

COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

(Heart of England School Annex to SMBC Code of Conduct & Ethics for Employees)

Heart of England School expects its employees to conduct themselves in a manner conducive to maintaining good working relationships with colleagues, parents/carers and students. Equally, stakeholders are entitled to expect the highest standards of ethical conduct from all school employees.

This policy applies to:

- All employees paid or unpaid
- Other workers including Council partners, contractors, consultants and agency staff
- Suppliers and those providing services under a contract in their own premises
- Governors

This policy should also be used in conjunction with other professional standards and in conjunction with other school policies.

Failure to adhere to or any contravention of the Code, whether or not within the workplace or working time, may be seen as a breach of discipline and could lead to action being taken against you under the appropriate procedure. While workers who are not employees of the school are expected to comply with the spirit of the code, any action which might be taken in response to a breach will depend on the precise nature of their working relationship with the school.

COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS & STUDENTS

Communication between employees and service users, especially students and parent/carers, by whatever method, should take place within clear and explicit professional boundaries. This includes the wider use of technology such as mobile phones, text messaging, emails, digital cameras, videos, webcams, websites and blogs. Employees should not share any personal information. They should not request, or respond to, any personal information from the student or parent/carer other than that which might be appropriate as part of their professional role. Employees should ensure that all communications are transparent and open to scrutiny.

Employees should also be circumspect in their communications with students so as to avoid any possible misinterpretation of their motives or any behaviour which could be construed as 'grooming'. They should not give their personal contact details including email, home or mobile telephone numbers, unless the need to do so is agreed with senior management and parents/carers.

Email, text communications or social networking communications through internet based websites between an employee and a parent/carer or child outside agreed protocols may lead to suspension, disciplinary and/or criminal investigations. Please refer to E-safety Policy

SOCIAL NETWORKING

It is recognized that a number of employees responsibly participate in social networking: however this must not be allowed to conflict with their job and the business interests of the school.

Employees are not permitted to access social networking websites in school. In order that confidentiality and the school's reputation is protected, employees using social networking websites should:

- Not use these sites during working hours or in school
- Refrain from identifying themselves as teachers
- Ensure that they do not conduct themselves in a way which could damage the school's reputation
- Ensure that working relationships between employees, clients and vulnerable groups are not damaged by access to these websites
- Ensure you have security settings so that you can restrict who views your site.

USE OF EMAIL AND THE INTERNET

Limited and responsible personal use of email and the internet is allowed.

You should remember that use of the email and internet facility is a privilege granted by the school. If the rules and procedures are not adhered to, then the use of these facilities may be withdrawn and disciplinary action may follow. Any email account passwords are the property of the school and as such may need to be declared to the Principal.

It is not acceptable for you to publicly criticise or blame colleagues, departments or managers **through any medium of communication** including email, internet 'blogs', websites, verbally or the media and you must be aware that the laws governing defamation, breach of copyright etc apply equally to 'blogging' as to other forms of communications. Offensive, defamatory, discriminatory or otherwise inappropriate comments will not be tolerated and may constitute a disciplinary and/or criminal offence, as could the disclosure/publication of any confidential or personal information about the business of the school, its staff, Governors or suppliers.

SOCIAL CONTACT

Employees should not seek to establish social contact with parents/carers or students. If anyone seeks to establish social contact, or if this occurs coincidentally, employees should exercise professional judgment in making a response, but should always discuss the situation with the Principal. Employees should be aware that social contact in certain situations can be misconstrued as 'grooming', which is a criminal offence. If a social activity is planned to be held in a school the relevant school guidelines should be followed. Staff members are not permitted to have social media contact with students until they have left **and** reach the age of 19.

Employees should not give personal details such as home or mobile phone numbers, home email address or have social network access to parents/carers or students unless the need to do so is agreed by senior management. Internal email systems should only be used within school policy.

It is recognized that some employees may support a parent/student who may be in particular difficulty. Care needs to be exercised in those situations where the parent/carer or student comes to depend upon the employee for support outside their professional role. This situation should be discussed with senior management and where necessary referrals made to the appropriate support agency.