



BCL School Attendance Team
Experts In Pupil Welfare

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Professional Conduct Policy

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- 1.0 We seek to provide a safe and supportive environment and secure the well-being and very best outcomes for children in our care. Staff can at times feel vulnerable in trying to achieve these aims; as such, guidelines on professional conduct are vital. BCL School Attendance Team Limited is committed to supporting all staff to minimise the risk of being accused of improper conduct towards the young people with whom they come into contact during their working hours. Additionally, the expected standard of conduct amongst staff is high and staff need to understand that they are expected to act as role models for young people and be mindful of the reputation of the organisation they work in and also BCL School Attendance Team Limited as a whole.

2.0 Scope and Purpose

- The expectations of professional conduct are the same regardless of where a member of staff works.
- The expectations are the same for all employees regardless of length of service or role. It also applies to temporary staff, volunteers, those employed through an agency and self-employed contractors although breaches may not be managed through the disciplinary procedure.
- All staff should recognise that conduct outside of work can impact on their employment, as they have a duty to uphold the reputation of the profession and BCL School Attendance Team Limited.
- The senior leadership team has responsibility for ensuring the professional conduct of members of staff.
- The Chief Executive Officer always expect senior staff to model professionalism.

The purpose of the policy is to:

- ensure a high standard of professional conduct amongst staff to safeguard children and protect staff from allegations
- ensure that the duty of care towards students and staff is promoted by raising awareness of illegal, unsafe and unwise behaviour
- ensure that staff exercise professional judgement appropriate to a professional in a 'position of trust'
- assist staff in monitoring their own standards and practice
- assist staff to work in a transparent and professional way



3.0 Working or meeting one to one with students

- 3.1 All staff should be aware of the dangers which may arise from private interviews with individual students. It is recognised that there are many occasions when confidential interviews take place. Where possible, such interviews should be conducted in a room with visual access, or with the door open, or in a room or area which is likely to be frequented by other people. Where such conditions cannot apply, staff are advised to ensure that another adult knows the interview is taking place, preferably beforehand. The use of 'Do Not Disturb' signs is not advisable. Where possible, another student, or another adult, should be present or nearby during the interview. Meetings or contact (e.g. via phone calls, texts, emails, social media) with students away from the School or office premises are not permitted unless the specific approval of the Chief Executive Officer of Line Manager has been obtained in advance. Staff must recognise that a relationship between a member of staff and a student cannot be a relationship of equals. There is a potential for exploitation and harm of vulnerable young people and staff have a responsibility to ensure that an unequal power balance is not used for personal advantage or gratification.

4.0 Confidentiality

- 4.1 Members of staff may have access to confidential information about students, colleagues or other matters which could include personal and sensitive data. This information should never be referred to casually or in order to humiliate, intimidate or embarrass a student, family or colleague. Highly sensitive information should only be shared on a 'need to know' basis at the direction of the Chief Executive Officer, HR or Designated Safeguarding Lead. Gossip about clients, students, their families or colleagues, is unnecessary and unprofessional. Staff must be familiar with and adhere to the expectations of the GDPR policy.

5.0 Propriety and behaviour

- 5.1 All staff have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of young people. This means that staff are required to take action to protect children from maltreatment, prevent impairment in health and development and ensure children grow up in safe and effective care. All staff should be prepared to identify children who may benefit from early help, providing support as soon as a problem emerges at any point in a child's life. All staff must be aware of the signs of abuse and neglect and know what action to take if these are identified.
- 5.2 Staff must adopt high standards of professional conduct in order to maintain confidence. This includes attention to dress, appearance (see page 6) and self-expression and thinking about how they conduct their professional relationships with other members of



staff. Standards may well vary from those adopted in their private life. Additionally, staff need to think carefully about the way that they present themselves on social network sites and the image of themselves and BCL School Attendance Team Limited that they may be portraying. Staff must be mindful of the guidance in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 and in particular the 4th bullet point: 'behaved in a way or may have behaved in a way that indicates that they may not be suitable to work with children'.

- 5.3 All staff must be aware of their duty to identify and report low level concerns, 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 BCL School Attendance Team Limited may have acted in a way that is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work, and does not meet the allegations threshold or is otherwise not considered serious enough to consider a referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).
- 5.4 Staff need to be aware that it is not uncommon for students to be strongly attracted to members of staff. Any situation should be responded to sensitively to maintain the dignity of all concerned. If you are aware of an infatuation involving yourself, or another, you should report it to the Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as you become concerned.

6.0 Sexual contact with young people

- 6.1 Any sexual behaviour or contact including grooming patterns of behaviour by a member of staff with, or towards, a child or young person is both unacceptable and illegal. Young people are protected by specific legal provisions regardless of whether they consent or not. Sexual activity does not just involve physical contact, it may also include causing children or young people to engage in or watch pornographic material. Staff should be aware that conferring special attention and favour upon a child or young person might be construed as being part of a 'grooming' process which is an offence (Sexual Offences Act 2003). In line with KCSIE, we will report all allegations or suggestions of sexual impropriety to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

7.0 Where physical contact maybe acceptable

- 7.1 There may be occasions when a distressed student needs comfort and reassurance which may include age appropriate physical comforting, such as a parent/carer would give. Staff should use their discretion in such cases to ensure that what is, and what is seen by others present to be normal, and natural, does not become unnecessary and unjustified contact, particularly with the same student over a period of time. Where a member of staff has a particular concern about the need to provide this type of care and reassurance, advice should be sought from the Designated Safeguarding Lead.



7.2 There may be rare occasions where it is necessary for staff to restrain a student to prevent the student from inflicting damage on themselves or others. In such cases, only the minimum force should be used in order to restrain. In most cases of a student refusing to leave a room, or absconding, the student should not be physically handled. The incident should be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. The only grounds to physically intervene would be if it was genuinely believed that the student was at risk to themselves or others. Physical force must never be used as a punishment, or to modify behaviour, or make a student comply with an instruction. Staff are advised that physical force may in law be regarded as an assault (see Care and Control policy). An accepted guideline that any complaint of inappropriate handling by a student (proven or otherwise) should be reported to the Local Authority Designated Officer for Child Protection (LADO). Following an investigation, it may be that information is passed to the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA).

8.0 Gratuitous physical contact with a student

8.1 Physical contact may be misconstrued by a student, parent/carer or observer. Such contact can include well-intentioned formal or informal gestures such as putting a hand on the arm or shoulder which, if repeated with an individual, could lead to serious questions being raised. Therefore, as a general principle, staff should not make gratuitous physical contact with students and it is unwise to attribute touching to their teaching style as a way of relating to students.

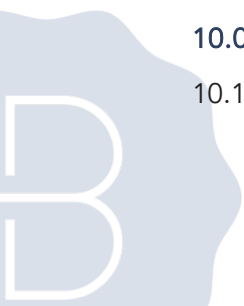
9.0 Where conversations of a sensitive nature may be appropriate

9.1 Many staff have a pastoral responsibility for students and, in order to fulfil that role effectively, there will be occasions when conversations will cover particularly sensitive matters. Staff must, in these circumstances, use their discretion to ensure that, for example, any probing details cannot be construed as unjustifiable intrusion.

9.2 All staff may, from time to time, be approached by students for advice. Students may also appear distressed and staff may feel the need to ask if all is well. In such cases, staff must judge whether it is appropriate for them to offer counselling and advice or whether to refer the student to another member of staff at the school we are supporting with acknowledged pastoral responsibility for the particular student, i.e. Attendance Officer, Form Tutor, Head of Year. Staff must remember that discretion can never be guaranteed and anything of concern must be referred to the safeguarding team (see Child Protection and Safeguarding policy).

10.0 General relationships and attitudes

10.1 Staff should ensure that their relationships with all students are appropriate to the



age and gender of the student, taking care of their conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Attitudes, demeanour and language require care and thought, particularly when staff are dealing with adolescents.

10.2 Staff should be aware that some actions might be construed as sexual harassment.

11.0 Personal views and beliefs

11.1 When dealing with political, religious or other sensitive issues, no personal beliefs should be imposed upon a student. Students should be enabled to make informed decisions and draw appropriate conclusions from being given balanced and reliable information. Teachers must be clear that some views are unacceptable and are in contravention with the Equality Act 2010 (see Equality and Diversity policy).

12.0 Contact with students outside of work

12.1 As a general rule, conversations either by telephone, text or social networking sites with students of schools we are acting for are inadmissible. If a member of staff has any reason to give any private contact details (for example, their private mobile number in the case of an emergency) to a student, they should inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Private communication is open to misinterpretation and may lead the member of staff to gain a bad reputation or lead to an accusation of unprofessional conduct. Staff should also think carefully about how they present themselves on any social networking website profile so as not to undermine their professional reputation. Staff must report any situation outside of work to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

12.2 Staff must not engage in conduct outside of work which could damage the reputation of BCL School Attendance Team Limited, their own reputation or the reputation of others in BCL School Attendance Team Limited. Informal meetings with students should be avoided, unless there is family involvement (e.g. an 18th birthday party where parents/carers are present), or it is an organised occasion (e.g. the Formal, a reunion party with other members of staff present). Staff are required to demonstrate responsible behaviour at events that do take place outside normal work hours. If a member of staff is in any doubt about the appropriateness of contact or an event, they should seek advice.

13.0 Social Media

13.1 All staff should ensure high levels of security on social media platforms and avoid



references to the place of work. Comments about colleagues, students or their families on social media are never appropriate. Staff need to be careful about comments made in any electronic communication and how they portray their lifestyle, as privacy on any social media cannot be guaranteed. There is no acceptable reason for any member of staff to be connected with any child schools were act for through social media unless it is a direct relative. If a child attempts to contact you in any way, outside of work, by any means, you must contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the Chief Executive Officer immediately. We recognise that employees work long hours and are entitled to engage in the use of social media in their own time and that there are many positive outcomes of engaging on social media. All employees, however, need to be mindful of what is private and public with other individuals unintentionally or intentionally and misinterpreting online communication. As such, we have written a guide for staff, to support them in their interactions and to make clear BCL School Attendance Team Limited's expectation (see Appendix 1).

14.0 Staff Dress Code

14.1 General guidelines

- All members of staff are expected to maintain professional dress and appropriate personal appearance at work.

14.2 Hair

- The general appearance requirements for all staff are set out in the Policy Statement and apply to hair in the same way as they apply to
- other aspects of appearance and presentation. In particular, hair must be smart, clean and tidy at all times whilst staff are at work so as to present a professional image. We welcome and accept all styles and recognise the unique differences of hair. Workplace adjustments maybe required to suit hair, such as afro styles, dreadlocks, and protective styles. These styles will also stay in fitting with the policy in that if hair is longer than collar length, irrelevant of style, this will be required to be tied up in a bun or similar style.
- Hair dyes of any colour may be used; however, this is restricted to a single colour. Hair must not be cut into shapes, motifs, or patterns as all of these detract from the professional image that BCL wishes to portray. All staff should be mindful that identification cards will need to be renewed or updated if a change in hair style or colour alters their appearance significantly.

14.3 Facial Hair

- Beards, moustaches, sideburns or any combination must be neatly maintained at all times unless a religious belief or requirement dictates otherwise.

14.4 Jewellery



- The wearing of jewellery in an operational setting is discouraged, this is due to the potential risks of personal injury of wearing all types of jewellery.
- A wedding, engagement and partnership band(s) may be worn. One set of simple ear studs may be worn.
- The wearing of jewellery in accordance with religious belief must be discussed with line managers for the purposes of health and safety risks.
- Any claim to BCL for the loss or damage to jewellery or wrist watches will not be accepted.

14.5 Facial Piercings

- Facial studs, including tongue studs and pins must not be worn unless required for operational needs.
- Discussions with Line managers will take place to ascertain any issues in relation to health and safety, and a comprehensive risk assessment may be required.

14.6 Sunglasses

- Sunglasses are permitted to be worn when necessary but must:
 - Be of plain design and not mirrored.
 - Removed when dealing with a school parent or pupil.

14.7 Makeup

- All staff may wear makeup in moderation, and this must be of a natural shade so as not to appear excessive or obtrusive. Bright makeup colours are not accepted. Discreet eyeshadow and lipstick, which is appropriate to the individual's natural skin tone and/or in connection with the individual's faith/religion may be worn along with fake tan that is natural, fitting to the individual's skin tone and not excessive in colour.
- Makeup may also be worn to conceal a facial disfigurement or significant blemish.
- Staff must keep their fingernails neatly trimmed and clean. For Health and Safety reasons, no jewellery or attachments may be worn on the nails. Nail polish of any colour can be worn but must portray a professional image.
- All staff may wear false eyelashes which are of natural length and thickness

14.8 Ear Stretchers

- Ear stretchers are not permitted by BCL and must be always taken out whilst at work. Individuals who are in a front facing role and dealing with members of the public, must take suitable steps to ensure that the holes are covered up to prevent injury to themselves.

14.9 Items of Cultural or Religious Belief



- Items of religious or cultural significance may be worn provided they do not present a risk to the individual, their colleagues, or members of the public.
- Colouring of specific items must be discussed with an individual's line manager and, ideally, follow standard uniform colourings however BCL do recognise that allowances may need to be made. Individuals can seek further guidance their line manager or union.

15.10 Tattoos

- Tattoos will not be accepted if they have the potential to cause offence due to containing explicit, offensive, obscene, discriminatory, or political words, slogans or symbols inconsistent with the Code of Ethics and the Standards of Professional Behaviour.
- Before individuals consider a new tattoo, initial advice must be gained via their line manager. The line manager will be responsible for any final decisions on the appropriateness of current or planned tattoos.
- New applicants must declare if they have any visible tattoos providing images and a description of the meaning behind them.
- Tattoos on the face are not acceptable unless eyebrow tattoos or as part of a medical issue.
- Tattoos visible above the collar line or on the hands are permitted as long as they fall within the scope of this policy. Where this is not clear, or an appeal is requested, this can be escalated through to the Dress and Personal Appearance Panel.
- Tattoos may be displayed by staff when wearing short sleeve order. Visible tattoos are deemed unacceptable if they have the potential to cause offence due to containing explicit, offensive, obscene, discriminatory, or political words, slogans or symbols inconsistent with the Code of Ethics and Standards of Professional Behaviour.
- The staff member's line manager will decide upon the suitability of any tattoo being visible.
- When in school's all tattoos will need to be covered.
- Staff must also consider whether it is appropriate to cover their tattoos on a case-by-case basis when conducting home visits.

15.11 Any current/serving member of staff that has a new tattoo after this new policy is adopted, which could reasonably be interpreted as discriminatory or offensive and/or indicate attitudes or views which are inconsistent with BCL's ethos; will be referred to your line manager for an assessment to be undertaken in relation to any breach of the Standards of Professional Behaviour.

15.12 Staff issued with an identify badge must wear it at all times.

- Where particular clothing is required for health, safety, hygiene and/or uniform purposes, it must be worn.
- BCL School Attendance Team Limited values and welcomes the ethnic diversity of its workforce and, therefore, dress codes will take account of this.

15.13 Identification



- Identity cards must be worn at all times when on school premises and must be worn around the neck using lanyards provided, or other suitable means e.g. ID card holder.
- All staff are responsible for the personal care of their identity card.
- Identity cards must not be used, other than in connection with BCL duty.
- A request for an Identity card must be made through the line manager for a new employee, or an existing employee who needs to change their name or their photograph on their card. A notification must be made to your line manager if your identity card has been lost. Line Managers must authorise the issue of a replacement card.

15.14 Lanyard

- Individuals must always wear their lanyards correctly.
- Individuals must hide or remove their lanyards when out in public and are off duty and/or not working e.g. break times etc.
- Line managers have the authority and discretion to direct that a lanyard be removed if they feel it does not comply with this policy or for safety during operational duty.
- The theme and content of lanyards can vary. Staff must be aware that lanyards must not be politically themed, however lanyards issued by any part of BCL and Unions are allowed.
- Lanyards representing local/national charities are allowed providing they are inoffensive and represent a relevant cause i.e. Mind, Andy's Man Club, Poppy Appeal etc.

15.15 Holidays

During school holidays, dress can be casual if the students are 'dressing down'; however, it should still be sensible and safe.

16.0 The Welfare of the Child is Paramount Children Act 1989

- 16.1 In the case of serious professional misconduct, we will co-operate and refer to the Teacher Referral Agency (TRA) even if the member of staff resigns during an investigation. Where the harm test is met, we will refer to DBS (see policy).

- These guidelines apply to all employees working at all grades and levels including consultants, contractors, casual and agency staff and volunteers, collectively referred to as staff.
- The guidelines refer to all forms of social media use both inside and outside of work hours and regardless of device used.
- The guidelines should be read in line with other policies as listed above.
- Staff work long hours and may occasionally desire to use social media for personal activity at work. Such use is acceptable as long as it does not interfere with employment responsibilities or productivity and does not breach other guidelines.
- As an employer, we have the right to monitor use of IT and resources during working hours.
- All use of social media for business purposes must be approved by the Chief Executive Officer
- Line Managers and HR staff should not covertly search applicants on social media as part of the recruitment process as this may lead to unconscious bias
- The exception to this would be if researching prospective candidates to encourage applications, for example, on a professional community site such as 'LinkedIn' , however, searches should never be a replacement for the safer recruitment process.
- Searches may be made once an offer and if an appointee is informed that this is part of the safer recruitment process (e.g. to ensure social media sites are private, for example).
- You should not communicate with students (or ex-students who are under 18) over social network sites and must block unwanted communication, reporting this to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the Principal.
- Staff must be mindful of BCL School Attendance Team Limited's reputation and must not post disparaging or defamatory statements about the BCL School Attendance Team Limited, our clients, students or families, our staff, suppliers or vendors or other known affiliates and stakeholders.
- Statements can be misconstrued and this can lead to damage to BCL School Attendance Team Limited's reputation, directly or indirectly.
- Staff must be aware that they are personally responsible for what they post on social media and that a digital footprint can be difficult to erase. When posting anything, they should consider whether what they are saying would pass the 'red face test' should it be brought into work.
- What may appear to be private communication can become public, particularly in the event of disagreements or conflict and staff must be mindful of this.
- Staff should refrain from posting comments about sensitive issues which could damage their or BCL School Attendance Team Limited's reputation.
- Employees may find it easier to use different sites for different purposes, so, for example, LinkedIn and Twitter may be for purely educational connections, whereas, Facebook may be purely social and private.
- Given the issue of misinterpretation, employees should think very carefully before posting anything about work on their private site, additionally, blurring the public and private can have unintended consequences.
- If you feel uncomfortable about any post that another employee makes, you should print it off and take it to your line Manager or the Chief Executive Officer.
- Respect for others is absolutely key and you must not post anything that other members of our community or any stakeholder would find offensive, for example, insults or obscenity.



- Social media sites should have the optimum security settings and it is advisable to use a pseudonym and to keep personal details to an absolute minimum.
- Staff may be asked to remove a post if it is felt that it breaches these guidelines, co-operation is expected.
- Staff should not provide employment references by social media; this should always be done through HR.
- If a member of staff discloses their affiliation as an employee, for example, on Twitter when engaging with a learning community, the following statement must be added 'the views in this post do not represent the views of my employer'.
- Employees must be aware that some views are non-conducive with the mission and values of BCL School Attendance Team Limited, for example, posting or re-posting comments or memes that go against the principles of our Equality and Diversity policy.
- Despite any disclaimer, the employee must be particularly mindful that the image presented should be consistent with the expectations of highly professionalised staff if an association with the organisation is made.

