



# Hurst Green Infant School and Nursery

## PARENT CODE OF CONDUCT

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### Introduction

At Hurst Green Infant School and Nursery, we are incredibly fortunate to have a supportive and friendly parent community working with us for the benefit of your children. We believe that educating children is a process that involves a close partnership between parents, teachers and the wider school community. We pride ourselves on the time we spend fostering positive relationships with our families in order to ensure that every child in our care receives the best education possible.

Through playing such a key role in this partnership, our parents understand the importance of a good working relationship to equip children with the necessary skills for the next phase of their educational journey and beyond. For these reasons we will always welcome and encourage parents/carers to participate fully in the life of our school.

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to provide a reminder to all parents, carers and visitors to our school about expected conduct. It is also intended to support any parent who feels uncomfortable if they read or hear any comments made about the school by another parent and are unsure about what they should do with that information.

It has been written so that we can continue to provide the kind of learning environment in which your children can flourish, progress and achieve, grounded firmly in an atmosphere of mutual understanding between home and school.

### 1. Practice

As well as following the guidance set out in our Home-School Agreement, we expect all parents, carers and visitors to:

- respect and adhere to our school's values;
- approach the school to help resolve any issues of concern. Parents' first point of contact will usually be with their child's teacher.
- understand that both teachers and parents need to work together for the benefit of their children;
- recognise that all members of our school community should be treated with respect and set a good example of this in their own speech and behaviour;
- seek to clarify a child's version of events, along with the school's view in order to bring about a peaceful solution to any issue;
- avoid using staff as threats to admonish children's behaviour.

In order to support a peaceful and safe school environment, the school will not tolerate parents, carers and visitors exhibiting any of the following:

- using offensive language: swearing, cursing, profane language or displaying temper anywhere on the school premises;
- bringing the school into disrepute;
- making disparaging or libellous comments about any member of school staff or a member of the Governing Body;
- making defamatory, offensive or derogatory comments regarding the school or any member of school staff, children or other parents at the school on Facebook or any other social sites. (See Section 2). Any concerns you may have about the school must be made through the appropriate channels by speaking to the class teacher, the Head teacher or the Chair of Governors, so they can be dealt with fairly, appropriately and effectively for all concerned. Please see our

Complaints Policy (available on the school website under Policies) for further details on making a complaint. Further to this, no mention of names should ever be used on social media sites;

- disruptive behaviour which interferes or threatens to interfere with the operation of a classroom, an employee's office, office area or any other area of the school grounds, including extra-curricular team matches;
- threatening to do actual bodily harm to a member of school staff, Governor, visitor, fellow parent/carer or child, regardless of whether or not the behaviour constitutes a criminal offence;
- damaging or destroying school property;
- abusive, rude, overly demanding or threatening e-mails, text/voicemail/phone messages or other form of written communication;
- appearing to be under the influence of intoxicating substances, eg. drugs, alcohol;
- using of physical aggression towards another adult or child. This includes physical punishment against your own child on school premises;
- approaching another parent/carer/visitor/ or someone else's child in order to discuss or chastise them because of the actions of a child towards their own child.

Should any of the above behaviour occur on school premises, the school may decide that it is necessary to contact the appropriate authorities and, if necessary, to ban the offending adult from entering the school grounds.

## **2. Inappropriate use of Social Network Sites**

Social media websites are being used increasingly to fuel campaigns and complaints against schools, Head Teachers, school staff and, in some cases, against other parents or children. The Governors of Hurst Green Infant School and Nursery consider the use of social media websites being used in this way as wholly unacceptable and not at all in the best interests of the children or the wider school community.

The school has set out its complaints procedures clearly and expects these to be adhered to, should you ever wish to raise an issue with or about the school. Any concerns you may have must be made through the appropriate channels by speaking first to the class teacher, then to the Head Teacher, should you feel it has not been satisfactorily resolved in the first instance. There is then a clear process of escalation of any complaints, should you wish to pursue your concern further.

At all stages of this process, school leaders and Governors can be expected to act with the utmost integrity, transparency and honesty, so that any concerns can be dealt with fairly, appropriately and effectively for all concerned.

In the event that any child or parent/carer of any children who attend our school is found to be posting libellous or defamatory comments on Facebook or other social network sites, they will be reported to the appropriate 'report abuse' section of the network site. All social network sites have clear rules about the content which can be posted on the site and they provide robust mechanisms to report content or activity which breaches this. The school will also expect that any parent/carer or child removes such comments immediately.

No child currently attending Hurst Green Infant School and Nursery is of a legal age allowed to have an account on Facebook or other similar sites. The school will report any cases of underage social media use immediately to the site provider, as per their guidelines.

In serious cases the school will consider its legal options to deal with any such misuse of social networking and other sites. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, is the issue of cyber bullying and the use by one child or a parent to publicly humiliate another by inappropriate social network entry. We will take and deal with any such case as a serious incident of school bullying.

### 3. Persistent and Vexatious Complaints

#### 3.1 Who is a Persistent Complainant?

For the purpose of this Code of Conduct, a persistent complainant is a parent/carer or member of the public who complains about issues, either formally or informally, or frequently raises issues that the complainant considers to be within the remit of the school, and whose behaviour is unreasonable. Such behaviour may be characterised by:

- actions which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitive;
- prolific correspondence or excessive e-mail or telephone contact about a concern or complaint;
- making Freedom of Information requests excessively and unreasonably;
- insisting on pursuing unsubstantial complaints and/or unrealistic or unreasonable outcomes;
- insisting on pursuing complaints in an unreasonable manner;
- insisting on only dealing with the Head Teacher on all occasions, irrespective of the issue and the level of delegation in the school to deal with such matters;
- insisting on repeatedly pursuing a complaint when the outcome is not satisfactory to the complainant but cannot be changed; for example, if the desired outcome is beyond the remit of the school because it is unlawful.

For the purpose of this Code of Conduct, harassment is the unreasonable pursuit of such actions outlined in the list above in such a way that they:

- a) appear to be targeted over a significant period of time towards one or more members of school staff and/or
- b) cause ongoing distress to individual member(s) of school staff and/or
- c) have a significant adverse effect on the whole/parts of the school community and/or
- d) are pursued in a manner which can be perceived as intimidating and oppressive by the recipient.

This could include situations where persistent demands and criticisms, whilst not particularly taxing or serious when viewed in isolation, have a cumulative effect over time of undermining confidence, well-being and health.

The Head Teacher and Governing Body will not tolerate actions of this kind under any circumstances, and parents can expect to be challenged if they choose to behave in this way towards any member of school staff.

#### 3.2 The School's Actions in Cases of Persistent or Vexatious Complaints or Harassment

1. The school will verbally inform the complainant that his/her behaviour is considered to be becoming unreasonable or unacceptable and that, if it is not modified, further action may be taken in accordance with this Code of Conduct. This conversation will be with at least two members of the school's Senior Leadership Team.
2. This will be confirmed in writing (Model Letter 1)
3. If the behaviour is not modified, the school will take some or all of the following actions as necessary, having regard for the nature of the complainant's behaviour and the effect of this on the school community:
  - inform the complainant in writing that his/her behaviour is now considered by the school to be unreasonable/unacceptable and, therefore, to fall under the terms of this Code of Conduct;
  - inform the complainant that all meetings with a member of staff will be conducted with a second person present and that notes of meetings may be taken in the interests of all parties;
  - inform the complainant that, except in emergencies, all routine communication with the complainant to the school should be by letter only;

- in the case of physical or verbal aggression, take advice from LA HR / Legal Services and consider warning the complainant about being banned from the school site; or proceed straight to a temporary ban;
  - consider taking advice from the LA on pursuing a case under Anti-Harassment legislation;
  - consider taking advice from the HR / Legal Services about putting in place a specific procedure for dealing with complaints from the complainant, i.e. the complainant will not be able to deal directly with the Head Teacher but only with a third person, to be identified by the Governing Body, who will investigate, determine whether or not the concern/complaint is reasonable or vexatious and advise the Head Teacher accordingly.
4. Legitimate new complaints may still be considered even if the person making them is, or has been, subject to the Code of Conduct for Dealing with Persistent or Vexatious Complaints and/or Harassment in Schools. In any such cases, the school will be advised by the HR / Legal Services.
  5. If a complainant's persistent complaining/harassing behaviour is modified and is then resumed at a later date within a reasonable period of time, the school may resume the process identified above at an appropriate level. In these circumstances advice may be sought from the HR/Legal Services of the LA.

#### **4. Review**

The School's Senior Leadership Team, supported by a Governor, will review as appropriate, and at least once in a school year, any sanctions applied in the context of this Code of Conduct.

This document has been approved by the Full Governing Body (October 2019).

**We trust that parents and carers will assist our school with the implementation of this Code of Conduct\* and we thank you for your continuing support of the school.**

*\*We expect parents to make any other adults who are responsible for collecting their children from Hurst Green Infant School and Nursery are aware of this Code of Conduct.*