



Positive Workplace Policy

See also, 'Who We Are, What We Do & How We Do It', Staff Handbook and Whistleblowing Policy

Our vision is to provide pupils with the confidence, skills and ambition to achieve a successful and productive life. We aim to ensure they leave the school with a 'new day, new opportunity' ethos and are capable of becoming positive members of their communities. To do this, we have 3 principles that underpin our policies, practices and everything we do:

- Everyone can learn, achieve and has the potential to be successful
- Positive relationships are key to success and are underpinned by mutual trust, respect and caring for one another
- We have high expectations in everything we do

Wonderful
Excellent
Lovely
Clever
Outstanding
Magnificent
Enthusiastic

(Acronym created by White Trees pupils)

INTRODUCTION

At White Trees School, we acknowledge the difficult environment we work in and aim to create a positive environment to support and empower staff. The vision of seamless teamwork and a strong, effective staff team is underpinned by high standards, clear expectations and flexibility from staff at all levels. Leaders must lead by setting a good example for staff to follow and aspire to. Staff should have and be aware of the clear expectations around how we work and be offered the appropriate guidelines and support to ensure that they achieve. This includes the setting of clear boundaries that are shared and followed up consistently by leaders. Finding the balance of creating a supportive and 'family' style workplace is important to us and we strive to find the balance between a relaxed, social and supportive atmosphere and a professional, hardworking, above and beyond approach. Professionalism will always be key, and we are proud to acknowledge that our staff regularly go above and beyond to support the pupils and the school.

SUPPORTING EACH OTHER

Staff are the most important aspect of any school and we acknowledge that working within a small SEMH setting is a significant challenge that is unavoidable. We try to establish a positive culture through three key principles:

We have high expectations of ourselves and others

We work as a team

We always work in the best interest of our pupils

Everyone involved with White Trees School has a responsibility to embed this culture and we establish and maintain a positive culture through:

LEADERSHIP

Leaders have a key role in the culture and workplace experience. This starts by setting clear and positive example as well as upholding the high expectations set out in our vision, values, policies and procedures. Expectations include but are not limited to:

- Upholding the vision, values, policies and procedures put in place by the school, governors and wider group. This is done first by setting a good example and then by holding staff to the same expectation.
- Hold honesty and integrity in high regard and represent these values at all times
- Ensuring there is an 'open door' policy where all staff know they can come to a leader and explore their concerns, offload appropriately about difficulties or look for support without judgement or reprisal.
- Leaders must ensure staff feel heard and validated. Leaders will make decisions in the best interests of the school and its pupils and sometimes there may be disagreements or negative perception about decisions from the wider team. Everyone should feel they can share their opinion and preferences professionally and know leaders will make every effort to consider all input when making decisions.
- Concerns around leaders, general practice/policies/procedures or safeguarding can be escalated and there are clear policies outlining how staff can seek to resolve any such concerns.
- Leaders make every effort to recognise staff achievements, appropriately and sincerely.

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- Several staff events are arranged throughout the year to encourage bonding and thank staff for their hard work. This ranges from buying lunch to arranging days out.

RECRUITMENT

The importance of culture and working together is exemplified at interview to ensure the expectations are clear. It is important that at interview, leaders are confident that candidates will be a positive addition to the team with regard to teaching, teamwork and professionalism.

TEAMWORK

Whilst the vast majority of teaching is 1:1 or in small groups at White Trees Independent School, having positive relationships, being able to work with and being able to rely on other members of the team is key to both success and enjoyment of work within any workplace. In order to embed this culture staff are expected to:

- be professional and always act in line with the school's values, policies and procedures
- support one another and seek support when needed
- engage and communicate positively and appropriately
- be flexible and always seek to offer support to other staff members in situations where they are well placed to do so
- set an example for newer or less experienced staff members
- share concerns appropriately and professionally with the team and/or leaders
- be honest and have integrity
- make every reasonable effort to help others and adapt positively to situations that occur over the school year/term/week/day in the best interests of pupils and the White Trees team

CONDUCT

In order to have a positive workplace, it is important to have clear, agreed expectations that all staff can follow. The aim is always to create a working environment that is supportive but this must be underpinned by expectations and boundaries. Clear pathways to success give employees the information they need to be a positive member of White Trees Independent School. Conduct should be considered in conjunction with the Staff Handbook to give the full and clear picture of the expectations on staff. Punctuality, attendance and outstanding conduct are all key to a positive and productive provision that can truly provide an exceptional educational experience for our pupils.

PUNCTUALITY AND ABSENCE

Staff must notify a line manager by a phone call if they are ever running late and any absence must be communicated as early as possible, but no later than 7.30am on the day of absence.

THE SCHOOL DAY

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All staff should aim to arrive at the school in good time to prepare for the arrival of the pupils. It is very important that when you arrive at work you leave any and all personal issues at the door, as our pupils are incredibly perceptive of our moods and mannerisms and can be impacted upon by the slightest negative input.

The morning briefings are a critical part of your day since it is where information is collated together and shared. A correct and non-rushed briefing means clear communication avoiding any breakdown in the consistency of our working practices. Staff should be ready to start this meeting at 8.30 prompt.

There is then time to prepare resources and learning materials for the day. Since unplanned changes in this job are inevitable there is a need for flexibility. However, it is expected that weeks are planned in advance so that staff and pupils have the best possible chance for a fluid transition throughout the daily activities. Everyone feels more secure when they know what to expect, especially our pupils.

There is a de-brief everyday where staff reflect on the day, pupil progress, safeguarding concerns and any incidents. Staff are then able to start appropriate follow ups and plan for the next day. The debriefs are led by the appropriate site leads or deputies. These are minuted in the daily debrief folder online.

There is a formal staff meeting every other week where everyone comes together to discuss the pupils and the operations of the school. Leaders hold these meetings but everyone is able to add items to the agenda. We start the meeting after de-brief on a Thursday and whilst we aim to be efficient, this can run for over an hour.

The leadership team will be available throughout the school day, and it is their duty to co-ordinate the day, which will include delegating tasks to incorporate into the daily routine. Should there be a change of plan you will be informed of this, and if you are not involved in the decision-making process this could be due to a number of reasons. Any decision that is made will be in the best interests of our pupils, and if in your opinion this is not the case, the usual procedure is for you to take this to the Executive Head Teacher, Laura Bull or when concern involves the Executive Head Teacher, it is appropriate to inform the Director of Operations and Proprietor, Emma Barr as outlined in White Trees Independent School/SureCare procedures and policies.

REQUESTS FOR LEAVE

Any request for leave of absence during term time must be made in advance and in writing to your line manager. Staff **should not expect** any request for leave of absence during term time (other than legal entitlements) to be approved. The request can only be approved (but will still likely be unpaid) by the Head Teacher if there are special circumstances relating to the application, examples of which are detailed within the Staff Handbook.

CHALLENGES WE FACE

White Trees Independent School, as part of White Trees Group/SureCare, hopes to provide plenty of opportunities to ensure staff are supported to enable them to cope during the times where pupil behaviour can be challenging.

Due to the nature of our schools, pupils exhibit behaviours that are difficult to manage, test our patience, make us feel uncomfortable and at times, make us feel we are unable to do a good job. We do our hardest at these times to remain as calm as possible and remember that it is not personal, however much it may feel that way.

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Although there will be times when staff may feel overwhelmed and thus need immediate support, it is always necessary to keep the pupils at the centre of our practice. Thus, even when times are stressful it is the responsibility of staff to ensure the environment remains safe.

It is never wrong to admit that challenging behaviour impacts on how we feel, in fact it is healthy to do this and sharing these feelings with colleagues, in a sensitive manner away from the pupils, can be useful. However, we expect to be reflective in our practice and therefore always checking that our actions, language and decisions are consistently based on what is best for our pupils. Your colleagues are there to help you, please use this resource thoughtfully when reflecting on practice.

VOICING CONCERNS

White Trees Independent School hopes to embody an open and communicative culture and encourage staff to share any professional disagreements and concerns directly (and appropriately) with their team members and/or leaders with a view to improve.

If a concern goes unresolved and there is still the consideration that practice or decisions are not in the best interest of our pupils, it can be escalated to the Executive Head Teacher or governing body, as identified in the Staff Handbook, Whistleblowing and Safeguarding Policy.

WHISTLEBLOWING

An important aspect of accountability and transparency is a mechanism to enable staff and other members of White Trees School to voice concerns in a responsible and effective manner. Where an individual discovers information which they believe shows serious malpractice or wrongdoing within the organisation, then this information should be disclosed internally without fear of reprisal.

There are arrangements to enable this to be done independently of line management (although in relatively minor instances the line manager would be the appropriate person to be told). For further information, see the Whistleblowing Policy.

CONCERNS AROUND STAFF

The company has a disciplinary policy and procedure to ensure that all employees are treated in a fair and equitable manner in relation to unsatisfactory standards of performance and conduct (including breach of any of the terms and conditions of employment). It also aims to ensure that where practical, matters are dealt with quickly and that employees are given every opportunity to improve.

In many cases it may not be necessary to resort to the formal disciplinary procedure and an informal follow up that includes additional support/monitoring and may be a more satisfactory method of resolving problems than a disciplinary interview.

No disciplinary action will be taken against an employee until the case has been investigated and the facts established. The process should be as open as possible and staff leading the investigation should be both professional in conducting the investigation and considerate in dealing with staff who are involved in the investigation. The Staff Handbook outlines expectations, processes and is issued to all staff.

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CONDUCT AND CAPABILITY

Where performance or attendance at work is considered to be below White Trees Independent School/SureCare requirements, it is the company's aim first and foremost to help you bring it up to an acceptable standard. Annual Performance Management meetings will take place, with 6 monthly check-ins (3 non-target supervision meetings will also take place with line managers) where SMART targets are mutually agreed to, with some targets linking to the schools School Improvement Plan (SIP). If staff achieve their targets then at the end of the academic year the Executive Head Teacher will present that member of staff at Governors with a recommendation for an appropriate pay rise.

The company's disciplinary procedures are set out in stages in the same way as for issues relating to conduct with a verbal warning (or review) followed by a formal written warning (or review) if necessary. The Head Teacher will do everything possible to help you with the problem and to agree the timescales with you for achieving the necessary improvements. Full details can be found in the Staff Handbook.

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