and accountable? ▪ If unsure, stop and check with a line manager or SLT. ▪ If something goes wrong, be honest, report it and help repair it.

Remember: The standard you walk past is the standard you accept. If something concerns you, report it. If something feels unclear, ask. If something goes wrong, own it and sort it.

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