

Reading Girls' School



Staff Code of Conduct

May 2012



**Business &
Enterprise**

RATIFIED BY FGB – June 2012

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Kayes'.

Peter Kayes
Chair of Governors

Updated October 2015
Review within three years

1 INTRODUCTION

The governing body is required to set out a Code of Conduct for all school employees. All staff who are employed under the Teachers' Terms & Conditions of Employment. All staff should be aware that a failure to comply with the following Code of Conduct could result in disciplinary action including dismissal.

2 PURPOSE, SCOPE AND PRINCIPLES

2.1 A Code of Conduct is designed to give clear guidance on the standards of behaviour all school staff are expected to observe, and the school should notify staff of this code and the expectations therein. School staff are in a unique position of influence and must adhere to behaviour that sets a good example to all members of the school community.

2.2 This Code of Conduct applies to:

- all staff who are employed by the school, including the Headteacher;
- all voluntary staff who work within the school community.

2.3 The Code of Conduct does not apply to:

- peripatetic staff who are centrally employed by the LA;
- employees of external contractors and providers of services.

(Such staff are covered by the relevant Code of Conduct of their employing body)

3 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

3.1 RGS Equal Opportunity policy reflects one of the School's core values. All employees are entitled to fair treatment by others, and to be treated with respect and dignity. In return, they are expected to treat others in this way.

4 OTHER SUPPORTING POLICIES

4.1 To assist the School the following policies exist in conjunction with the Code of Conduct Policy

- Safeguarding
- Disciplinary
- Complaints
- Anti Bullying
- Equal Opportunities
- Data Protection
- Internet Use
- Whistleblowing

5 SAFEGUARDING STUDENTS

5.1 Staff have a duty to safeguard students from:

- physical abuse
- sexual abuse
- emotional abuse
- verbal abuse
- neglect

National safeguarding guidance is under constant review and any changes to this guidance that affects the school will be reflected in the School's Safeguarding Policy and not necessarily duplicated in this policy.

5.2 The duty to safeguard students includes the duty to report concerns about a student to the school's Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) for Child Protection who, in turn, has a duty to record such concerns.

5.3 The school's DSOs are the Headteacher and the Inclusion Manager.

5.4 Staff have a duty to make a written record of any complaint about themselves or another member of staff and pass this information within one working day to the Headteacher. Where the complaint is against the Headteacher, this information must be passed to the Chair of Governors.

5.5 Staff are provided access to the school's Safeguarding Policy, Whistleblowing Policy, Behaviour Policy and Anti-Bullying Policy and they must be familiar with these documents.

5.6 Staff must not demean or undermine students, their parents/carers, or colleagues through their actions or use of language.

5.7 Staff must take reasonable care of students under their supervision with the aim of ensuring their safety and welfare.

6 STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

6.1 Staff must comply with school policies and procedures that support the well-being and development of students

6.2 Staff must co-operate and collaborate with colleagues and with external agencies where necessary to support the well-being and development of students.

6.3 Staff must follow reasonable instructions that support the development of students.

7 HONESTY AND INTEGRITY

- 7.1 Staff must maintain high standards of honesty and integrity in their work. This includes the handling and claiming of money and the use of school property and facilities.
- 7.2 Staff must maintain high standards of confidentiality and must only discuss matters concerning students or families with the relevant members of staff or DSP (see Section 8).
- 7.3 Employees must not disclose official/confidential information. Employees must not use information obtained in the course of their employment for personal gain or benefit, nor should they pass it onto others who might use it in such a way. Also for information relating to patents and intellectual property.
- 7.4 Information on students may not be disclosed without the consent of the child's parent, or where a child is of reasonable understanding, the child. The only exceptions to this are:
 - To safeguard the welfare of the child, information may be disclosed in accordance with the school's child protection policy, Child Protection Guidance and Working Together to Safeguard Children.
 - Where information is requested by the Police to detect or prevent offending
 - Where otherwise allowed to be disclosed by a legal obligation (for example, to give information to a child protection case conference), or an Order of a Court.
- 7.5 It may not be appropriate to agree to maintain confidentiality, where to do so would cause harm or allow unacceptable practices to persist. For further information see the Whistleblowing Policy.

8 DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

- 8.1 Employees of the school may in the course of their duties have access to confidential information. The law requires that certain types of information must be available to LA members, auditors, government departments, service users and the public.
- 8.2 Employees must not use any information obtained during their employment for personal gain or benefit, nor should they pass it on to others who might use it for personal advantage.
- 8.3 Many employees have access to personal information relating to other employees, students and other members of the public. All employees must treat this information in a discreet and confidential manner (Data Protection Act) and adhere to the following guidelines.
 - Written records and correspondence should be kept securely at all times.

- Information relating to staff/students/public must not be disclosed either orally or in writing to unauthorised persons.
- Information relating to students/public must not be given over the telephone unless the caller has given details of their right to ask for such information. Employees should check on the caller's right to information by obtaining their telephone number and calling back to check their identity or by asking for a written request for information.
- Confidential matters relating to staff/students/public should not be discussed in areas where they may be heard by passers-by, i.e. corridors, reception, staff room outside school etc.
- Any breach of confidentiality may be regarded as misconduct and be subject to disciplinary action (Disciplinary Policy).

8.4 As a general rule employees should not make statements or write letters to the media, if in doubt they should refer such matters to the Headteacher.

9 ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES INCLUDING CONFLICT OF INTEREST

9.1 Additional activities

9.1.1 For the purpose of the Working Time Regulations employees who have more than one employment (either inside or outside the school) should seek their Headteacher's approval, this should be reviewed annually. Before undertaking another job, employees must also inform their manager of other work undertaken so that the total level of work undertaken can be monitored. Managers should also find out if prospective employees have secondary employment that may prevent them from performing their duties with the school to the standards desired.

9.1.2 The policy does not bar all outside work, however, all employees must be clear about their contractual obligations and must not take outside employment that conflicts with the school's interests or damages the school's interests or reputation.

9.2 Conflict of Interest

9.2.1 All employees should ensure before they undertake additional employment that there is no conflict of interest with their duties or the School's interest.

9.2.2 The public expects transparency and accountability in how decisions are made. The School expects its employees to give the highest possible standard of service and to avoid any situation where private and School interests may conflict. An employee, who believes he/she is in a situation that may cause a conflict of interest, should discuss their situation with their Line Manager/Headteacher.

9.2.3 Where this is not declared and there is a clear conflict of interest this may be considered misconduct. Where there is a financial/other benefit to the employee it may be seen as gross misconduct. Where there is a likelihood of dismissal for inappropriate personal interest, it is the responsibility of the School to demonstrate that there is a genuine risk in continuing to employ the employee in the same capacity. An investigation will be necessary before beginning such a course of action. Below are further examples of what constitutes personal interest:

- Employees must exercise fairness and impartiality when dealing with all parents, students, suppliers, other contractors and sub-contractors and no part of the local community should be discriminated against.
- Employees who have access to confidential information on tenders or costs for either internal or external contractors must not disclose that information to any unauthorised party or organisation
- Employees who engage or supervise contractors or have any other official relationship with contractors and have had previously had or currently have a private or domestic relationship with them, must declare that relationship to their manager.

9.2.4 Employees must also declare an interest where:

- An employee has membership of any organisation not open to the public without formal membership and commitment of allegiance and which has secrecy about rules, membership or conduct.
- An employee allocates school places to an acquaintance or relative.

10 RELATIONSHIPS

10.1 Employees should always remember their responsibilities to the community they serve and ensure courteous, efficient and impartial service delivery to all groups and individuals within the community.

11 CONTACT WITH STUDENTS AND OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE

11.1 The advisory document “Guidance for Safe Working Practice for the Protection of Children and Staff in Education Settings” is an example of good practice and staff are expected to be guided by it. The guidance includes information on dealing with

- Infatuation
- Social contact
- Physical contact
- Physical education and other activities which require physical contact
- Showers and changing
- Pupils in distress
- Behaviour management
- Care, control and physical intervention

- Sexual contact with young people
- One to one situations
- Overnight supervision and examinations
- Transporting children
- Educational visits and after school clubs
- First aid and administration of medication
- Intimate care
- Sensitive areas of the curriculum
- Photography, videos and other creative arts

11.2 Staff working with students on a one to one situation are more vulnerable to allegations being made against them. Teachers and others should recognise this possibility and plan and conduct such meetings accordingly. Every attempt should be made to ensure the safety and security needs of both staff and students are met. At Reading Girls' School - **ALL** staff who are working with individual students or small groups must follow the same procedure:

- other staff to be informed
- if after school meetings held such as one to one revision sessions, booster sessions etc then the staff member must follow the school procedure of notifying the school admin office providing a list of names and the times of the session (this can be completed via e-mail or a written note to the office)
- avoid meetings with students in a remote or secluded areas of the school
- if working after 4.30 pm with students staff member has to move into the main school building
- ensure there is visual access and an open door in one to one situations

12 APPOINTMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF STAFF

12.1 Employees involved in the recruitment of internal and external staff must ensure that the decision to appoint is based on merit. (Refer to Recruit & Retention Policy). An appointment that is based on anything other than the ability of the candidate to do the job may leave the School vulnerable to allegations of discrimination. Employees must not be involved in an appointment where they are related to an applicant, or have a close personal relationship with him or her.

12.2 For the purposes of this policy guidance the definitions of partners/relatives are ongoing personal and emotional relationships, marriage and close family members.

12.3 It is the policy of the school that spouses/partners will not be employed where there will be a line management relationship between them relating to discipline, promotion or pay adjustments and/or where they will be employed together in the area of contracts or finance. This will ensure that our parents and staff feel confident that decisions within the School are made in a fair and equitable way based on the

reasonable application of professional judgements. Equally managers and supervisors will want to ensure that their decisions are not influenced by personal considerations. The requirements of managers to maintain confidentiality may also put strains on personal relationships.

- 12.4 If a personal relationship develops where there is a line management responsibility, managers must investigate the situation and discuss the issues with the employees concerned. Where there is evidence that the working relationship will cause a conflict of interest i.e. where the service involves financial and/or contract work the manager must look for an alternative post for one of the employees involved. The decision of who should move to an alternative post must be based on the degree of impact the loss of either employee would have on the particular service. Each case must be decided on its merits to ensure that the decision made is on objective and reasonable grounds and not unfairly discriminatory.
- 12.5 There may be an opportunity to retain both employees in the same area if another manager can take on the line management element of the role in the same department or if the work can be rearranged. A decision can only be made once a full investigation has taken place and the employees have had the opportunity to express their views. Where there is no alternative post or way of working, this may result in dismissal for “for some substantial reason”. Managers must ensure that the decision to redeploy or dismiss is fair and based on measurable criteria. A full investigation must be undertaken before a decision is made. Dismissal is not automatic all other avenues must first be explored.

13 GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY

- 13.1 Employees should not accept any personal gifts from students and their families, contractors and external suppliers unless the gifts are insignificant items with a value not exceeding £10.
- 13.2 Employees must not accept offers of hospitality unless there is a genuine need to impart information or represent the School in the community. Offers to attend purely social and sporting functions should be accepted only when these are part of the life of the community or where the School should be seen to be represented. They should be properly authorised and recorded in the Gifts/Hospitality Register held in the School.

14 ACCEPTANCE OF GIFTS

- 14.3 Under the Prevention of Corruption Acts (1906, 1916) it is an offence for an employee of a public body in his or her official capacity to accept any gift, inducement or reward, including hospitality, for showing favour or disfavour to any person or other organisation. It is the responsibility of the person receiving the

favour to prove that it was not received dishonestly. The following must be considered:

- Employees acting in an official capacity must not give the impression that their conduct both inside and outside work with any person or organisation is influenced by the receipt of gifts, rewards and hospitality or any other such consideration.
- Employees must think about the circumstances in which they are made offers and be aware that they may be regarded as owing a favour in return.
- Employees must seek permission from their line managers before accepting such offers and be aware that the offers may have to be returned/refused.
- When gifts/hospitality have to be declined those making the offer should be courteously but firmly informed of the procedures operating within the School.
- How an employee should react to an offer depends on the type of offer, the relationship between the parties involved and the circumstances in which the gift or hospitality is offered.
- Employees must not be seen to be acting in their own personal interests and need to be careful that their behaviour cannot be misinterpreted.
- An offer of a bribe or commission made by contractors, their agents or by a member of the public must be reported to the line manager. Hospitality from contractors should also be avoided for where employees/team are singled out for example Christmas lunch etc, this may be perceived as preferential treatment.
- Employees must not accept significant personal gifts. However, there are occasions when students or parents wish to pass small tokens of appreciation to staff e.g. at Christmas or as a thank-you and this is acceptable. However, it is unacceptable to receive gifts on a regular basis or of any significant value, generally not exceeding the value of £10.
- Employees must be particularly wary from accepting gifts from a student where it is suspected that a student has an infatuation on the employee.

14.4 No one working for, employed by, or providing services on behalf of the school is to make, or encourage another to make personal gain out of its activities in any way. Any person becoming aware of a personal gain being made at the expense of the School, contractors or the public should follow the Whistleblowing Policy.

14.5 The acceptance of gifts and hospitality may be a subject of criticism placing the School in a position that it has to defend such action. Consequently, it is essential that all details of gifts and hospitality (except small tokens by parents or students as detailed above) be recorded.

15 SPONSORSHIP RECEIVING

15.1 Where an external organisation wishes to sponsor a School activity, whether by invitation, tender, negotiation or voluntarily, the basic principles concerning

acceptance of gifts or hospitality apply. Particular care must be taken when dealing with contractors or potential contractors.

16 MATTERS OF CONSCIENCE

- 16.1 Where an employee believes he or she is being required to act in a way which is illegal, improper, unethical, or in breach of the School's conventions, which may involve possible maladministration, or which is otherwise inconsistent with the Policy for Conduct he or she should refer to their line manager or Head teacher or to the Whistleblowing Policy.
- 16.2 Where an employee is aware, or has evidence of illegal, improper or abusive behaviour of another employee he or she should refer to their line manager or the Policy for Equal Opportunities.
- 16.3 Where an employee is aware, or has evidence of illegal, improper or abusive behaviour of another employee towards a student, he or she must notify immediately the Head teacher, unless the allegation is against the Head teacher, when he or she should bring it to the attention of the Chair of Governors.
- 16.4 Where an employee fails to report such concerns outlined in paragraph 16.3 this may be construed as misconduct and lead to disciplinary action.

17 PERSONAL BEHAVIOUR

The School believes in treating all employees with respect and trust in a mature, respectful and considerate manner and expects the same approach from employees. The School expects employees to respect the School's property, other employees and their property, suppliers and the public at all times. Employees also demonstrate the characteristics they are trying to inspire in students. Failure to observe the standards of behaviour expected breaks the bond of trust that is fundamental to the employer/employee relationship and may lead to disciplinary action.

- The Discipline Policy will be initiated where any employee is found to be in breach of this Policy. If an employee is found guilty of gross misconduct he or she may face dismissal.

17.1 Absence from Work

All leave should be approved prior to it being taken. This includes parental leave, special leave etc. Failure to notify absence is unauthorised absence which could lead to disciplinary action.

17.2 **Poor timekeeping**

Managers must set a timekeeping standard that is known to all employees. This standard should be applied consistently with employees arriving and departing from their place of work at the agreed times.

Employees must inform their managers/colleagues of their whereabouts and expected time of return when they are out of the school e.g. off-site meetings/visits etc.

17.3 **Negligence**

Negligence arises from failure by the employee to exercise reasonable care in his or her work. Employees must not cause loss or damage through carelessness, negligence, a reckless act or breach of instructions. It is only a disciplinary offence if the individual is considered to be personally responsible.

17.4 **Refusal to obey a reasonable instruction**

It is the responsibility of all employees to carry out reasonable instructions. In those circumstances where an employee refuses to obey a reasonable instruction, it will be necessary to investigate the situation and depending on the outcome of an investigation it may result in disciplinary action. See the Whistleblowing Policy, where refusal to carry out a reasonable instruction is linked to a matter of conscience.

17.5 **Social Behaviour**

Employees should be aware of the following expected standards of behaviour when attending work related events in and outside of worktime where attendance could be seen as representing the School:

- This policy will still apply e.g. regarding drug/alcohol abuse, harassment and discrimination.
- Consideration and respect for others.
- Those in a position of management/supervision should not behave in a way that could undermine their position.
- The School should always be seen in a favourable way by the public.

Employees should be aware of the dangers implicit with the use of social networking sites. Employees must, if they use such sites, have the highest security and privacy setting and ensure no information pertaining to the School or examples of personal behaviour could undermine their position or reflect negatively on the School.

In line with the Safeguarding policy no employee should enable or allow existing students to have access to their social network site. This is in line with Safeguarding practice in the School.

Employees must not access their blogs or social networking sites during working hours. Access using the School's IT systems is restricted to official breaks, unless specific permission is granted.

Employees must not post information on a blog or social networking site which is commercially sensitive and/or is confidential to the School, its suppliers or customers.

Employees must not make reference on a social networking site to the School, its employees, its customers, partners and suppliers. Any of the aforementioned parties must not be identifiable from any comments posted on an employee's personal blog

Employees must not post entries on a blog or social networking site which are derogatory, defamatory, discriminatory or offensive in any way, or which could bring the School, its employees, its customers, partners and suppliers into disrepute or is likely to have a negative impact on the reputation of any of these parties.

Employees should be aware that blogs and social networking posts may create documents which the courts can order to be disclosed for use in litigation. Consequently, employees will be assumed to have written any contentious items unless they can prove definitively that they have not done so.

The School will monitor its IT systems as is deemed necessary in order to prevent inappropriate usage. Hard copy of blog entries which could include screen shots will be used in any disciplinary proceedings. Employees whose conduct breaches this policy in any way will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the School's disciplinary procedure up to, and including, dismissal.

Any blog entries or comments on social networking sites made inside or outside the workplace that are defamatory, derogatory, or discriminatory about the School, its customers, suppliers or employees will be investigated as gross misconduct. If substantiated, such conduct may lead to summary dismissal after the due process of the School's disciplinary procedure has been followed.

Employees are also advised not to provide their private mobile numbers, private e-mail address etc. to any student in the School.

Employees using private vehicles for School business must ensure:

- The vehicle is road worthy and complies with Road traffic/Transport regulations
- That the vehicle is insured for "business use".
- They are licensed to drive the vehicle.
- They do not drive under the influence of drink/drugs or where there is ill health that may impair their ability to drive the vehicle safely.
- They abide by the current Road Traffic/Transport regulations.

17.6 Alcohol/Drugs

Employees must ensure that they are not unfit for duty due to the consumption of alcohol and/or drugs. Staff should be aware of the lasting effects of alcohol and drugs (both prescription and illegal), and ensure they are fit to discharge their duties.

17.7 Smoking

Employees must comply with the non smoking policy on site.

17.8 Health and Safety

Employees also have a duty to familiarise themselves with all the safety Regulations that apply to their job and in the area in which they work. Refer to the School's Health and Safety Policy.

18 PRIVATE USE OF OFFICIAL FACILITIES

18.1 Employees are not to use official stationery for private purposes and must not carry out private correspondence during working time. Employees are allowed to make private essential telephone calls that cannot be made outside working hours but this privilege must not be abused and the duration of the calls must be kept to a minimum.

18.2 Employees must obtain prior approval from their manager to borrow school property for use to work at home. When removing school property from the building they may be asked to show evidence of their managers consent.

19 REPORTING OF ARRESTS, PROSECUTIONS ETC

19.1 Employees must report to their manager details of any arrest or criminal conviction or caution made against them by the Police (except for minor traffic offences, i.e. where they do not mean imprisonment or suspension of his or her driving licence), where the offence is also a breach of discipline and/or may have a direct impact on the employee's job, or where it calls into question their suitability to work with children.

20 FRAUD AND CORRUPTION

20.1 An employee who commits a fraudulent act is liable to disciplinary action, which may include dismissal and possible criminal prosecution even for a first offence. Fraud is defined as any manipulation of an accounting system or supply system to enable public money or material to be misappropriated.

Employees involved in the investigation of alleged fraud may be required to sign an additional code of conduct relating to their specific duties

20.2 Employees must not make any false statement e.g. on subsistence/mileage claims, etc. Where there is evidence of an employee submitting such claims, he or she will be liable to disciplinary action and/or prosecution under the Theft Act 1968.

20.3 Where an employee has witnessed misconduct i.e. a fraudulent activity; he or she will have a duty to report such an incident. Refer to Whistleblowing Policy.

21 DISCRIMINATION

21.1 It is the School's policy that all current and prospective employees will have equal opportunity for employment, promotion and training on the basis of relevant ability, qualifications and merit. Employees must ensure they do not unfairly discriminate on the grounds of gender, race, colour, marital status, national or ethnic origin, nationality, disability, sexuality, age or religion. All job applicants and workers are treated equally and the School are willing to make reasonable adjustments where appropriate for disabled applicants and workers.

22 HARASSMENT/BULLYING

22.1 The School seeks to provide an environment for all employees, contractors and temporary workers free from harassment, bullying intimidation and victimisation.

22.2 Disciplinary action will be taken against any employee who is found to have committed a deliberate or unlawful act of discrimination, sexual or racial harassment or bullying. Refer to Equal Opportunities Policy

23 ABUSE OF THE E-MAIL/INTERNET

23.1 The School will not accept any abuse of the e-mail/internet or telephones. Such behaviour will result in disciplinary action.

23.2 The downloading, sending or accessing of offensive material that affects the dignity of any individual or group of individuals at work may constitute harassment. Threatening, obscene or harassing messages including chain e-mails and material that will cause offence and/or degrade individuals or minority groups will constitute a disciplinary offence which may result in dismissal.

23.3 Under the Obscene Publications Act 1959 an employee may have criminal liability if an individual publishes material that could corrupt or deprave the persons likely to see the material; this includes the transmission of data stored electronically.

24 DRESS AND APPEARANCE

24.1 Dress and Appearance are matters of personal choice and self-expression. However, staff should consider the manner of dress and appearance appropriate to their

professional role which may be different to that adopted in their personal life. Staff should ensure they are dressed decently, safely and appropriately for the tasks they undertake. Those who dress or appear in a manner which could be considered as inappropriate could render themselves vulnerable to criticism or allegation. Further clarification can be found in the staff handbook.

This Policy was Approved by the Full Governing Body on 20th June 2012.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Kayes', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Peter Kayes
Chair of Governors