

## **GUIDANCE FOR STAFF AND STAFF PARENTS OF GDST PUPILS**

**This guidance is intended to provide advice for dealing with situations which relate to GDST pupils who are children of staff members, and therefore applies to all staff (teaching, support and Trust Office staff). The guidance places a particular emphasis on those who are parents of pupils who attend the same school at which they work but applies equally to staff who have a child at any GDST school. The definition of children includes those who are stepchildren, foster children, grandchildren, and other similarly close familial relationships.**

### **1. General principles**

1.1 We welcome children of staff members into our school communities within the terms of each of our schools' normal admissions criteria. Staff parents and staff children enrich our communities in a myriad of ways and staff and pupils are very good at understanding both the boundaries and the potential for sensitivities which can arise from this close relationship between home and school.

1.2 The overarching principle is that the children of staff must not be given favourable treatment by any member of staff including their staff parent, but neither should they be disadvantaged because of their relationship to a staff member. In all cases, the school's standard pupil policies and procedures should be followed in the same way as they would for any other pupil.

1.3 Staff whose children are pupils must treat them in exactly the same way as any other pupil whilst at school or in a school context. This includes scenarios where staff parents come into contact with their children during the school day or on external visits and at fixtures, and where pupils are in a class with their own parent as a teacher or form tutor. All staff should be mindful of issues of favouritism and fairness and should exercise care when, for example, they are selecting or excluding children of staff members for activities, special jobs, awards or privileges. It is reiterated that pupils of staff must be neither advantaged nor disadvantaged because of their relationship with their staff parent.

1.4 Being a staff member *and* a parent of a pupil in the same school can involve some additional sensitivities, particularly in relation to information-sharing and can increase the likelihood of potentially awkward situations. No guidance or policy document can cover every eventuality and staff should use their common sense and professional judgement to guide their behaviour. If a situation arises which has the potential to be problematic or create a conflict of interest or duty, staff should refer any queries or concerns they have in relation to their position to their line manager, a Deputy Head, the Head or the Director of Finance and Operations or a member of HR, as appropriate. If the Head is a staff parent, they should raise their queries or concerns with the Director of Legal and Risk Assurance.

### **2. Professional trust and boundaries**

2.1 In most respects, the usual procedures for contact between staff and parents should be used by staff parents and teaching staff. On occasions, it may be easier if the staff parent talks to colleagues outside the school day if there are any concerns or problems regarding their child. If it is thought helpful or necessary to mention a staff child at a staff meeting, colleagues are asked to be sensitive and consider whether the form tutor may prefer to discuss matters privately with the relevant teaching staff and then contact the staff parent out of school hours.

2.2 Deputy Heads or Heads, as appropriate, are available to discuss, in confidence, any matter concerning a member of staff's own child which cannot be dealt with by the form tutor or teacher in the usual way. Where a Head is a staff parent, they should discuss their concerns with the Director of Legal and Risk Assurance.

2.3 When communicating with colleagues or the school about their child it would be helpful if, in advance, the staff parent makes it clear that they are acting in a parental, not a professional, capacity. If such communications are electronic, staff parents should use their own personal email address rather than their school email to indicate this distinction.

2.4 At parents' evenings, staff parents should have the opportunity to discuss their child's progress with staff for some part of the evening. If they teach girls in the same year group themselves, they should indicate when they will be available to other parents. Any potential difficulties should be discussed with the Deputy Head or Head.

2.5 Members of staff who are also parents of pupils must exercise particular caution when sharing information received in a professional capacity to ensure that they do not overstep professional boundaries or breach data protection regulations. For example, the sharing of or acting upon exam results/grade cards before their publication date would be a serious breach of professional trust. Members of staff must not discuss any aspects of school business with their own or their colleagues' children which are not intended to be common knowledge among pupils.

2.6 Staff parents must be mindful that whilst they are acting in a professional capacity at school, the GDST safeguarding procedures and other school rules and protocols continue to apply to their interactions with their children.

2.7 As it is important to put safeguarding records on CPOMS, information for staff children should be entered in the same way as for any other pupils. Staff should have their access blocked to their own child's CPOMS record. Nevertheless, colleagues should be sensitive to the fact that all other designated staff can see this information. If appropriate, staff entering the information might elect to discuss any potential safeguarding matter with the DSL for further guidance and advice. Should the DSL have a child or children in the school, arrangements should be made to ensure their records are overseen by another member of the safeguarding team.

2.8 When setting the timetable, schools should try to avoid assigning teachers to classes in which they would be teaching their own children, if at all possible.

2.9 In terms of parents marking their own child's coursework, guidance is taken from the JCQ document 'Instructions for conducting coursework.' *"Centres must make every effort to avoid situations where a candidate is assessed by a person who has a close personal relationship with the candidate, for example, members of their family (which includes step-family, foster family and similar close relationships) or close friends and their immediate family (e.g. son/child). Where this cannot be avoided, the centre must declare the possible conflict of interest to the relevant awarding body and submit the marked work for moderation whether or not it is part of the moderation sample. Further details are given in section 5 of the JCQ document General Regulations for Approved Centres. This document is available in an interactive format within the Centre Admin Portal (CAP). The Centre Admin Portal can be accessed via any of the awarding bodies' secure extranet sites. The document is also available in PDF format on the JCQ website: <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations>*

2.10 Where a parental complaint situation arises from a staff parent, it would be advisable for an appropriate member of SLT to deal with it.

2.11 Children of staff should not be allowed into areas within school that are barred to other pupils.

### 3. Social situations

3.1 It is understandable that staff who are parents of GDST pupils may more frequently be in social situations with other GDST parents and it is acknowledged that there will be genuine friendships and social contact between parents of pupils, independent of the professional relationship.

3.2 Staff members must exercise their judgement when arranging social contact with their children's friends and their families if they are also GDST pupils. This includes scenarios where staff member's children are not themselves GDST pupils, but they have friends who are GDST pupils. Staff should be clear that although in social settings they are not acting in their professional capacity, they retain responsibility for exercising good judgement and acting professionally as behaviour outside of work when it involves GDST pupils has a bearing on their role at work.

Particular thought and care should be given to the scenarios below (*these are illustrations only and are not an exhaustive list*).

- Where pupils who are friends of the staff member's child(ren) are visiting staff members' homes and where overnight stays are involved (in the family home or on holiday).
- Transport issues i.e., giving lifts to pupils who are their child's friends.
- Taking, storing and sharing photos of pupils in a social setting.

3.3 The Head (or in the case of the Head, the Director of Legal and Risk Assurance at Trust Office) should be informed of any close friendship with parents of pupils which could involve social contact with a pupil and might give rise to concern (e.g., attending social events involving alcohol when pupils are present).

3.4 The Head (or, in the case of the Head, the Director of Legal and Risk Assurance at Trust Office) should be informed of any close personal relationship (a partner or a close friendship) with a parent which, for example, might involve living together, spending the night at each other's homes or sharing accommodation on holiday when the pupil is present.

3.5 Staff in social situations with GDST pupils and parents, must avoid potentially inappropriate discussion about school life, e.g., the sharing of professional confidences including information about pupils or other staff.

3.6 If staff parents are in a social setting and are put into a difficult situation by parents who wish to complain about the school and request their intervention or comment, the staff parent should remind them that they are present in a social capacity and ask the parent to make an appointment with the appropriate member of staff or management at school.

3.7 Where staff are members of GDST parent WhatsApp groups, they should be mindful that they may hear things about other pupils, staff or the school or be asked to take part in activities (e.g., a petition) that might give rise to a conflict of interest between their role at school and as a parent. If this creates any concern, staff are advised to speak to the Head or an appropriate member of the SLT, or for Trust Office staff, the Director of Legal and Risk Assurance at Trust Office.

### 4. Contractual relationship

Staff parents will enter into a contractual relationship with the GDST by virtue of the fact that they have entered into a parent contract for their child's education. The GDST will treat staff parents in the same way as any other parent under this contract. Staff parents should be particularly mindful that where a term's notice is not given before withdrawal of a pupil, this will be pursued at the full rate of fees and without the application of any relevant staff discount.

Relevant guidance:

- JCQ document 'Instructions for conducting coursework.'
- Guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings, Feb 2022 (Safer Recruitment Consortium)