POLICY FOR THE BEACON STAFF CODE OF CONDUCT

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PERSON RESPONSIBLE:	**Mrs L Hatton**
RATIFIED BY:	**Management Committee**

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Introduction

This Code describes the standards of conduct and behaviour expected from our staff and any staff seconded or engaged from other organisations to undertake work within Worcestershire schools. It also highlights some types of behaviour or conduct which might be considered incompatible with being a school employee. It is intended to help you by describing the standards expected of you and has been approved by Worcestershire County Council following consultation with the appropriate Trade Unions. Please take time to read it and ensure your conduct meets these requirements. If you are at all uncertain about what is expected please seek further clarification from the Headteacher so that you do not unwittingly contravene this Code or otherwise act against the school or county council's interests.

Contravening or failing to act within the spirit of the Code, or behaving in a manner which could bring the good name of the school or the county council into disrepute, whether or not in the workplace or working time, might be seen as a breach of discipline and could lead to action being taken against you under the appropriate procedure.

While workers who are not employees of the county council are expected to comply with the spirit of the Code, any action that may be taken in response to a breach will depend upon the precise nature of their working relationship with the county council.

This code relates to all staff working for Worcestershire County Council. Teachers must be aware that there is also a *Code of Conduct and Practice for Registered Teachers* (developed by the General Teaching Council) and are advised to familiarise themselves with the requirements of this.

Guiding Principles

As a school employee, you should put the well-being, development and progress of children and young people first. You should recognise that you are in a position to influence children and young people through your slightest actions, comments or behaviour.

To the public you are a representative of the school. You are expected to maintain the highest standards of professional competence, knowledge, integrity, confidentiality, financial propriety and personal conduct. Contact with all members of the school community, including parents and outside visitors, should be courteous, efficient and impartial to all groups and individuals. You must also familiarise with, and adhere to any rules or codes of conduct or policies relating to your particular school and role and you should comply with all reasonable requirements or instructions from the Headteacher.

It is not appropriate for you when working within your role as an employee to oppose the stated aims and policies of the school or county council or to undermine the performance of its duties and responsibilities. It is important for all employees to present a unified image to the public.

You should ensure that your relationships with your fellow employees and with pupils are always conducted in a professional and courteous manner; you should not censure other colleagues or criticise their work in the hearing of a pupil or parent/carer.

It is not acceptable for you to publicly criticise or blame school management, colleagues or the county council through any medium including internet 'blogs', websites or social networking tools such as Facebook or Twitter and you must be aware that the laws governing defamation, breach of copyright,etc. apply equally to 'blogging' as to other forms of communications. Offensive, defamatory, discriminatory or otherwise inappropriate comments will not be tolerated and may constitute a disciplinary and/or criminal offence, as could the disclosure/publication of any confidential or personal information about the school, its staff, pupils or other members of the school community.

Any disagreement involving the interpretation or application of the Code as it applies to you should be discussed with the Headteacher in the first instance. However if you feel the Code is being applied unreasonably you may be able to seek redress through the school's Grievance Procedure.

Personal Interests

The interests of the school or the way you do your job must not be influenced by personal interests or those of relatives, friends or membership of external organisations or societies. There should be no grounds for suspicion that you are using your position with or knowledge of the school for personal gain or that you could be influenced by improper motives. If you belong to outside organisations, including voluntary organisations, there must be no conflict with your job or other school or county council interests. You should advice the Headteacher in writing about anything which could give this impression.

Private Work

School or Council premises, equipment, working time or other resources must not be used to undertake private work.

The school needs to be aware if its employees undertake private work or voluntary activities in their own time to ensure that there is no conflict of interests with the school and to meet its obligations under Health and Safety legislation. Therefore, to protect yourself, the school and the Council from potential criticism you should not put yourself in a position where there is an actual or perceived conflict of interests. You should be aware that outside work or activity, whether or not you receive payment, could reduce your ability to safely and effectively carry out your employment with the school or county council, e.g. through tiredness, and would be considered unacceptable.

You must advise the Headteacher before engaging in any other work especially if it could reasonably be seen to conflict with your employment with the school or lead to misunderstanding or criticism.

You must not undertake private work for any individual, organisation or establishment which otherwise would be undertaken as part of your normal duties. Any charge raised as a result of undertaking work within another school or other establishment should be paid to the school.

You must not undertake private work when on sick leave without the express knowledge and prior written approval of the Headteacher and subject to appropriate medical advice.

You must not undertake private work for any Worcestershire County Council school or establishment during a period of paid leave or suspension.

Expressing concern about irregularities and tackling malpractice

If you feel there is something seriously wrong at work please tell an appropriate person as a 'voice of concern'. It might be for example, the conduct of another employee, the way a contractor is behaving, a work practice, something that is endangering the safety of pupils or staff. You might be the first to notice it and your intervention could stop things getting worse.

No matter how reticent you may feel, you should raise any serious concern – e.g. a suspicion of fraud or corruption or reasonable belief that a child or adult's health, safety or wellbeing are in danger – with the Headteacher so that potentially serious problems or malpractice can be addressed without undue delay. If this is not appropriate, then you should contact either the Chair of the Management Committee or Children's Services Human Resources. If the matter relates to fraudulent activity, you

may inform the Audit Division. If you do raise a genuine concern in good faith all reasonable steps will be taken to respect your confidence and protect you from possible reprisals (see Confidential Reporting (Whistleblowing) Policy).
The school and county council take this issue very seriously and will investigate and address any problems genuinely raised. However, any frivolous, malicious or mischievous use of the Confidential Reporting (Whistleblowing)Policy will be treated as a serious disciplinary matter.

Copyright

You should be aware that 'intellectual property' such as software, ideas, documents, etc. created during your employment belongs to the school. All files, materials, the media upon which they are located and all software programmes or packages which are utilised or developed solely for or in connection with your job remain the property of the school.

Confidentiality

The county council is committed to open government and, in law, certain information must be made available to councillors, government departments, service users and the public. However, you must make sure you know whether information is 'public' or confidential and treat it accordingly.
You may sometimes acquire information at work which has not been made public or is confidential. Examples include information about a pupil or family, a colleague, information on tenders or costs or the proceedings of confidential meetings.
You must ensure that sensitive and/or confidential information is properly secured and safeguarded at all times especially if being transported in paper or electronic formats. Particular care must be taken with information stored on portable electronic media such as laptops and memory devices which are often targeted for theft due to their high intrinsic value. Only The Beacon email addresses should be used for school business.
Confidential information which comes into your possession must not be used for personal benefit or divulged to other parties except in the proper course of duty, for example to other professionals working with the same child. If you have any doubt whether or not disclosure is appropriate, you must check with the Headteacher before releasing confidential information.
Some information can be extremely valuable in business and commerce and its publication, loss or misuse could seriously disadvantage the school or county council and its employees. Therefore, it is important that you do not, deliberately or inadvertently, pass on information, including software, during or after your employment with the school, to anyone who has no right to receive it. You must not discuss, disclose, publicise or use such information for your own or anyone else's personal interest or advantage.
You must decline any approaches or offers made asking for information which could be detrimental to, or help others to gain a contract, grant or any other advantage from the school or county council and/or its employees, e.g. a potential contractor could offer a financial reward for information leading to the award of a major contract. Approaches or offers of this kind must be declared to the Headteacher without delay.
You must not criticise the school, its policies or staff in open media such as internet 'blogs', websites, social networking sites, etc. where it may be seen by parents, children or others in the school community.

Contact with the media

Unless you are properly authorised to speak with, write or give interviews to the media you should refer any enquiries from the media on work related matters to the Headteacher. Advice is available to school through the county council's Communication Unit.

Information Technology and Data Protection

Everyone using computing equipment has a duty of care to use it according to prescribed arrangements, e.g. to avoid introducing computer viruses, to comply with GDPR and to safeguard and ensure the security of information. School laptops must be securely stored when not in use. Laptops must never be left in vehicles overnight, nor used for anything other than school business.
You must familiarise yourself with the school's ICT policies, including use of the internet. In particular, all use of the internet and email facilities must be authorised, legal, appropriate, and in accordance with the provisions of the school policies. Personal use of any facilities – including laptops – must be authorised and only undertaken at times deemed appropriate by the Headteacher.

Users shall not use the internet or email for the following:

- To knowingly break the law
- To fail to comply with existing county council policy
- To compromise the integrity of any network system
- To access, display or transmit any kind of sexually explicit material or any offensive or discriminatory material of any kind
- To make unauthorised contact with outside bodies
- To download software or play games
- To bet or gamble
- To disclose private or confidential information.

Failure to comply with the policies in force or any unauthorised use of such facilities will be dealt with in accordance with the relevant disciplinary procedure.

Employees should also take account of policies on cyber bullying.

Employees should also be aware when they are using personal IT equipment for undertaking school related business that the same rules apply. Personal mobile phones must not be used during lesson time to take/receive call and texts and under no circumstances must photographs of children be taken using personal mobile phones. Please refer to the Mobile Phone Policy.

Gifts, inducements, hospitality and sponsorship

You must not accept any commission, discount, allowance, direct or indirect profit, inducement, payment, perk or benefit in connection with any professional work undertaken, other than any fee recoverable on behalf of the school or county council.
Minor gifts and hospitality are sometimes part of the normal courtesies of life: the parent of a pupil may offer a modest gift, especially at Christmas or as a token of appreciation. As a guidance, any gift

or hospitality with a value of £25.00 or more is unlikely to be viewed as a 'token'. With the exception of these 'tokens' and any special schemes arranged by the county council, all gifts, vouchers, fees, special discounts, rewards or preferential treatment must be refused. In situations where refusal is difficult or might offend you must inform the Headteacher who will decide on the appropriate action. Where an outside organisation wishes to sponsor any activity or make a donation to the school, the basic principles relating to personal interests and the acceptance of gifts or hospitality apply.

Use of Council resources and equipment

Facilities, equipment, vehicles, materials and other resources provided by the school or county council for use in your work must not be used for any other purpose without permission or appropriate payment, e.g. photocopying, private telephone calls.

Standards of appearance

The county council does not impose particular dress standards but staff are expected to present a reasonable and professional appearance and dress appropriately to the circumstances within their working environment. For further details please see The Beacon Dress Policy.
When wearing anything which identifies you as an employee of the school you must maintain appropriate standards of conduct whether or not on duty, e.g. when travelling to and from work.

Relatives and close personal relationships within the workplace

In order to avoid any possible accusation of bias you should endeavour not to be directly involved in the appointment, promotion, discipline or other employment decision relating to another employee to whom you are related or whom you may have a close personal relationship. If a situation arises in which you feel you may be in such a position, please seek the advice of Children's Services Human Resources.
If you work in close proximity with other employees or pupils to whom you are related or have a close personal connection you must maintain a strictly professional relationship at work. You should also be aware that if any relationship leads to disruption in the workplace, unacceptable conduct or performance or situations involving undue favouritism or detriment, action will be taken under the appropriate procedure which could lead to you being redeployed or your contract terminated.

Smoke free environment

All county council buildings, workplaces and vehicles are smoke free areas. Since July 2007, it has been against the law to smoke in workplaces; failure to comply is now a criminal offence. This includes the use of E cigarettes.

Drugs and alcohol

Employees must not take drugs, alcohol or any other substance before work, during a break or at lunch time that is capable of causing their behaviour, judgment or performance at work to be affected.

It is equally inappropriate for those working in close proximity to children to have alcohol on their breath even though this may not amount to drunkenness.

Health and Safety

Unsafe working can endanger you, your colleagues and members of the public. You must familiarise yourself with the school's and Council's Health and Safety Policy and guidelines for your particular work. Please speak to the Headteacher for further information. You must follow the rules, codes and safe practices they describe including reporting any accidents, incidents or near misses you have at work.

Criminal charges, cautions and convictions

You must advise the Headteacher immediately if you are charged with or cautioned or convicted of any criminal offence whilst you are an employee of The Beacon or county council. Whilst such proceedings will not necessarily affect your employment, the school and council need to be sure there are no implications for the school, its reputation and safety of children in relation to the role you undertake.

Specific standards for staff with responsibility for expenditure

Personal interests:

The interests of the school and county council must not be undermined by personal interests. The way you do your job must not be influenced by personal interests or those of relatives, friends or membership of external organisations or societies. There should be no grounds for suspicion that you are using your position with or knowledge of the school or county council for personal gain or that you could be influenced by improper motives. If you belong to outside organisations, including voluntary organisations, there must be no conflict with your job or other school or county council interests.

All orders, contracts and grants must be awarded on merit following fair competition. No favour should be shown because of personal interests and no part of the community should be discriminated against.

You must advise the Headteacher in writing about anything which could give the impression that you may be acting for personal gain, financial or otherwise, or in the interests of another person or organisation; or you are involved as an employee in matters which might reasonably be regarded as affecting the well-being or financial position of yourself, your spouse, partner, relative, a close friend or any person with whom you have a close association, e.g. if any of those persons

- hold an office or employment with
- have any connection or influence with
- have any financial interest in any company or organisation doing or seeking to do business with, or requesting grants or other funding from the county council.

You should avoid being involved as an employee in matters which might reasonably be regarded as affecting the well-being or financial position of yourself (or the persons, companies or organisations referred to above) so significant that it is likely to prejudice your judgement of the school/county

council or public interest. (N.B. Holding shares in a company with which you know the county council is likely to be dealing, or acting as an agent for them, could be regarded as a financial interest.)
You must advise the Headteacher who will notify the Head of Legal & Democratic Services in writing of any direct or indirect pecuniary interest in a contract or proposed contract with the county council as soon as practicable after becoming aware of it so that it can be recorded in the 'Register of Officers' Interests'. Failure to do so may be a criminal offence as well as a disciplinary matter.
You must advise the Headteacher of any personal dealings of a business or private nature with existing or potential suppliers, consultants or contractors who you know (or could reasonably be expected to know) to have dealings with the school or county council.
If you engage or supervise contractors or consultants on behalf of the school or have any other official relationship with them, you must advise the Headteacher, prior to any contractual relationship beginning or work being undertaken.

In the case of sickness absence, staff must telephone the Headteacher between 6:30 and 7 am. Please do not send text messages.

Gifts, inducements, hospitality and sponsorship:

Please see previous information regarding the acceptance of gifts.

Offers of hospitality, even of a seemingly minor nature, must be treated with particular caution as they can leave both individuals and the county council open to all manner of allegations of impropriety. The timing of offers of hospitality, e.g. in relation to purchasing, the award of contracts, granting of applications or other decisions, should be considered equally to the generosity of the hospitality offered. Accepting hospitality must be justified in the public interest, e.g. when there is a genuine need to represent the school or county council. You must inform the Headteacher of an invitation or offer of hospitality before it is accepted.

Personal purchases:

You should be aware of possible conflicts of interest when you buy goods or use the services of firms which have dealings with the school and follow any school procedures relating to the disclosure of any such transactions. You should neither seek, because of your position, nor accept, because of an organisation's dealings with the school, preferential rates, reductions or any other favourable treatment in the purchase of goods and services.

Procurement of goods and services and disposal of county council property:

Procurement procedures must be strictly adhered to and you must not accept any inducement or preferential treatment if you are responsible for procuring goods or services for the school or disposing of surplus property.

In addition, staff should always be in a position to demonstrate that 'Best Value' has been sought and achieved. Detailed guidance on procurement and tendering is set out in the council's Financial Regulations and Procurement Code.

Conduct and Performance

Unacceptable behaviour and/or failure to maintain satisfactory standards of conduct or performance will lead to action being taken against you under the appropriate procedure. This includes specifically the failure to behave at all times in accordance with the schools and county council's stated values.
You must ensure you understand the requirements of this Code of Conduct and any terms and conditions, rules, standards and requirements that apply to you and your job. Any of the examples of unacceptable behaviour listed below may be considered as misconduct or gross misconduct depending on the relevance to your role, your seniority, the seriousness of the act and particular circumstances. Those underlined normally will be considered as gross misconduct. The list is not exhaustive and other unacceptable behaviour not specifically listed nevertheless may be considered as misconduct or gross misconduct:

a) any form of unjustifiable discrimination, harassment, threatening or bullying behaviour, e.g. on the grounds of race, sex/gender, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, age, religion or belief; whether or not the subject of current legislation;
b) any physical, emotional or sexual abuse of a child or other vulnerable person;
c) possession, displaying, viewing or downloading of offensive materials, accessing 'unacceptable' websites, e.g. websites of a sexual nature, gambling, betting or gaming in the workplace or via any portable device, e.g. laptop, mass storage, which is the property of the school or county council and has been provided in connection with the post holder's work;
d) undertaking private activities during working hours;
e) unpunctuality, misuse of time and recording, unauthorised absence from work;
f) refusing to comply with reasonable orders and instructions;
g) deliberately causing damage to school or council property
h) harming or endangering other persons or property, e.g. by contravening safety rules;
i) neglect of duty/lack of due care or diligence, disruptive behaviour, poor attitude;
j) fighting, threatening or actual violence towards, physical assault or abuse of another person whilst at work (NOTE: this does not include reasonable physical restraint necessarily carried out in the course of duty);
k) theft, unauthorised removal, misappropriation, improper or unauthorised use of council or other property systems (including telephones, IT, email and internet), vehicles, equipment, name or other resources. This may include loss by failing to properly secure or safeguard;
l) failure to report criminal convictions, particularly those which may be relevant to the type of work undertaken, e.g. driving convictions where the work necessitates driving on school business, indecent assault where working with children or vulnerable adults;
m) fraudulent or misleading practices and/or omissions in connection with official duties, e.g. deliberately falsifying school or council documents, reports, etc.;
n) fraudulent or false claims for payment of salary, expenses and/or allowances, etc. or seeking financial gain by deception;
o) acts involving bribery or corruption;
p) any action for which it would be appropriate for the school or council as an employer to take legal proceedings (irrespective of whether such proceedings are taken);
q) sexual misconduct at work
r) wilfully breaching any school or council policy or procedure;
s) drunkenness, being unable to carry out duties through the influence of any substances including drugs, whether or not prescribed, and alcohol, or for any other avoidable reason. (N.B. It is equally inappropriate for those hosting visitors or working in close proximity to

service users such as children and vulnerable adults, to have alcohol on their breath even though this may not amount to drunkenness.);

t) possession, buying or selling of weapons, illegal substances or materials at work;
u) any breach of trust or security in respect of information or procedures;
v) obtaining or attempting to obtain access to information (including information held or stored by electronic means) to which the employee is not entitled;
w) any action which may bring the good name of the school or county council into disrepute;
x) as an employee, public opposition to the stated aims and policies of the school or county council, criticism or blame of colleagues, council departments or county councillors through any medium including internet 'blogs', websites, social networking sites, etc.;
y) any action unconnected with work which brings in to question your suitability as an employee of the school or county council;
z) failing to report serious misconduct, aiding or inciting another employee to undertake any of the above actions or other act of wrongdoing.