



STAFF CODE OF CONDUCT

2026-27

Our Mission

As a family with God in our hearts, we love, laugh and learn.

Our three consistencies

Love of others • Love of self • Love of learning

Policy owner	Headteacher
Person responsible	Luke Gilhooly
Approved / ratified by	Academy Council / Trust, September 2026
Effective from	1 September 2026
Review date	September 2027
Key statutory guidance	Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026



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1. Aims, scope and Catholic ethos

Purpose. This Code sets and maintains the standards of professional conduct expected of all adults working in or on behalf of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Otley. It applies to employees, agency and supply staff, trainee teachers, volunteers, governors/academy councillors, contractors and any other adults working regularly with pupils, where relevant to their role.

Catholic character. Our conduct should reflect the dignity of every person and the Catholic mission of the school. Adults are expected to model compassion, respect, service, honesty, justice and forgiveness, and to support the school's mission: *"As a family with God in our hearts, we love, laugh and learn."*

Principle. Staff occupy positions of trust and influence. Their behaviour must support a safe culture in which pupils are protected from harm, adults are protected from avoidable misunderstandings, and professional boundaries are clear.

- Treat every pupil and adult with dignity, respect and fairness.
- Act as a positive role model and maintain high professional standards.
- Place the safety, welfare and best interests of pupils at the centre of professional decision-making.
- Recognise that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and that concerns must be acted upon promptly.
- Use professional judgement where a situation is not expressly covered by this Code, seeking advice from a senior leader when needed.

Important

Failure to follow this Code may lead to action under the school's disciplinary procedures or other relevant procedures. Serious breaches may constitute gross misconduct and/or require referral to external agencies.

2. Legislation, statutory guidance and related documents

This Code has been reviewed for the 2026-27 academic year with particular regard to:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026, in force from 1 September 2026.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026.
- The Teachers' Standards, including Part Two: Personal and Professional Conduct.
- The Equality Act 2010.
- The Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.
- The Prevent duty and relevant statutory guidance.
- The school's funding agreement, articles of association and applicable Trust policies.
- Catholic Education Service expectations and the school's Catholic mission and ethos.

KCSIE 2026 expectation. All staff are expected to read Part One of KCSIE 2026. The school will put arrangements in place to support staff to understand and discharge their safeguarding roles and responsibilities.

3. General professional obligations

All staff will:

- maintain high standards of attendance, punctuality, reliability and professional preparation;
- work within the duties, policies, procedures and reasonable instructions that apply to their role;
- treat pupils, families, colleagues and visitors with dignity and respect;
- use calm, appropriate and professional language and never use language that is discriminatory, humiliating, threatening, sexually inappropriate or offensive;
- show tolerance and respect for the rights of others and uphold fundamental British values, while acting consistently with the school's Catholic character;

- ensure personal beliefs are expressed appropriately and are never used to exploit pupils' vulnerability or improperly influence them;
- maintain professional curiosity and act where something does not feel right;
- raise concerns about unsafe, unprofessional or inappropriate practice rather than ignoring it;
- co-operate with safeguarding, disciplinary, complaints and other legitimate school processes;
- take responsibility for keeping required training and professional knowledge up to date.

4. Safeguarding responsibilities

Safeguarding culture

At St Joseph's, safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. Staff should work with the mindset that abuse, neglect, exploitation or other harm could happen here and should act on concerns, however small they may initially appear.

All staff must:

- know the identity and role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and deputy DSLs;
- read and understand Part One of KCSIE 2026 and the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy;
- know how to respond if a child makes a disclosure or shares a concern, including listening carefully, not promising confidentiality and reporting promptly;
- report safeguarding concerns without delay through the school's agreed route, normally to the DSL or a deputy;
- record concerns accurately, factually and promptly on the school's safeguarding system (including CPOMS where applicable), in line with school procedures;
- understand that concerns, decisions, actions and the rationale for decisions must be properly recorded;
- recognise that data protection law does not prevent the sharing of information necessary to safeguard a child;
- know how to make a referral to children's social care and/or the police where circumstances require urgent action, and seek DSL support where appropriate;
- be alert to indicators of abuse, neglect and exploitation, including child-on-child abuse, sexual harassment and sexual violence, domestic abuse, criminal and sexual exploitation, county lines, radicalisation, FGM, forced marriage, online harm and risks outside the home;
- be aware of safeguarding issues affecting children who are absent from education, children with SEND, young carers and pupils who may face additional barriers to recognising or reporting abuse;
- complete safeguarding and online-safety training and updates as required by the school.

5. Concerns and allegations about adults, including low-level concerns

Why this matters. The school is committed to a culture of openness, trust and transparency in which expected behaviour is clear, concerns are shared, and inappropriate or unprofessional behaviour is addressed promptly and proportionately.

5.1 Concerns or allegations that may meet the harm threshold

Any concern or allegation that an adult working in or on behalf of the school has harmed a child, may have harmed a child, may pose a risk of harm to children, or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children must be reported without delay in accordance with the school's safeguarding procedures.

- A concern or allegation about a member of staff, supply staff, trainee teacher, volunteer or contractor must be reported to the Headteacher.
- A concern or allegation about the Headteacher must be reported to the Chair of the Academy Council/governing body (or the appropriate Trust/proprietor route required by local procedures).

- Where there is a conflict of interest in reporting the matter internally, staff must use the route set out in the safeguarding policy, including direct contact with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) where appropriate.
- Staff must not investigate allegations themselves or question children beyond what is necessary to clarify the immediate concern.

5.2 Low-level concerns

A low-level concern is any concern - however small, including a sense of unease - that an adult working in or on behalf of the school may have acted in a way that is inconsistent with this Code, including inappropriate conduct outside work, but which does not meet the harm threshold for a LADO referral.

Examples may include, but are not limited to:

- being over-friendly with children;
- having favourites or creating a relationship that could be perceived as preferential;
- taking photographs of pupils on a personal device contrary to school policy;
- engaging with a child one-to-one in a secluded area or behind a closed door without appropriate safeguards;
- using humiliating, intimidating, sexualised, discriminatory or otherwise inappropriate language;
- sharing personal information or communicating with a pupil through an unauthorised personal account;
- conduct outside work which raises a safeguarding concern or is inconsistent with the standards expected of adults working with children.

5.3 Sharing and recording low-level concerns

- Low-level concerns must be shared promptly using the school's designated low-level concerns route. At St Joseph's, concerns should normally be reported to the Headteacher; where appropriate the Headteacher may consult the DSL and/or HR.
- Where the concern relates to the Headteacher, it must be shared with the Chair of the Academy Council/governing body or the appropriate Trust route.
- Staff are encouraged to self-refer where they believe they may have acted in a way that could be misinterpreted, appeared compromising, or fallen below expected professional standards.
- Low-level concerns about supply staff or contractors will also be shared with their employer where required.
- All low-level concerns will be recorded in writing, including the concern, context, action taken and the rationale for decisions.
- Records will be kept confidentially and securely in accordance with data protection requirements and reviewed for patterns or emerging themes.
- If there is doubt about whether a concern meets the harm threshold, the school will consult the LADO.

No 'banter' exception

Staff must never dismiss inappropriate conduct as banter, joking, a personality issue or 'just how someone is'. Concerns are to be shared so that leaders can assess them properly.

6. Staff-pupil relationships and professional boundaries

Staff must maintain clear, appropriate professional boundaries at all times. They will:

- act in a fair, transparent and professional way that would withstand reasonable scrutiny;
- avoid behaviour that could be interpreted as grooming, favouritism, secrecy, intimidation or an inappropriate personal relationship;
- not establish or seek friendships, romantic relationships or sexual relationships with pupils;

- not exchange personal contact details, personal social-media accounts or private messaging details with pupils;
- not contact pupils outside authorised school systems except where specifically agreed for a legitimate educational or safeguarding purpose;
- avoid discussing intimate details of their private life with pupils;
- not ask pupils to keep secrets or create arrangements that exclude normal professional oversight;
- consider the age, vulnerability, communication needs and individual circumstances of pupils when deciding how best to work with them.

6.1 One-to-one working

- One-to-one work should be planned, necessary and proportionate to the pupil's needs.
- Where possible, it should take place in a room or area where others can see in or readily access the space.
- A colleague or line manager should know the session is taking place where this is not part of normal timetabled provision.
- Staff should follow any individual risk assessment, care plan or safeguarding plan.
- Any interaction that may have been misinterpreted, or that causes a member of staff concern on reflection, should be self-referred under the low-level concerns arrangements.

6.2 Gifts, rewards and favouritism

Staff should not give personal gifts to individual pupils in a way that could be interpreted as favouritism or as creating an obligation. School-authorised rewards, class gifts, prizes or gifts given openly and consistently as part of normal school practice are permitted. Any significant gift received by a member of staff must be declared in accordance with the school's gifts and hospitality arrangements.

7. Physical contact, intimate care and reasonable force

Physical contact with pupils must be necessary, appropriate, proportionate and in the child's best interests. Staff should:

- use the minimum necessary physical contact and be sensitive to the pupil's age, needs, wishes, culture and known experiences;
- never use physical contact as punishment or in anger;
- follow the school's behaviour, intimate care, first aid, SEND and reasonable force procedures;
- ensure intimate or personal care is undertaken only where authorised, with appropriate safeguards, dignity and privacy;
- record and report any physical intervention or incident when required by school policy;
- seek advice where they are uncertain whether a form of physical contact is appropriate.

8. Communication, social media and professional correspondence

Staff communications must remain professional and use authorised school channels. Staff will:

- use school email, approved platforms and school systems for professional communication;
- not use personal social-media accounts to contact pupils or develop relationships with pupils or their families;
- not search for, follow or attempt to access pupils' personal social-media accounts without a legitimate safeguarding reason and senior-leader authorisation;
- set personal social-media privacy settings appropriately and consider how their public profile may affect professional responsibilities;
- not post confidential information, images or comments that identify pupils, families or colleagues without lawful authority;

- not make derogatory, defamatory, discriminatory or otherwise inappropriate comments about the school, Trust, pupils, families or colleagues online;
- remember that online material can be copied, shared and retained even where an account is private or a post is deleted.

9. Acceptable use of technology, mobile devices and online safety

- School technology must be used lawfully, responsibly and in line with the Acceptable Use and Online Safety policies.
- Staff must not use school systems to access, create, store or share illegal, sexual, extremist, discriminatory or otherwise inappropriate material.
- Personal mobile phones and personal devices must not be used in front of pupils or for personal purposes during teaching/contact time unless specifically authorised or required by an agreed medical or emergency arrangement.
- Personal devices must never be used to photograph, film or audio-record pupils.
- Images of pupils must be taken only using school-authorised devices and systems and used in accordance with consent, safeguarding and data-protection requirements.
- Staff must not attempt to bypass the school's filtering, monitoring or security systems.
- Staff must report concerns about unsafe online content, cybersecurity, filtering or monitoring to the appropriate school leader.
- Where generative AI or other digital tools are used, staff must follow school/Trust guidance and must not enter confidential pupil, staff or safeguarding information into unapproved systems.
- The school reserves the right to monitor use of its networks, email, devices and systems in accordance with law and policy.

10. Confidentiality, information sharing and data protection

In the course of their duties, staff may have access to sensitive and confidential information. Such information must:

- be accessed only where needed for the staff member's role;
- be discussed only with people who are authorised and need to know;
- not be used to humiliate, embarrass, threaten or disadvantage another person;
- not be shared through personal email, messaging accounts, personal cloud storage or other unapproved channels;
- be stored, transported and disposed of securely.

Safeguarding takes priority. Confidentiality must never be used as a reason not to share a safeguarding concern. Staff should share relevant information with the DSL or appropriate safeguarding agencies when necessary to protect a child.

11. Honesty, integrity, gifts and conflicts of interest

- Staff must act honestly and with integrity in all professional matters, including qualifications, attendance, expenses, purchasing, handling money and use of school property.
- Staff must not seek or accept bribes, inducements or inappropriate benefits.
- Gifts and hospitality must be declared and recorded where required by the school's/Trust's policy.
- Staff must disclose any actual or potential conflict of interest that could affect, or appear to affect, professional decision-making.
- Staff must not use their role, school information or relationships for improper personal gain.
- School property, resources and funds must be used responsibly and only for authorised purposes.

12. Professional relationships with colleagues and parents/carers

12.1 With colleagues

- Treat colleagues with courtesy, respect and professional trust.
- Contribute positively to teamwork and communicate constructively, including where there is disagreement.
- Raise concerns through appropriate professional channels and avoid undermining colleagues in front of pupils, parents/carers or the wider community.
- Avoid workplace gossip, bullying, harassment, discrimination and conduct that damages professional relationships.
- Respect confidentiality while recognising the duty to report safeguarding, misconduct or other serious concerns.
- Share ideas, expertise and resources in the best interests of pupils.
- Seek resolution rather than blame and engage in professional challenge respectfully.

12.2 With parents and carers

- Listen respectfully and communicate honestly, calmly and professionally.
- Maintain appropriate boundaries and confidentiality.
- Use approved channels and keep appropriate records of significant communications.
- Work in partnership with families in the best interests of the child.
- Pass concerns to the appropriate leader and record them on CPOMS or other school systems where required.
- Avoid discussing another child, family or member of staff inappropriately.

13. Dress and professional presentation

Staff should present themselves in a professional, practical and appropriate manner for their role and the activities being undertaken. Clothing, footwear, jewellery, tattoos or visible images must not:

- display offensive, discriminatory, sexual, extremist or political slogans or imagery;
- create an avoidable health and safety risk;
- be excessively revealing or otherwise unsuitable for a primary-school professional environment.

Where particular clothing or PPE is required for PE, outdoor learning, practical work, first aid, intimate care or other duties, staff should follow the relevant risk assessment and school expectations.

14. Conduct outside work

Staff are entitled to a private life, but professional responsibilities can extend beyond school where conduct is relevant to suitability to work with children, safeguarding, the reputation of the school, or the employment relationship. Staff must:

- not engage in criminal, violent, sexual, discriminatory or extremist conduct that may call into question their suitability to work with children;
- not behave online or offline in a way that seriously undermines trust and confidence in their professional role;
- inform the Headteacher promptly of any arrest, charge, conviction, caution, investigation, restriction or other matter they are required to disclose under law, contract or Trust policy;
- seek advice if personal circumstances create a potential conflict with their professional role or safeguarding responsibilities.

15. Whistleblowing and speaking up

All staff should feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe safeguarding practice, wrongdoing or failures in the school's safeguarding arrangements. Concerns should normally be raised through the school's Whistleblowing Policy or with the Headteacher, Chair of the Academy Council/governing body or appropriate Trust officer, depending on the circumstances.

No member of staff should suffer detriment for raising a genuine concern in good faith. Where staff do not feel able to raise a child-protection failure internally, or believe a genuine concern is not being addressed, they should use the external whistleblowing routes identified in KCSIE 2026 and the school's Whistleblowing Policy.

16. Monitoring, breaches and review

- The Headteacher and senior leaders are responsible for promoting and monitoring compliance with this Code, with oversight from the Academy Council/Trust as appropriate.
- Concerns about breaches will be considered under the appropriate safeguarding, low-level concerns, disciplinary, capability, grievance or whistleblowing procedure.
- The response to a concern will be proportionate to its nature, seriousness, context and any pattern of behaviour.
- Nothing in this Code prevents the school from making referrals to the LADO, children's social care, police, DBS, Teaching Regulation Agency or other body where required.
- This Code will be reviewed at least annually and sooner if statutory guidance, Trust policy or safeguarding practice changes.

17. Links with other policies

This Code should be read alongside the school's and Trust's current versions of:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Disciplinary Procedure
- Grievance Procedure
- Low-Level Concerns / Allegations Management Procedure (where separate)
- Online Safety Policy and Acceptable Use Agreement
- Data Protection / Information Governance policies
- Behaviour / Relationship-Based Behaviour Policy
- SEND and Inclusion policies
- Intimate Care Policy
- First Aid and Medical Needs policies
- Reasonable Force / Positive Handling procedures
- Gifts and Hospitality Policy
- Social Media / Communications Policy
- Health and Safety Policy

Reference documents

- Department for Education, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (effective 1 September 2026).
- Department for Education, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026.
- Department for Education, Teachers' Standards.



Staff acknowledgement

Declaration

I confirm that I have read and understood the St Joseph's Catholic Primary School Staff Code of Conduct 2026-27. I understand my responsibility to follow the Code, Part One of KCSIE 2026, the school's safeguarding procedures, and the arrangements for reporting safeguarding concerns, allegations and low-level concerns.

Name

Role

Signature

Date

KCSIE Part One read

St Joseph, pray for us.