

# HASSENBROOK SCHOOL Specialist Technology College



## **CODE OF CONDUCT POLICY**

*(An amalgamation of Confidentiality / Whistle blowing and Use of Internet and e-mail Policies)*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Governing Body is committed to providing a professional and ethical environment, which serves and protects the whole school community. Certain expectations for good conduct are described in specific policies and procedures e.g. discipline and equal opportunities and professional expectations are set out in national and local conditions of service and by professional bodies e.g. the General Teaching Council. This Code supplements these and provides additional guidance for adults working in the School.
- 1.2 The following areas are covered within Further Particulars (summary of conditions of service) accompanying employees' contracts of employment:
- Outside work
  - Acceptance of gifts, legacies and hospitality
  - Data Protection
  - Intellectual property and copyright/Inventions and designs
  - Disclosure of Information

## 2. SCOPE

- 2.1 This Code applies to all adults working at the school and voluntary workers.

## 3. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

- 3.1 It is the responsibility of the **Governing Body** to establish and monitor standards of conduct and behaviour, including the establishment of relevant policies and procedures.
- 3.2 It is the responsibility of **the headteacher and other managers** to address promptly any breaches of good conduct and behaviour, using informal procedures where possible but implementing formal procedures where necessary.
- 3.3 It is the responsibility of all **staff** to familiarise themselves, and comply, with this Code, policies, procedures, conditions of service and relevant professional standards.
- 3.4 Any breaches of the Code of Conduct will be regarded as a serious matter which could result in disciplinary action, and possible dismissal.

## 4. STANDARDS

- 4.1 There is an expectation that school employees will provide the highest possible standard of service to the public through the performance of their duties. Employees will be expected through agreed procedures and without fear of recrimination, to bring to the attention of their line manager any deficiency in the provision of service. Employees must report to the appropriate manager/the Governing Body any impropriety or breach of procedure.
- 4.2.1 The Public Interest Disclosure Act ("Whistleblowers Act") affords protection against dismissal or penalty where an employee discloses certain information relating to:
- failure to comply with legal obligation;
  - miscarriages of justice;

- criminal offences;
  - danger to Health and Safety;
  - damage to the environment; and,
  - concealment of evidence relating to the above.
- 4.3 To qualify for protection the employee must have acted in good faith and have reasonable grounds for belief in the disclosure. The employee should usually have raised the matter internally prior to making a Public Interest Disclosure. Disclosures are only protected if made to the employer/some other person responsible for the matter/regulatory body.
- 4.4 This procedure should be used where the concern is about the consequences for other employees or the public. If the concern is about yourself being disadvantaged by the action or failure to take action of others, then that should be pursued through the School's Grievance Procedure.
- 4.5 In all cases employees may wish to seek advice from their Professional Association/Trade Union before to making a protected Disclosure.

Further details on Whistleblowing can be found at Appendix A.

## **5. CONFIDENTIALITY**

- 5.1 Working in the school environment necessarily means having access, in a variety of ways, to information that must be regarded as confidential.
- 5.2 As a general rule, all information received in the course of employment, no matter how it is received, should be regarded as sensitive and confidential. Employees should use their discretion regarding these matters, should refer to the Data Protection Policy and the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act and, if in doubt, should seek advice from the headteacher or their line manager.

Further details on confidentiality can be found at Appendix B.

## **6. USE OF EMAIL AND THE INTERNET**

- 6.1 Those that use the schools electronic mail services and/or the internet are expected to do so responsibly and to comply with all applicable laws, policies and procedures of the school, and with normal standards of professional and personal courtesy and conduct.
- 6.2 Computers and laptops loaned to employees by the school are provided solely to support their professional responsibilities and employees must notify their employer of any significant personal use.
- 6.3 Electronic media must not be used for knowingly viewing, transmitting, retrieving, or storing any communication that is:
- Discriminatory or harassing
  - Derogatory to any individual or group
  - Obscene or pornographic
  - Defamatory or threatening
  - Illegal or contrary to the school's policies or business interests.

- 6.4 All forms of chain mail are unacceptable and the transmission of user names, passwords or other information related to the security of the school's computers is not permitted
- 6.5 The email system and the internet/intranet are business tools provided to staff and other users at significant cost. Hence, it is expected that this resource will be used primarily for business related purposes. Reasonable access and use of the internet/intranet and email facilities is also available to recognised representatives of professional associations i.e. Union Officers.
- 6.6 The schools e-mail and internet service may be used for incidental personal purposes, with the approval of the Headteacher, provided that it does not:
- Interfere with the schools operation of computing facilities or email services.
  - Interfere with the user's employment or other obligations to the school.
  - Interfere with the performance of professional duties.
  - Is of a reasonable duration and frequency.
  - Is performed in non-work time.
  - Does not over burden the system or create any additional expense to the school.

Such use must not be for:

- Unlawful activities.
- Commercial purposes not under the auspices of the school.
- Personal financial gain.
- Personal use inconsistent other school policies or guidelines.

Further details on the use of email and the Internet can be found at Appendix C.

## **7. RELATIONSHIPS**

### **7.1 *Governing Body Proceedings***

There are restrictions on Governors or persons taking part in proceedings of the Governing Body or their committees under the Education (School Government) (England) Regulations 1999 which requires that they shall withdraw:

- a) if there is a conflict of interest or where there is reasonable doubt about their ability to act impartially;
- b) where they have pecuniary interest, N.B. re: Contracts;
- c) if a relative (including spouse) living with them has pecuniary interest.

### **7.2 *The Community and Service Users***

Employees must always remember their responsibilities in the community they serve and ensure courteous, efficient and impartial service delivery to all groups and individuals within the community as defined by the policies of the Governing Body and, where applicable, the Local Authority.

### **7.3 *Contracts***

- 7.3.1 All relationships of a business or private nature with external contractors, or potential contractors, must be made known to the School's Governing Body. Orders and contracts must be in accordance with Standing Orders and Financial Regulations of the County Council and the school. No special favour should be shown to businesses run by, for example, friends, partners or relatives in the tendering process. No part of the local community should be discriminated against.

- 7.3.2 Employees who engage or supervise contractors or have any other official relationship with contractors and have previously had or currently have a relationship in a private or domestic capacity with contractors, must declare that relationship to the School Governing Body.

**7.4 *Close personal relationships at work***

- 7.4.1 Situations arise where relations, or those in other close relationships, may be employed at the school and it is recognised that a significant proportion of close relationships are formed at work.
- 7.4.2 Applicants are required to disclose personal relationships and may not seek their support for an appointment. Employees should discuss, confidentially with their line manager, any relationships with an applicant or formed with another employee which may impact on the conduct of the school.

Further details on close personal relationships, including a definition of the term, can be found at Appendix D.

**8. POLITICAL NEUTRALITY**

- 8.1 Employees serve the community as a whole. It follows they must serve all members of the public and ensure that the individual rights of members of the public are respected and must not allow their own personal or political opinions to interfere with their work.

**9. USE OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES**

- 9.1 Employees must ensure that they use public and any other funds entrusted to them in a responsible and lawful manner. They must strive to ensure value for money to the local community and to avoid legal challenge to the Governing Body or the Local Authority. They must also observe the County Council's Financial Regulations and school's financial regulations.

**10. SPONSORSHIP**

- 10.1 Where an outside organisation wishes to sponsor or is seeking to sponsor a school activity, whether by invitation, tender, negotiation or voluntarily, the basic conventions concerning acceptance of gifts or hospitality apply. The sponsorship should always be related to the schools interests and/or the Authority's departmental or corporate activities and never for personal benefit only. Particular care must be taken when dealing with contractors or potential contractors.

## Appendix A

### **PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURE (WHISTLEBLOWING) ACT 1998**

This school is committed to achieving high standards of integrity and accountability and expects the same commitment from its employees and others working in or for the school. As such the school wishes to promote an open environment that enables staff to raise issues in a constructive way and with confidence that they will be acted upon appropriately without fear of recrimination.

It is expected that most issues will be dealt with through the normal management systems/procedures, but the following procedures provides for action beyond these when all other reasonable avenues of complaint have been exhausted.

#### **1. MAKING A PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURE**

- 1.1 Staff should raise any concerns about the conduct or behaviour of employees, volunteers or others associated with the operation and organisation of the school as soon as possible. Verbal reports should be followed up in writing.
- 1.2 Concerns should normally be raised initially with the employees line manager. However, where having raised a concern there is a belief that a manager has failed to take appropriate action or the complaint relates to the employee's line manager, the complaint should be brought to the attention of a more senior manager, the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors or in exceptional circumstances, the Local Authority.
- 1.3 Where the complaint is serious e.g. involving fraud, theft or other potential gross misconduct, act quickly to report it but do not mention it to the subject of the complaint or other colleagues as that could prejudice any investigatory process.
- 1.4 It may be the case that you will have very genuine and justified suspicions of wrong-doing even though at the time of 'whistleblowing' you cannot point to concrete evidence. That should not deter you from going ahead and reporting the matter, particularly where it may involve potential risk to vulnerable people.

#### **2. ACTION BY RECIPIENTS OF DISCLOSURES**

- 2.1 It would be inappropriate to have hard or fast rules and judgement must be exercised. While it is essential for problems to be tackled effectively and with the aim of righting wrongs, this may well be best achieved in many less serious cases by discussion with the 'offending' employee and securing a commitment as to future standards and corrective action. In other more serious cases the matter may need to be passed to a more senior level of management or directly to the Governing Body, as appropriate.
- 2.2 Where complaints are received from members of the public, the School's Formal Complaints Procedure (as contained in the School Customer Care Code of Practice) must be followed, unless the complaint relates to the specific conduct or performance of an individual employee in which case the Disciplinary Procedures may need to be instigated.
- 2.3 Any written complaint/allegation should be given a written acknowledgement and confirmation that the matter will be looked into. Unless clearly made in a very low key way about minor matters, verbal complaints/allegations should receive a written acknowledgement in the same way.

- 2.4 In the event of the allegation being of a very serious nature, eg relating to a fraud or other potential gross misconduct offence, there may well be a need to involve the School's Auditors and/or the police. This should normally be agreed initially by the Chair of Governors who, in turn, should keep the Local Authority informed in view of any possible implications concerning public monies. Advice may be sought from the School's Legal Advisors before involving the police in any such internal complaint or allegation.
- 2.5 When any complaint or allegation has been looked into and resolved or dealt with, the person who raised the matter in the first instance should be notified of that, normally in writing unless common-sense indicates that it can be done more appropriately in a verbal, informal way. How much detail to give of findings and outcomes is a matter of judgement and it would, for example, be inappropriate to disclose details of disciplinary actions taken against another employee.

### **3. PROTECTING 'WHISTLEBLOWERS' AND COMPLAINANTS**

- 3.1 A 'whistleblower' may ask for their identity to be kept concealed. Frequently the answer will be yes, but in more serious cases where disciplinary action may have to be taken against others they may well have a right to know the source as well as the nature of such complaints. In any case the school is committed to doing as much as possible to ensure that well-being at work does not suffer as a result of the tensions that may result from the making or investigation of complaints.
- 3.2 If a person believes they are experiencing harassment or victimisation at work as a consequence of 'whistleblowing' they are strongly encouraged to bring this to an appropriate senior manager's attention at an early stage so that it can be addressed. The school will take any appropriate action necessary to ensure that such harassment or victimisation stops.
- 3.3 Whether or not work relationships suffer in this way it may well be that 'whistleblowers' will find the process of reporting wrong-doing and making statements etc stressful, particularly where there may be feelings of divided loyalties. In such circumstances the 'whistleblower' may welcome the opportunity to talk through these anxieties and feelings either with their manager, or possibly, with someone from a counselling service. This is to be encouraged.

### **4. WHAT IF I RECEIVE A COMPLAINT ABOUT MYSELF?**

- 4.1 If the complaint or allegation is at all significant or made in a formal way, particularly by a member of the public or other external users, then you should inform your line manager, or Chair of Governors in the case of Headteachers – even if you believe or know the complaint to be groundless or unjustified.
- 4.2 Where a complaint or 'grumble' clearly does not justify taking up the line in this way, making a brief note on a file or diary or similar will often be appropriate and in your own best interests.

### **5 A SENSE OF PERSPECTIVE**

- 5.1 As stated in (1) above, all staff have an obligation under the Code of Conduct to raise concerns in this way where they see that proper standards have clearly been breached or ignored. Nevertheless it is important that where deficiencies in service provision standards are involved rather than corruption, staff should satisfy themselves that the failing is serious and that the potential disadvantage to the public or the School is significant. Any unnecessarily over-zealous reporting would be inappropriate and counter-productive.

**6. MALICIOUS ACCUSATIONS**

- 6.1 Equally though if on investigation it is considered that an employee has made malicious allegations without real substance, then that in itself will be taken as a most serious matter and likely to result in disciplinary action.

## **Appendix B**

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

#### **1. TYPES OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION**

- 1.1 Information that is regarded as confidential can relate to a variety of people e.g. pupils, parents, staff, governors or job applicants.
- 1.2 And a variety of matters e.g. personal information, conduct and performance, health, pay, internal minutes etc.

#### **2. POTENTIAL RECIPIENTS OF INFORMATION**

- 2.1 Within the course of daily operation, information related to the business or those connected with it, may be requested by, supplied by, or passed to a range of people. This might include internal colleagues, pupils, governors, trade unions, parents, the Local Authority, DfES, contractors.
- 2.2 Clearly, the sensitivity of the information will be partly dependent upon the recipient/supplier and the manner in which it is transferred.
- 2.3 Particular responsibilities
  - Personal (e.g. home addresses and telephone numbers) and work-related information (e.g. salary details, medical details) relating to individuals, should not be disclosed to third parties except where the individual has given their express permission (e.g. where they are key holders) or where this is necessary to the particular work being undertaken, e.g. it is necessary for an individual to be written to.
  - If someone requesting information is not known to staff, particularly in the case of telephone calls, his/her identity and the legitimacy of his/her request should be verified by calling them back. A person with genuine reasons for seeking information will never mind this safety measure.
  - It is a requirement under the Data Protection Act that action is taken to ensure the validity of any caller even if they state they have a statutory right to the information requested.
  - Wherever possible requests for information should be made in writing e.g. employee references.
  - The same principle applies when sending E-mails and faxes. Staff should always check that the information is going to the correct person and is marked confidential where appropriate.
  - Being known as an employee of the school may mean being asked for information, for instance, by parents about a member of staff who is off sick. Although this can be awkward, parents must be informed that employees are unable to discuss confidential school matters. Persistent enquiries can be referred to the headteacher.
  - The Data Protection Act refers to the principle of third party confidentiality. Information relating to, or provided by, a third party should not be released without the written consent of the third party or unless an 'order for disclosure' is made by a court of competent jurisdiction.

#### **3. THE FORM CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION CAN TAKE**

- 3.1 Confidential information can take various forms and be held and transmitted in a variety of ways e.g. manual records (files, reports, notes), computerised records and disks, telephone calls, face-to-face, fax, Email, Intranet/internet.
- 3.2 The methods of acquiring information can also vary. Individuals and groups may become aware of confidential information in the following ways:
- access is gained as part of the employee's day to day work;
  - information is supplied openly by an external third party;
  - employees may inadvertently become aware of information;
  - information may be disclosed.
- 3.3 Particular responsibilities
- Employees should be aware that they may have disclosed to them sensitive information in the course of their work or outside. In some circumstances the individual may request that the information remains confidential.
  - Staff will also need to be aware that they may be obliged to disclose certain information e.g. relating to child protection issues and should make it clear to the individual either that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed and/or direct them to a more appropriate colleague or decline to receive the information.

#### **4. RESPONSIBILITY OF INDIVIDUALS IN POSSESSION OF SENSITIVE INFORMATION**

- 4.1 As a general rule, all information received in the course of employment, no matter how it is received, should be regarded as sensitive and confidential.
- 4.2 While it is often necessary to share such information, in doing so, employees should consider the following key points.
- 4.2.1 The nature of the information:
- how sensitive is the information?
  - how did it come to your attention?
- 4.2.2 The appropriate audience:
- who does the information need to be shared with?
  - for what purpose?
  - who is the information being copied to? Why?
  - does restriction of access need to be passed on to your audience?
- 4.2.3 The most appropriate method of communication e.g. verbal, written, Email, in person.
- 4.2.4 The potential consequences of inappropriate communication.
- 4.3 It is also an individual employee's responsibility to safeguard sensitive information in their possession.
- 4.3.1 Sensitive information should be kept secure.
- Filing cabinets should be kept locked when unattended.
  - Sensitive information should not be left on desks or the photocopier/fax/printer.
  - Papers should not be left lying around at home or in the car. If confidential materials or paperwork are taken out of the office, precautions must be taken to ensure they are not accessible to third parties.
  - Appropriate steps should be taken to keep track of files which are on loan or being worked on i.e. a record of the date sent and the recipients name and position.

- If it is necessary to supply personal files through the external mail, this must be effected by recorded delivery.
- Copies of faxes and Emails should be stored securely.
- Steps should be taken to ensure that private/confidential telephone calls/conversations are not overheard.
- Meetings where sensitive or confidential information is being discussed should be held in a secure environment.
- Confidential paperwork should be disposed of correctly either by shredding it or using the confidential waste facility.
- Personal data should not be used for training or demonstration purposes where fictional data can be used.
- Line Managers should comply with the procedures for the storage and sharing of information relating to individuals' Performance Management Appraisal Reviews.

4.3.2 A variety of phrases may be used on correspondence to denote confidentiality. As a general rule:

- post marked 'personal' or 'for the attention of the addressee only' should only be opened by the addressee personally;
- post marked 'private' and/or 'confidential' may be opened by those responsible for distributing post within the school.

Confidential mail which is then forwarded internally, should continue to carry a confidential tag.

4.3.3 Employees should have regard to potential difficulties which may arise as a result of discussions outside work. While it is natural (and indeed can be therapeutic) to talk about work at home or socially, staff should be cautious about discussing specific and sensitive matters and should take steps to ensure that information is not passed on. Staff should be particularly aware that many people will have a direct interest in education and schools and even the closest of friends may inadvertently use information gleaned through casual discussion.

Employees should use their discretion regarding confidentiality, should refer to appropriate procedures and, if in doubt, should seek advice from the Headteacher or line manager.

Refer also to Appendix C for computer, email and internet protocols.

## Appendix C

### USE OF EMAIL AND THE INTERNET

E-mail and the internet can be extremely valuable tools in an educational context, encouraging the development of communication skills, and transforming the learning process by opening up possibilities that, conventionally, would be impossible to achieve. The school encourages the use of electronic mail as a medium for paper mail replacement and as a means of enhancing communications.

#### 1. SECURITY

- 1.1 The school follows sound professional practices to secure e-mail records, data and system programmes under its control. As with standard paper based mail systems, confidentiality of e-mail cannot be 100% assured. Consequently users should consider the risks when transmitting highly confidential or sensitive information and use the appropriate level of security measure.
- 1.2 Enhancement of the base level security to a higher or intermediate level can be achieved by the use of passwords for confidential files. It should be remembered e-mails forwarded from another individual can be amended by the forwarder. This possibility should be considered before acting on any such mail.
- 1.3 In order to effectively manage the email system the following should be adhered to:
  - Open mailboxes must not be left unattended.
  - Care should be taken about the content of an e-mail as it has the same standing as a memo or letter. Both the individual who sent the message and/or the school can be sued for libel.
  - Reporting immediately to IT Units when a virus is suspected in an email.

#### 2. PRIVACY

- 2.1 The school respects users' privacy. Email content will not be routinely inspected or monitored, nor content disclosed without the originator's consent. However, under the following circumstances such action may be required:
  - When required by law.
  - If there is a substantiated reason to believe that a breach of the law or school policy has taken place.
  - When there are emergency or compelling circumstances.
- 2.2 The school reserves the right, at its discretion, to review any employee's electronic files and messages to the extent necessary to ensure electronic media and services are being used in compliance with the law, this policy and other school policies.
- 2.3 Employees should not have any expectation of privacy to his or her internet usage. The school reserves the right to inspect any and all files stored in computers or on the network in order to assure compliance with this policy. Auditors must be given the right of access to any document, information or explanation that they require.
- 2.4 Use of the employee's designated personal file area on the network server provides some level of privacy in that it is not readily accessible by other members of staff. These file areas will however be monitored to ensure adherence to the schools policies and to the law. The employee's personal file area is disk space on the central computer allocated to that particular employee. Because it is not readily accessible to colleagues it should not be used for the storage of documents or other data that should be open and available in the office.

- 2.5 Managers will not routinely have access to an employee's personal file area. However, usage statistics/management information on usage size of drives or a report outlining the amount of information held on an individual's personal file area will be made available from time to time.

### **3. EMAIL & INTERNET USE AT HOME**

- 3.1 Access to the internet from an employee's home using a school owned computer or through school owned connections must adhere to all the policies that apply to use within the school. Family members or other non-employees must not be allowed to access the schools computer system or use the schools computer facilities, without the formal agreement of the Headteacher.

### **4. EMAIL PROTOCOLS**

- 4.1 Users must:

- Not Ignore e-mails. The system is designed for speedy communication. If the message requires a reply, a response should be sent promptly.
- Not use anonymous mailing services to conceal identity when mailing through the Internet, falsify e-mails to make them appear to originate from someone else, or provide false information to any Internet service which requests name, e-mail address or other details.
- Not abuse others (known as 'flaming'), even in response to abuse directed at themselves.
- Not use electronic media and services in a manner that is likely to cause network congestion or significantly hamper the ability of other people to access and use the system.
- Not use e-mail, either internally or on the Internet, to sexually harass fellow employees, or harass or threaten anyone in any manner.
- Not use, transfer and tampering with other people's accounts and files.
- Respect all copyrights and cannot copy, retrieve, modify or forward copyrighted materials except as permitted by the copyright owner.
- Not use the internet/intranet facilities or equipment to deliberately propagate any virus, worm, Trojan horse or any such other programme that is harmful to normal computer operations.
- Not access any obscene or pornographic sites. Sexually explicit or other offensive material may not be viewed, archived, stored, distributed, edited or recorded using the schools networks or computing resources. If a user finds himself/herself connected accidentally to a site that contains sexually explicit or offensive material, they must disconnect from that site immediately. Such unintentional access to inappropriate internet sites must be reported immediately to the respective line manager or Headteacher. Any failure to report such access may result in disciplinary action.

- 4.2 Except in cases in which explicit authorisation has been granted by school management, employees are prohibited from engaging in, or attempting to engage in:

- Monitoring or intercepting the files or electronic communications of other employees or third parties.
- Hacking or obtaining access to systems or accounts they are not authorised to use.
- Using other people's log-ins or passwords.
- Breaching, testing, or monitoring computer or network security measures.
- E-mail or other electronic communication that attempts to hide the identity of the sender or represent the sender as someone else.
- Interfering with other people's work or computing facilities.
- Sending mass e-mails without consultation with the Headteacher. Global Sends (send to everybody in the Global address book) are prohibited.

- Using the Internet for personal commercial purposes.

## 5. DATA PROTECTION

- 5.1 The Data Protection Act 1998 prohibits the disclosure of personal data except in accordance with the principles of the Act. This prohibition applies to e-mail in the same way as to other media. Information gathered on the basis that it would be seen by specified employees must not be given to a wider audience. In accordance with the provisions of Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, the school respects the right to privacy for employees who use IT equipment but does not offer any guarantee of privacy to employees using IT equipment for private purposes.
- 5.2 As data controller, the school has responsibility for any data processed or stored on any of its equipment. Any employee monitoring will be carried out in accordance with the principles contained in the Code of Practice issued by the Information Commissioner under the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.
- 5.3 In order to comply with its duties under the Human Rights Act 1998, the school is required to show that it has acted proportionately, i.e. are not going beyond what is necessary to deal with the abuse and that the need to investigate outweighs the individual's rights to privacy, taking into account the schools wider business interests. In drawing up and operating this policy the school recognises that the need for any monitoring must be reasonable and proportionate.
- 5.4 Auditors (internal or external) are able to monitor the use of the schools IT equipment and the storage of data. They are nevertheless bound by the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998, the Data Protection Act 1998, associated codes of practice and other statutory provisions and guidance, including the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 in respect of any activity that could be classed as directed surveillance.

## 6. EMAIL GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

	<b>Good Practice</b>
Read Receipt	When it is important to know that a recipient has opened a message, it is recommended that the sender invoke the 'read receipt' option.
Attachment Formats	When attaching a file it will have a specific format. Be aware of the possibility that a recipient may not have the software necessary to read the attachment. Format incompatibility can occur even between successive versions of the same software, e.g. different version of Microsoft Word.
E-mail Address Groups	If messages are regularly sent to the same group of people, the addressing process can be speeded up by the creation of a personal group in the personal address book.
Message header, or subject	Convey as much information as possible within the size limitation. This will help those who get a lot of e-mails to decide which are most important, or to spot one they are waiting for.
Subject	Avoid sending messages dealing with more than one subject. These are difficult to give a meaningful subject heading to, difficult for the recipient to forward on to others for action, and difficult to archive.
Recipients	Beware of sending messages to too many recipients at once. When sending messages for more than one-person's use be sure to indicate people for whom there is some expectation of action or who have central interest. cc to indicate those who have peripheral interest and who are not expected to take action or respond unless they wish to do so.

Replying	When replying to a message sent to more than one person, do not routinely reply to all recipients of the original message. Consider who needs to read your reply, e.g. if the sender is organising a meeting and asking you for availability dates, you need only reply to the sender.
Absent	If you have your own e-mail address, it is possible, for users of MS Exchange or have local enhancements to MS-mail, to set the 'out of office' message when you are going to be away for some time, e.g. on annual leave. You won't lose your messages, they will await your return, but the sender will know that you're not there and can take alternative action if necessary.
Evidential Record	Never forget that electronic conversations can produce an evidential record which is absent in a telephone conversation. Comments made by an employee during the course of an exchange of e-mails could be used in support, or in defence, of the schools legal position in the event of a dispute.
Legal records	Computer generated information can now be used in evidence in the courts. Conversations conducted over the e-mail can result in legally binding contracts being put into place.
Distribution Lists	Keep personal distribution lists up-to-date and ensure you remove individuals from lists that no longer apply to them
E-Mail threads	Include the previous message when making a reply. This is called a thread. Threads are a series of responses to an original message. It is best that a response to a message is continued by using reply accessed on the quick menu bar, rather than start an entirely new message for a response. Keep the thread information together. It is easier for the participants to follow the chain of information already exchanged. If the message gets too long the previous parts can be edited while still leaving the essence of the message.
Context	E-mail in the right context, care should be taken to use e-mail where appropriate. There may be occasions when a telephone call would be more appropriate especially on delicate matters. Beware of the use of excessive use of capitals. It can be interpreted as SHOUTING so consider how the style of your email may be interpreted by its recipient.
Forwarding e-mails	Consideration should be given when forwarding e-mails that it may contain information that you should consult with the originator before passing to someone else.
Large E-mails	For larger e-mails, particularly Internet e-mails, where possible send at the end of the day as they may cause queues to form and slow other peoples e-mail.

## 7. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

- 7.1 **The Human Rights Act 1998** provides for the concept of privacy giving a 'right to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence'.
- 7.2 **The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000** covers the extent to which organisations can monitor or record communications at the point at which they enter or are being sent within the employer's telecommunications system.
- 7.3 **The Data Protection Act.** Codes of Practice clarify the Act in relation to processing of individual data, and the basis for monitoring and retention of email communications.
- 7.4 **Telecommunications (Lawful Business Practise) (Interception of communications) Regulations 2000** empowers the Secretary of State to make regulations, which allow businesses to intercept communications.

- 7.5 **Contract law.** It is possible to make a legally binding contract via e-mail.
- 7.6 **Copyright law.** The Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 gives the same protection to digital and electronic publications as it does to other forms of publication.
- 7.7 **Obscene Publications Act 1959, Protection of Children Act 1988, Criminal Justice Act 1988.** These Acts are concerned with material that might be criminal, cause harm to young persons or be otherwise unlawful.
- 7.8 **Computer Misuse Act 1990.** This Act is mainly concerned with the problems of 'hacking' into computer systems.
- 7.9 **Lawful Business Practice Regulations (LBP)** authorise employers to monitor or record communications without consent for a number of purposes.

## **Appendix D**

### **CLOSE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS**

#### **1. DEFINITION**

- 1.1 Close personal relationships are defined as:
- Employees who are married, dating or in a partnership or co-habiting arrangement
  - Immediate family members e.g. parent, child, sibling, grandparent/child
  - Other relationships e.g. extended family (cousins, uncles, in-laws), close friendships, business associates (outside the School)
- 1.2 Whilst not all such situations where those in close personal relationships work together give rise issues of conflict of interest, implications can include:
- effect on trust and confidence
  - perception of service users, the public and other employees on professionalism and fairness
  - operational issues e.g. working patterns, financial and procurement separation requirements
  - conflicting loyalties and breaches of confidentiality
- 1.3 Open, constructive and confidential discussion between employees and managers is essential to ensure these implications do not occur.

#### **2. MANAGEMENT**

- 2.1 It is inappropriate for an employee to line manage, or sit on an appointment panel for, those with who they have close personal relationship. Employees must not be involved in any decisions relating to discipline, promotion or pay adjustment for anyone where there is a close personal relationship.

#### **3. REFERENCES**

- 3.1 When providing a reference, the individual providing the reference must make it clear if it is provided as a personal or colleague reference or provided formally as a reference on behalf of the employer.
- 3.2 Personal or colleague references should not be provided on headed paper. References on behalf of the employer should be cleared and signed by another manager.

#### **4. IMPACT**

- 4.1 It may be in appropriate to employ someone to work in a team with someone with who they have a close personal relationship. It may also be necessary in certain circumstances to consider transferring staff who form close personal relationships at work. Any such action will be taken in full consultation with both parties and without discrimination.
- 4.2 Colleagues who feel they are affected by a close personal relationship at work involving other colleagues should at all times feel that they can discuss this, without prejudice, with their line manager, other manager or Governing Body.