



## **4H Code of Conduct Policy (for parents, carers & members of the public)**

Reviewed: HR Manager/SMT – July – September 2023 (every 2 years)

Ratified by Board: September 2023

Next Review Date: Autumn Term 2025

EDI Assessment: SSET does not currently identify any EDI impact of this policy; should new information come to light, this will be considered at the next review.

## Introduction

We are very fortunate to have a supportive and friendly parent and carer body. Our parents and carers recognise that educating children and young people is a process that involves partnership between parents, class teachers and the school/college community.

As a partnership, our parents/carers will understand the importance of a good working relationship to equip our students with the necessary skills for adulthood. For these reasons, we continue to welcome and encourage parents/carers to participate fully across the Sheiling community.

## Purpose and scope

The purpose of this policy is to provide shared expectations to all parents, carers and members of the public about their expected conduct. This is so we can continue to flourish, progress and achieve in an atmosphere of mutual understanding.

To help us do this, we set clear expectations and guidelines on behaviour for all members of our community. This includes staff (through the Staff Code of Conduct Policy 4B) and students (through our Behaviour Support Policy – Policy 4A).

This Code of Conduct for parents, carers and members of the public aims to help the Sheiling work together with those parties by setting guidelines on appropriate behaviour.

We use the term ‘parents’ to refer to:

- Anyone with parental responsibility for a child or young person
- Anyone caring for a child or young person (such as shared carers or child-minders)

## Guidance

We expect parents, carers and members of the public to:

- Respect the caring ethos and values of our school and college
- Work together with all staff in the best interests of our students
- Recognise that all members of the Sheiling community should be treated with respect and therefore set a good example in their own speech and behaviour
- Seek appropriate and respectful solution to any issues
- Approach the correct member of staff to help resolve any issues of concern

The Sheiling recognises there may be situations where parents/carers may be unhappy or concerned and we take all complaints seriously. Minor issues may often be resolved informally. It is important that any grievance, dissatisfaction, or complaint is shared in a way that is safe, acceptable and enables the Sheiling to respond effectively. This policy may be read alongside our 1H Complaints Policy (for Parents & Carers).

The Sheiling has a duty of care to all our staff and students. In order to support the peaceful and safe school and college environment, it is not acceptable for parents, carers and members of the public to act unreasonably or do or encourage anyone else to do any of the following:

- Disrupting, or threatening to disrupt, school and college operations (including events on Sheiling grounds)
- Abusive, insulting, malicious or threatening emails or text/voicemail/phone messages or written communication
- Using loud or offensive language, swearing, cursing, using profane language or displaying animosity

- Damaging or destroying Sheiling property
- Defamatory, offensive or derogatory comments regarding the Sheiling or any of the students/parents/staff at the school or college including on Facebook or other social network sites (See Appendix 1)
- The use of aggressive behaviour (including physically, verbally or in writing) towards another adult or student
- Behaving in a manner which is likely to cause alarm and distress to another individual, parent, member of staff and anything that could be reasonably interpreted as bullying, intimidating or humiliating
- Disciplining another parent's child/young person – please bring any behaviour incidents to a member of staff's attention
- Smoking and consumption of alcohol or drugs whilst on Sheiling premises
- Bringing dogs onto Sheiling premises (other than recognised Assistance Dogs)
- Discriminatory behaviour based on a person's characteristics including sex, race, disability, age, religion or belief, or gender re-assignment
- Taking photos or videos on our site or taking any photos or videos of our staff, students or parents without permission
- Refusing to co-operate with reasonable instructions
- Acting contrary to our Sheiling policies
- Excessively demanding behaviour that impacts on Sheiling staff

Should any of the above behaviour occur on Sheiling premises or via email, phone, social media or other methods of verbal or written communication, we may feel it is necessary to contact the appropriate authorities and, if necessary, put measures in place as set out below including to change or reduce communication and/or access to the site.

We trust that parents, carers and members of the public will assist us with the implementation of this policy and we thank everyone for their continued support of the Sheiling.

## Breaching the Code of Conduct

If the Sheiling suspects, or becomes aware, that a parent, carer or member of the public has breached the Code of Conduct, we will appoint an investigator to gather information from those involved with the incident.

Depending on the nature of the incident, the Sheiling may then:

- Arrange for a meeting to take place at the Sheiling, or via Teams.
- Implement a limited communications strategy
- Advise that a third party acts on behalf of a parent/carers or member of the public
- Seek legal advice regarding further action (such as in cases of conduct that may be libellous or slanderous)
- Seek to remove posts from social media and recover our legal costs from parent/carers or member of the public
- Send a warning letter or restrict access to the Sheiling site
- Contact the appropriate authorities including the local authority or the police (in cases of criminal behaviour)

### Contacting the police

The Sheiling will take appropriate action to protect our staff and students should an incident of criminal behaviour occur. We will contact the police to investigate and take

action. Parents, carers and members of the public should be aware that we will report potentially criminal behaviour including in relation to the following:

#### S1 Malicious Communications Act 1988:

1. Any person who sends to another person—
  - a. a letter, electronic communication or article of any description which conveys—
    - i. a message which is indecent or grossly offensive;
    - ii. a threat; or
  - b. information which is false and known or believed to be false by the sender; or any article or electronic communication which is, in whole or part, of an indecent or grossly offensive nature, is guilty of an offence if his purpose, or one of his purposes, in sending it is that it should, so far as falling within paragraph (a) or (b) above, cause distress or anxiety to the recipient or to any other person to whom he intends that it or its contents or nature should be communicated.

#### S127 of the Communications Act 2003:

1. A person is guilty of an offence if he—
  - a. sends by means of a public electronic communications network a message or other matter that is grossly offensive or of an indecent, obscene or menacing character; or
  - b. causes any such message or matter to be so sent.
2. A person is guilty of an offence if, for the purpose of causing annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety to another, he—
  - a. sends by means of a public electronic communications network, a message that he knows to be false,
  - b. causes such a message to be sent; or
  - c. persistently makes use of a public electronic communications network.

#### Protection from Harassment Act 1997:

##### Prohibition of harassment S1:

1. A person must not pursue a course of conduct—
  - a. which amounts to harassment of another, and
  - b. which he knows or ought to know amounts to harassment of the other.A person must not pursue a course of conduct —
  - a. which involves harassment of two or more persons, and
  - b. which he knows or ought to know involves harassment of those persons, and
  - c. by which he intends to persuade any person (whether or not one of those mentioned above)—
    - i. not to do something that he is entitled or required to do, or
    - ii. to do something that he is not under any obligation to do.
2. For the purposes of this section, the person whose course of conduct is in question ought to know that it amounts to harassment of another if a reasonable person in possession of the same information would think the course of conduct amounted to harassment of the other.

## Restricting access to the Sheiling site

People do not have an automatic right to enter the Sheiling site. Parents, carers and members of the public have an 'implied licence' to come onto the premises at certain

times, for instance: for appointments; to attend a school or college event; or to drop off or pick up children/young people.

The Sheiling would need to consider barring any person from the premises where their behaviour or communications are deemed to have breached this Code of Conduct and we feel that aggressive, abusive or insulting behaviour or language is a risk to staff or students. It is sufficient for a member of staff or a student to feel threatened.

The Sheiling will put any need for barring in writing to the person concerned. This could be a temporary ban, until the matter can be discussed, or a notice stating the intention to bar with an invitation to attend a meeting. Any decision to bar will be reviewed within a reasonable time.

Section 547 of the Education Act 1996 makes it a criminal offence for a person who is on school or college premises without legal permission to cause or permit a nuisance or disturbance.

If the Sheiling has reasonable grounds to suspect that someone has committed an offence, then the person can be removed from the Sheiling premises by a police officer or a person authorised by the Board of Trustees.

The Sheiling will always respond to an incident in a proportionate way. The final decision on how to respond to breaches of the Code of Conduct rests with the Principal.

The Principal will consult the Board of Trustees before putting measures in place to restrict parental access to the Sheiling site.

## Appendix 1: Inappropriate use of Social Network Sites

Social network websites are being used increasingly to fuel campaigns and complaints against schools, colleges, Principals, education and care staff and, in some cases, other parents/students. The Trustees consider the use of social network websites in such a way as unacceptable and not in the best interests of the students or the whole Sheiling community. Any concerns you may have must be made through the appropriate channels by speaking to the head of department, Principal or the Chair of the Board of Trustees to ensure they can be dealt with fairly, appropriately and effectively for all concerned.

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

In serious cases, the Sheiling will also consider its legal options to deal with any such misuse of social networking and other sites.

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