Staff Code of Conduct

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Staff Conduct

Whilst undertaking a role with Vision for Education or Smart Teachers, you are acting in a position of authority and have a duty of care towards the children, young people and vulnerable adults we work with. You are likely to be seen as a role model and are expected to act appropriately both inside and outside of your role.

General Conduct

Be sure to dress appropriately - no jeans or trainers, and collar and tie for men. Some schools and alternative provisions have specific policies relating to dress and personal appearance - always ask your consultant or check your booking confirmation if you are unsure.

Take your original DBS certificate, photo ID (passport or driver's licence) and overseas police check (if applicable) with you wherever you go. Schools and alternative providers will ask to see these documents before allowing you on-site.

Follow the lesson plan if one has been left and ensure you mark any work you have set during the day. Make sure you leave the classroom clean and tidy.

Always familiarise yourself with the school's own policies and procedures (e.g., Behaviour Management, Safeguarding and Child Protection, Online Safety, Whistleblowing, Health and Safety and IT policies and procedures) and adhere to them fully. You should also be aware of the Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) for the site at the start of the booking. For advanced bookings, we'd recommend checking the school's website. If it's a last-minute booking, you can always ask for copies on your arrival at the school**. If these policies are not presented to you, it is your responsibility to seek them out.**

Staff have an important role in developing a calm and safe environment for pupils and establishing clear boundaries of acceptable pupil behaviour. Staff should uphold the whole-school approach to behaviour by teaching and modelling expected behaviour and positive relationships, as defined by the school behaviour policy, so that pupils can see examples of good habits and are confident to ask for help when needed. Staff should also challenge pupils to meet the school expectations and maintain the boundaries of acceptable conduct.

All staff should communicate the school expectations, routines, values and standards

both explicitly through teaching behaviour and in every interaction with pupils. Staff should consider the impact of their own behaviour on the school culture and how they can uphold the school rules and expectations. Staff should consider how their own culture, religion, opinions and bias' affect their professional conduct, making sure not to impart any strong personal beliefs upon students, and ensuring conduct always remains suitable. Staff also receive clear guidance about school expectations regarding their own conduct at school via the school's behaviour management policy, and here via our Code of Conduct.

If equivalent training has not been completed within the last 12 months, supply workers are enrolled on our training platform to give access to safeguarding and child protection training at the point of registration. This will be provided free of charge.

Sickness and Absence

If you are sick or unable to get to your placement for any reason, it is imperative that you let us know as soon as possible, so we can contact the school and organise alternative cover if required.

Please avoid emailing or texting, as these can be missed - calling your local branch to let them know is much more reliable. If you are going to be absent for more than one day, please call the branch before 5pm to let them know of any ongoing absence and a potential return to work date (if you know it).

Each branch has an on-call service, so you can reach us outside working hours for urgent queries.

Harassment of our employees by supply workers

Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our employees is essential. We expect all supply staff to treat our employees respectfully at all times, and take very seriously any threatening, abusive, sexual or violent behaviour against any of our staff or school staff.

Any supply staff found to be harassing any of our employees or school staff will automatically be permanently struck off our database and we will make any necessary referrals to the Police, Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) and/or the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

Expectations of supply staff behaviour are also set out in our Sexual Harassment Policy, which lists the types of behaviour that are considered sexual harassment, complaints procedure and potential outcomes. **All staff must read, understand and adhere to this policy at all times during their engagement with our agency.**

Conduct and suitability

Your conduct in both professional and personal circumstances is a key factor in your suitability to work in education settings. We will not tolerate poor conduct in relation to our clients or their staff whilst on placement, and all communications with colleagues should be respectful and appropriate. It is our expectation that all of our agency workers represent us and themselves to a high standard in both professional and personal environments, which also applies during any social events which are arranged via the agency, client or professional colleagues. Any work seeker's failure to uphold professional standards will result in our work finding services being retracted. The right to a formal meeting will not apply, and under our agency worker Terms of Engagement, we reserve the right to immediately terminate all bookings and withdraw our services should an agency worker engage in conduct detrimental to our agency or our client. Depending on the nature of the misconduct, we will also consider our wider responsibility to refer.

Staff can find further information regarding the expectations of the Teachers' Standards here. We expect that all staff working in a position of trust with our agency operate within these standards, including those who are undertaking a support staff role.

Social Networking Policy

Our **Social Networking Policy** contains broad guidance for online conduct and must be adhered to at all times – see Appendix 2 for our **Social Networking Policy**.

The policy should be reviewed and adhered to in full, but please be aware that under no circumstances should candidates connect with pupils in any form on social media.

Please note that in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023, we reserve the right to conduct an online search on you as part of our recruitment and ongoing suitability checks. Should the search reveal any concerns relating to safeguarding or suitability, we will contact you to discuss how this will affect your registration/placement. Please note that any content identified that is not appropriately aligned with work in a position of trust, and is publicly available, may affect your registration with our organisation. In more serious cases, registration/placement may not be able to continue.

Safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults

Physical contact

We operate a no physical contact policy, which should always be adhered to apart from in the following circumstances:

- In the event that a student is at risk of harming themselves.
- In the event that a student is at risk of harming others.
- Where you are providing personal care as part of your agreed job role. You should carry out the task with sensitivity and respect. Ensure another appropriate adult is in the vicinity and is aware of the task to be undertaken.
- Supply workers who are Team Teach trained and are in a situation where manual handling is required (please provide your consultant with current proof of qualification).
- Supply workers who are first aid trained and are in a situation where first aid is required (please provide your consultant with current proof of qualification).

Physical contact can refer to:

- direct physical contact with the student,
- contact with the student via another object e.g. pen or ruler, and
- contact with a student's worn item, for example a bag or item of uniform.

If physical contact is necessary, always be mindful that physical contact with a child, young person or vulnerable adult may be misinterpreted.

Usually, you should never be on your own with a child. If you cannot avoid this, make sure you keep the classroom door open and do not block any exits.

Be mindful that schools are often sociologically complex and multi-cultural, so sensitivity is key to success in teaching.

When working with children, young people or vulnerable adults, you must not:

- Allow allegations or concerns to go unreported.
- Take unnecessary risks.
- Leave children unattended
- Lock classroom doors with students inside so that they are unable to exit
- Be under the influence of alcohol or illegal substances, or smoke on site
- Develop inappropriate relationships with children, young people or vulnerable adults. If you think a student may be infatuated with you, speak to the school or setting's DSL or Deputy DSL as soon as possible, so that appropriate action can be taken.
- Make inappropriate promises to children, young people or vulnerable adults.
- Touch a student in any way that could be considered indecent, nor indulge in horseplay, tickling or fun fights.
- Physically stand in doorways with a view to blocking a pupil's entrance or exit as this could result in a physical altercation.
- Close doors when pupils are present in the doorway and therefore could be physically harmed by this action.
- Engage in behaviour that is in any way abusive, including having any form of sexual contact with a child, young person or vulnerable adult.
- Accept gifts from students or their parents/carers. That said, occasionally students or their parents or carers may wish to give tokens of appreciation (for example at Christmas). These may be accepted if they are not of significant value.
- Give/offer gifts to students or their parents/carers. This is to maintain clear professional boundaries and prevent any perception of favouritism or inappropriate relationships.
- Offer lifts to a child, young person or vulnerable adult outside the agreements of your role.
- Spend time with students off-site outside of the agreements of your role.
- Accept invitations to events on the school grounds offered by students, without first making school staff aware that you plan to attend.
- Use pupil toilets.
- Take any item onto the school premises which is a weapon, or which could be considered a weapon.
- Administer medicine outside of the agreements of your role. A school must provide the correct training if this is required. Do not give children any of your personal medication.
- Leave personal medication in a place that is accessible to children. Ensure that any personal medication is securely locked away.

You should:

- Promote relationships that are based on openness, honesty, trust and respect.
- Be patient with others.
- Exercise caution when you are discussing sensitive issues with children, young people

or vulnerable adults.

- Be vigilant and respond accordingly to instances of child-on-child abuse, including any sexual violence and sexual harassment between children, young people or vulnerable adults.
- Ensure your contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults is appropriate and relevant to the work you are involved in.
- Ensure that all media content that you use as a classroom resource or that you direct pupils to access (e.g. websites, videos etc) is relevant and wholly appropriate for the audience.
- In addition to our **Social Networking Policy**, found later in this document, we provide here practical guidance in relation to devices on placement, and social media advice.

When in a position of trust, staff must not:

- Let a child, young person or vulnerable adult have your personal contact details (including but not limited to mobile number, email or postal address), or have contact with them via a personal social media account.
- Take photos/videos with pupils or allow pupils to take photos/videos of you e.g. Selfies or TikTok videos, unless authorised by the school/setting.
- Take photos/videos on the school site. Photos/videos of the school/setting site must not be distributed, e.g. via social media, messaging apps etc.
- Use student mobile phones or communication devices to speak with a third party, e.g. parent or carer, unless with prior authorisation from the school/setting.

All staff should consistently enforce the school's policy on the use of mobile phones. Staff should not use their own mobile phone for personal reasons in front of pupils throughout the school day. This will empower staff to better challenge pupils to meet the school expectations and effectively enforce the prohibition of mobile phones throughout the school day. There may be occasions where it is appropriate for a teacher to use a mobile phone or similar device, for instance to issue homework, issue rewards and sanctions or use multi-factor authentication.

Staff are responsible for:

- Prioritising the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- Providing a safe learning environment for children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- Having a good awareness of issues to do with safeguarding and child protection and taking action when appropriate.
- Reporting all safeguarding and child protection concerns immediately in line with our **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy**.
- Following our principles, policies and procedures.

Reporting Safeguarding Allegations or Concerns

If staff have safeguarding concerns, or an allegation is made about another member of staff (including supply staff and volunteers) posing a risk of harm to children, then this should be referred to the Headteacher or Principal.

Allegations against teachers and other staff, including supply staff and volunteers, will be managed in accordance with the Department for Education's 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' guidance. Any safeguarding concerns or allegations must be reported immediately to the school or alternative provision's DSL where it is alleged that anyone working in a school or alternative provision, including supply staff, has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child, young person or vulnerable adult,
- committed, or possibly committed, a criminal offence against, or related to, a child, young person or vulnerable adult,
- behaved, or may have behaved, in a way that indicates he or she may pose a risk of harm to children, young people or vulnerable adults, or
- behaved, or may have behaved, in a way that indicates he or she may not be suitable to work with children, young people or vulnerable adults.

If any incidents occur, you should first record what has happened on paper and report it to the DSL or Deputy DSL for the school or alternative provision.

If a student discloses information that they, or another child, young person or vulnerable adult, are at risk, or you have any other reason for concern regarding a child, young person or vulnerable adult, then immediate action must be taken. You have a duty of care to report this to the school or alternative provision's DSL or Deputy DSL as soon as possible.

Staff should be aware that students may not feel ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused. This should not prevent staff from having a professional curiosity and speaking to the DSL if they have concerns about a child.

All staff should be able to reassure victims that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. A victim should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting abuse, sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report.

You must also record the incident or disclosure as factually as possible, by writing down what was said (word for word if possible), the date, time and your name. Be careful that you do not over question the pupil or take a full statement.

Incidents and allegations

The company rules are designed to encourage supply workers to achieve and maintain high standards of conduct and safeguarding.

The aim of this procedure is to set out the actions to be taken when these rules are breached and to ensure consistent and fair treatment for all.

This procedure is designed to establish the facts quickly and deal with safeguarding matters consistently. No action will be taken until the case has been fully investigated.

This procedure may be implemented at any stage if the supply worker's alleged misconduct warrants such action. This procedure applies to all supply workers regardless of length of service.

Incidents and allegations procedure

Whilst working for the company, should an incident be raised or an allegation be made against you, the following procedures will be followed:

If you become the subject of an open investigation/review by any third party in relation to your suitability to work in regulated activity, or in relation to your conduct, then we will be unable to offer you any further placement until an outcome is confirmed to us

directly by the third party. We will then use this outcome to determine whether it is suitable for us to continue to offer you placement.

- If a school, college or alternative provision informs us of a particular incident, but it does not meet the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) threshold, a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will discuss this with you via a telephone call, or we will arrange a meeting to discuss the incident or allegation, depending on the nature. We will only be able to facilitate this meeting upon receipt of necessary information from the school, college or alternative provision, e.g. statements. You will not be offered any further work until after the meeting and will not be paid by the company during this time. During the meeting, you will have the opportunity to discuss the incident and put forward your version of events. After the investigation is concluded, a decision will be made regarding whether you can continue to work for the company. Where it is decided that further work will be offered, it is expected that additional training will be completed before recommencing work, including child protection, safeguarding and GDPR training and, if appropriate, a manual handling course.
- If a school, college or alternative provision informs us of a particular incident or allegation, and it requires LADO oversight, the school, college, alternative provision and/or agency will inform the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and the school should investigate the incident or allegation in the initial instance. If the incident or allegation reaches the LADO threshold, a position of trust meeting will be organised, where representatives from the company, the school, college or alternative provision and, in some instances, the police and social workers meet with the LADO to discuss the incident or allegation. This process can be lengthy, and you will not be allowed to work with children, young people or vulnerable adults in any capacity during this time. You will not be paid by the company during this process as you will be unable to undertake any placements until the outcome is delivered. Our decision regarding whether to work with you again will be based on the outcome of this process.

Outcomes will be one of the following:

- The allegation is malicious – you will be able to continue to work in regulated activity and can continue working through our agencies.
- The allegation is unsubstantiated – you will be able to continue to work in regulated activity and can continue working through our agencies.
- The allegation is unfounded – you will be able to continue to work in regulated activity and can continue working through our agencies.
- The allegation is substantiated and the harm level has been reached – you will not be able to continue being registered with Vision for Education and Smart Teachers.
- The allegation is substantiated but the harm level has not been reached – you will be invited to a safeguarding review meeting and a decision will be made as to whether you can continue working through our agencies.

Our dedicated and experienced safeguarding leads will manage any allegations or concerns that are brought to our attention in line with both statutory guidance and internal policies and procedures. You will be kept informed of any suitable updates to your case whilst our team works together with other professionals to reach fair and proportionate outcomes for both staff and young people. Please be aware that our team support and advise on both professional and personal life suitability cases across our agencies, and so availability will be managed in line with a wider caseload.

As your agency, we will treat you with courtesy and respect during any investigation, and we expect the same in return. We understand that being the subject of an investigation can be a stressful time, but the allegations management process and our

team is in place to support you, and we strive for best outcomes for all involved. We will not tolerate any harassment of our team, and it will not speed up the process. The speed at which we can conclude your case will also depend on the working timescales of external agencies such as the LADO, the police, social care or your other employers. Please be aware that we are also unable to disproportionately influence or overturn any suitability decisions or outcomes that are made by a third party, such as the LADO or the police.

Please also be aware that any ongoing investigation process, either by our organisation or via a third party, will be noted on outgoing references until such a time that a suitable conclusion has been determined, and where applicable, confirmed to us directly by the third party.

Safeguarding review meeting

Safeguarding review meetings will be held by a Designated Safeguarding Lead and a note taker. As supply workers are not employees, you do not have the right to be accompanied. However, in the interest of general fairness we will allow a trade union representative or work colleague to accompany you if you feel that is necessary. If you intend to be accompanied, then advance notice must be given.

Following a safeguarding incident/allegation, once investigated the agency will consider all suitable outcomes available to us, which may include issuing a verbal warning, placing the supply member of staff on a final written warning, or immediate termination of engagement. Support and further CPD may be considered when returning to placement.

Depending on the seriousness of the incident or allegation, we may also make a report to statutory agencies such as the police, Disclosure Barring Service, Teaching Regulation Authority and the local authority's Child Protection Service.

Please note that if you become the subject of an allegation or investigation by another agency, employer, the TRA, police or any other body, you must notify your local branch immediately.

Appendix 1

Low Level Concerns

Allegations/concerns that do not meet the harms threshold are referred to as 'low level' concerns. The term 'low-level' concern does not mean that it is insignificant, it means that the behaviour towards a child does not meet the threshold of harm.

A low-level concern is any concern – no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt' - that an adult working in or on behalf of the school or college may have acted in a way that:

- Is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct*, including inappropriate conduct outside of work.
- Does not meet the allegations threshold or is otherwise not considered serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO.

*As a member of supply staff, we ask that you make considerations of our **Safeguarding Policies** and **Code of Conduct** alongside those of the client school or setting.

Examples of such behaviour that may constitute a low level concern could include, but are not limited to:

- Being over friendly with children.

- Having favourites.
- Taking photographs of children on their mobile phone.
- Engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door.
- Using inappropriate sexualised, intimidating or offensive language.
- Humiliating children.

Such behaviour can exist on a wide spectrum, from the inadvertent or thoughtless, or behaviour that may look to be inappropriate, but might not be in specific circumstances, through to that which is ultimately intended to enable abuse.

Following a report of a low-level concern, once investigated the agency will consider all suitable outcomes available to us, which may include issuing a verbal warning, placing the supply member of staff on a final written warning, or immediate termination of engagement. Support and further CPD may be considered when returning to placement.

Our **Low Level Concerns** Policy applies to any adult working in or on behalf of our agency – meaning that low level concerns can be self-reported by and/or shared about them. An individual may wish to self-report - occasionally a member of staff may find themselves in a situation which could be misinterpreted, or might appear compromising to others. Equally, a member of staff may, for whatever reason, have behaved in a manner which, on reflection, they consider falls below the standard set out in the staff code of conduct. These concerns should be shared with the headteacher or principal of the school or setting, along with the agency's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). DSL contact details can be found in our **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.**

How to report a low level concern

It is crucial that all low level allegations/concerns are reported immediately to the headteacher or principal of the school or setting.

Low level concerns can be reported either verbally or with a written summary. Some schools or settings may also provide a low level concern form. All supply staff are expected to familiarise themselves with the client school/setting's policies and forms at the start of their placement.

Appendix 2

Social Networking Policy

Vision for Education and Smart Teachers acknowledge that social networking sites provide a number of benefits, but all professionals should be aware of the many challenges and potential difficulties associated with electronic communication and social media. The aim of this policy is to provide clear guidance to all candidates whilst engaged in schools and alternative provision.

- Social networking sites should not be visited during the school day.
- Protect your mobile phone, laptop and computer with a PIN whilst in school to protect access to its content and potential misuse.

- Differentiate friends from professional connections by using access and privacy settings. Keep these under review and regularly audit and re-evaluate the information about you and who has access to it.
- Headteachers, parents, pupils and prospective employers may look you up on social media. Ask yourself if you would be comfortable about your content being viewed. If not, remove any dubious material.
- Do not engage in online activities that may bring yourself, the school or alternative provision, or the agency into disrepute. Derogatory, defamatory or offensive comments about pupils, parents and carers or colleagues must not be posted.
- Always maintain a professional tone online. Use of expletives, sexual content or any form of discrimination or harassment is always unacceptable.
- Do not create, or be involved in the creation or distribution, of any content that would be considered indecent, inappropriate and/or unsuitable to be associated with a professional working in a position of trust with children and young people, for example, creating/distributing content via sites such as OnlyFans.
- Do not allow pupils or parents and carers to make you their online 'friend' and do not instigate any befriending yourself. Parents and carers should be encouraged to use more formal channels to contact you.
- Do not exchange private texts, phone numbers, personal email addresses or photos of a personal nature with pupils or parents and carers.
- Do not allow others to tag you in photos without your permission – this needs to be agreed with your friends, especially on a night out.
- No confidential information about pupils, parents and carers or colleagues may be disclosed on social networking sites.
- Do not use networking sites to raise concerns about work or your colleagues – use the appropriate internal channels or call your Vision for Education or Smart Teachers' consultant.
- If you do post your opinions online, make it clear that these are your personal views and not those of your agency by adding a statement to that effect.
- Respect copyright and fair use. Credit authors for their work and ask for the necessary permissions where appropriate.
- Contact your consultant if you come across any material that is likely to reflect badly on yourself, the school or Vision for Education or Smart Teachers.

For further information regarding cyberbullying and cybercrime, please refer to our **Safeguarding and Child Protection policy**.