



**Highfields
Workplace Well-Being &
Relationships Charter**



Ito Sozan: Flying Geese and Moon - Art Gallery of Greater Victoria - Ukiyo-e Search

“It’s one of my great stories at United,” Ferguson said. “I had a pal whose cousin had a farm in Canada, and he was telling me about geese flying from Canada to warmer climates in the winter and I said ‘that’s a great story’.

“So on the first game of the season, I ended up telling the players about these geese who were flying 4,000 miles towards sunnier climes in two Vs, and that the ones in the second row don’t fly, instead using the others slipstream, and then the others take over when they sense the others tiring - and that’s the essence of team work.”

“I finished it by saying - now if these geese can do it for 4,000 miles just to get a bit of sun, then I’m not asking much of you to do it over 38 games and win the league...”

Rationale and Purpose – Why have a charter for workplace relations?

Highfields is both a place of work and a community.

Highfields is bound by national legislation alongside local policy in terms of workplace behaviour and well-being. In addition, the Department of Education's *Teachers' Standards*, sets out clearly that teachers are to “*demonstrate consistently high standards of personal and professional conduct*” and “*make a positive contribution to the wider life and ethos of the school.*” These particular standards are not limited to teachers and are deemed applicable to all school staff.

Highfields exists to further the learning and development of young people with social, emotional and mental health needs who - by the very fact they have been referred to the provision - are likely to present with problematic interaction styles. How Highfields staff interact with one another serves as an ongoing lesson - in terms of role modelling - for such young people.

By aims for the highest of standards in this area, the staff team will be more able to maintain well-being in what can be a challenging environment and young people will be provided with demonstrations and experiences of how to function positively within a workplace and community. In terms of standards, rather than thinking in terms of rules, it is more effective to work in terms of a framework of protective factor behaviours and risk factor behaviours.

- Protective Factor Behaviours - conditions / factors / attributes that help prevent and mitigate conflict, thereby improving individual and communal well-being.
- Risk Factor Behaviours - conditions / factors / attributes that may cause and exacerbate conflict, impacting negatively on individual and communal well-being.

The purpose of this charter – following a model found in other organisations such as the NHS and universities - is to set out protective factor behaviours which all staff should uphold whilst seeking also to reduce risk factor behaviours.

This charter acts as a supplement rather than replacement to existing policies around staff conduct and discipline.

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Protective Factor Behaviours

Highfields aims that all colleagues will conduct themselves in a professional manner when interacting with colleagues or when managing colleagues. All members of the staff team should consider their own behaviour and the impact that this can have on others. Highfields recognises that personalities, characters and management styles may differ but, notwithstanding these differences, as a minimum standard all staff are expected to:

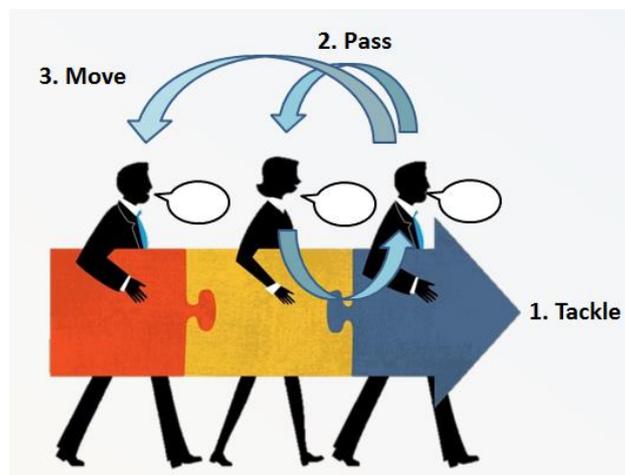
- Work co-operatively with others in order to achieve objectives
- Manage performance in an appropriate and fair manner
- Give and receive constructive feedback as part of normal day-to-day work - such feedback should be evidence-based and delivered in an appropriate manner

- Consider other people’s perspectives in order to help reach agreement
- Establish good working relationships
- Where disagreement occurs, work to resolve it peaceably and constructively directly with those involved
- Be sensitive and literate in terms of understanding colleague perspectives, experiences and emotional states.

In addition, other optional activities that may help promote well-being include:

- Sharing break times together
- Eating together at lunchtimes
- Using a lunch break to go for a walk together
- A calendar of staff social events

‘Tackle – Pass – Move’



In their work with young people who present daily with challenging behaviour – including occasional incidences of high-agitation / abuse / aggression – all staff must commit to a ‘*tackle – pass – move*’ approach which involves:

- Every member of the staff recognising behaviour is their responsibility in the first instance – that is, pre-empting common situations with groups and individuals, ‘reading’ situations as they arise, acting as ‘first responder’, using the graduated models set out in the Behaviour Policy to communicate onwards and call on help from the team. By doing this, colleagues do not become focal points – and in turn become overloaded – with behaviour management.
- All behaviour management involves a degree of subjectivity. On passing on behaviour issues, staff members should entrust their colleagues to make decisions – in line with the Behaviour Policy - for the good of the student and the provision as a whole – even if those decisions are not the exact decision you would have made.
- Where a disagreement occurs about a decision that has been made, colleagues should seek to resolve this through appropriate channels (page 5) and never in front of young people.

'Fierce Conversations'

“Life is 10 percent what happens to you and 90 percent how you respond to it.” -
- Lou Holtz

It is a part of working life that there will be rational disagreements regarding school matters and constructive communication is required to move disagreements towards resolution. Highfields supports constructive communication through the following avenues:

- **Daily De-Briefing**
- **Subject Team Meetings**
- **Pastoral Team Meetings**
- **Weekly Thematic Meetings** - with 'Forum' slot at the end
- **Staff Questionnaire/s**
- **'Open Door' Leaders** - an approach adopted by all School Leaders - that is, if the leader is practically available, they are willing to talk through issues
- **Union Engagement** - A positive approach to the presence of unions, the providing of a venue for union meetings and a commitment to engage in dialogue with union representatives.

In addition, all staff are encouraged where possible to develop the confidence and skills to engage in 1-to-1 constructive communication and dispute resolution with colleagues, wherever it is possible and appropriate to do so. An effective method for this is the 'Fierce Conversations' model by Susan Scott (see Appendix 1).

Personal Relationships

- **Personal Relationship – a relationship that goes beyond the bounds of a ‘professional’ relationship and includes being personally involved, i.e. a platonic relationship/personal friend, being sexually involved, a close family member, married or in a co habiting relationship, or in a business relationship.**

It is recognised that personal relationships can and do sometimes form in the workplace - these may take the form of lasting friendships or romantic relationships. In addition, as a PRU based in a relatively small town and working with partner schools across the area, it is inevitable that some staff will have family ties with colleagues within the schools network.

Whilst recognising the right of colleagues to privacy and family life, the organisation has a legitimate right to protect the interests of the organisation, all staff, young people and its partners and to take appropriate action when personal relationships either have the potential to or do impact upon the organisation’s functioning and reputation.

- A colleague should not be involved in any formal performance management, capability, promotion or pay review procedures if they have a personal relationship with the individual concerned.
- Any colleague who is in a close personal relationship with a colleague working in the same department/section must declare the relationship to his/her manager. If the relationship is between a manager/supervisor and a colleague whom he/she

supervises, the relationship should be declared to a senior manager. The information declared will be considered as to whether the personal relationship has any impact.

- The organisation does not permit situations in which a colleague has managerial authority over another with whom he/she is having a close personal relationship. The organisation reserves the right to elect to transfer one or both of the colleagues involved in the relationship to a different line management strand in order to avoid any detrimental effect on either effectiveness or working relationships within that department/service. In these circumstances, the organisation will consult both of the colleagues and seek to reach a satisfactory agreement regarding the transfer of one or both of them.
- If a colleague has a personal/intimate relationship with a colleague, he/she should not display any obvious signs of affection in the presence of third parties, whilst undertaking school business. This is to prevent any apparent embarrassment to colleagues and also to maintain a professional image to young people and other staff colleagues.
- A colleague should not allow their personal relationship with another colleague to influence their decision making, or that of other decision-makers.
- If the relationship breaks down, colleagues should ensure interaction that could be interpreted as personal arguments or disagreements do not occur at work.
- Colleagues should ensure that their personal/intimate relationship does not bring the reputation of the organisation into disrepute.
- Colleagues with family members at a partner school should be mindful to keep their two roles – for example, as a connected colleague to the school and as a parent - completely separate.

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Risk Factor Behaviours

Risk Factor Behaviour may involve actions, words or physical gestures that could reasonably be perceived to be the cause of another person's distress or discomfort. Risk Factor Behaviour may be enacted by an individual against another individual or involve groups of people.

Some examples of unacceptable behaviour are:

- Aggressive / abusive interaction, such as tone / volume of voice, personalised comments etc.
- Offensive comments/jokes or body language
- Spreading rumours or gossip, or speaking disrespectfully about someone
- Discrimination or harassment when related to a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010
- Unwanted physical contact
- Publishing, circulating or displaying pornographic, racist, sexually suggestive or otherwise offensive material or pictures
- Contributing to isolation, deliberate exclusion and/or unreasonable non-cooperation between colleagues at work
- Withholding information that impacts on another person's capacity to do their job
- Unreasonable demands and impossible targets
- Persistent and unreasonable criticism

- Insensitivity to another's background / home life / affiliations, such as pressure to subscribe to a particular political or religious belief – this involves 'one off' comments that may intentionally or unintentionally demean another's known political affiliations or religious beliefs

Isolated incidents of unreasonable behaviour such as abruptness, sharpness or rudeness whilst unacceptable, will generally not be considered to amount to bullying. However, individuals may want to let the other person know how their behaviour has made them feel in order to avoid a repeat of such behaviour. If the behaviour does continue over a period of time this may be considered to be bullying/harassment.

It is important to note that behaviour that is considered bullying by one person may be considered acceptable by another. For instance, legitimate, constructive and fair feedback on a member of staff's performance or behaviour at work is not bullying.

For the avoidance of doubt and for the purposes of this charter, invoking procedures connected to areas such as conduct, capability or discipline where such procedures are applied reasonably and appropriately will not constitute Risk Factor Behaviour.

'No Gossip Commitment'

*"The words of the tongue should have three gatekeepers:
Is it true? Is it kind? Is it necessary?" -Arab proverb*

- ***gossip n. v. 'to gossip' - casual or unconstrained conversation or reports about other people, typically involving details which are not confirmed as true.***
- Gossip can be talk or electronic communications.
- Gossip always involves a person who is not present.
- Unwelcome and negative comments about another person.
- Gossip often is about conjecture that can injure another person's credibility, reputation and relations.
- Gossip can take the form of spreading exaggerated, distorted – and ultimately false - narratives about workplace events and developments.

In the workplace, gossip is a particular activity that can drain, distract and degrade the well-being of the individual subject to gossip - and those involved. It is natural to some extent for human beings to participate in this, yet most when asked will say it is damaging. In order to create a more professional workplace, all colleagues are expected to make a commitment to work to ensure the atmosphere is as gossip-free as possible.

In order to have a more professional, gossip-free workplace all colleagues should:

- 1) Not speak or insinuate another colleague's name when that person is not present unless it is to compliment or reference them practically-speaking regarding work matters.
- 2) Refuse to participate when another mentions a person who is not present in a negative light - change the subject or tell the colleague they not have agreed not to talk about another.

- 3) Choose not to respond to negative email or use email to pass on private or derogatory information about any person in the team. Seek to resolve disagreements face-to-face or through the proper channels in terms of organisational hierarchy.
- 4) While outside of Highfields, avoid communicating with colleagues about people at work in a derogatory light. If there are unresolved matters, this should be pursued through the proper channels.
- 5) If another person in the team does something unethical, incorrect, against procedures, or disruptive, the proper channels will be used to report and resolve this.

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When Things Go Awry

"When you realize you've made a mistake, make amends immediately. It's easier to eat crow while it's still warm." - Dan Heist

Where Risk Factor Behaviour occurs that a colleague does not feel they can address as an individual, this should be reported formally to their Line Manager and/or Senior Leadership Team. An assessment of the situation will be made, with advice sought from HR resources if necessary.

From there, a number of ways forward may be pursued:

Informal 'fact finding' - a member of SLT or other nominated colleague speaking to both parties involved	Informal Conflict Resolution
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Decision to 'park' the issue indefinitely - with agreement of individuals involved	
Informal professional advice / guidance given to individuals involved - by member of SLT	
Restorative Approaches - chaired by member of SLT or other nominated colleague	Formal Procedures
↓	
Formal Investigation - undertaken by SLT, with support from HR	
Formal Disciplinary Measures - undertaken by SLT, with support from HR	

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Mental Health in the Workplace

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological and social wellbeing. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, interact with others and cope with the challenges of working in a PRU.

Mental health, like physical health, can fluctuate from 'good' to 'poor'. Good mental health is important to a person's overall wellbeing, so it's important to spot the signs of declining mental health in your colleagues so that you can help support them.

Declining mental health does not mean a 'bad day' or 'bad week' but, rather, recurring concerns over a period of time, such as over a month or a half-term. Signs of declining mental health include:

- poor concentration - more forgetful / less organised than usual
- worrying more than usual
- appearing to find it increasingly hard to make decisions
- appearing less interested in day-to-day activities
- engaging in intensive negative narratives about the workplace
- appearing overwhelmed by things
- tearfulness
- tiredness and lack of energy
- sleeping more or less
- talking less and appearing less sociable than usual
- days of absence attributed to stomach pains, head aches etc.
- talking more or talking very fast, jumping between topics and ideas
- working increasingly longer hours
- finding it difficult to control emotions
- irritability and short temper
- aggression

It is not within the remit for a colleague to diagnose another. In such circumstances, a 1-to-1 conversation about 'how things are going' may be an opener. If this feels uncomfortable, sharing observations with the colleague's line manager is the next step. Colleagues experiencing declining mental health are also encouraged to 'check in' themselves.

Line managers can offer practical solutions to support colleagues. Highfields can also offer counselling and referrals to Occupation Health.

It is important that a staff team which prides itself on improving the social, emotional and mental health of its young people operates in the same non-judgemental, open and supportive way with one another.

*“Employees are people who live in communities.
Employees spend years - sometimes whole lifetimes - together at work.
So let's stop pretending workplaces are separate from community, places where
robots simply work until they die.”*
— Diane Kalen-Sukra

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Ongoing Monitoring and Review

The charter will be reviewed on an annual basis by all staff. The charter will act as a working document, reflecting good practice as they develop and address any recurring bad habits / concerns as they arise.

'Fierce Conversations' (Scott 2002)

Adapted for School Staff for Difficult Conversations

The steps to take are as follows:

1. **Name the issue.** There should only be one issue at a time. If there is more than one issue, this is a mark of failure because you should have dealt with each issue as they arose. Avoid 'always' or presenting 'charge sheets' as this suggests from the start that the issue cannot be changed.
2. **Describe the particular example of the person's actions** that concerns you and which will allow you to focus on the specific issue you wish to raise.
3. **Describe your perspective** - how this issue is affecting you.
4. **State simply what you believe is the wider impact** - what impact this has on your relationship / your wider community.
5. **Acknowledge any of your responsibility or other factors causing the issue.** Acknowledge the person maybe having a hard time elsewhere. If you have contributed to the problem, say so, but do not make polite statements about being responsible for something you have not done!
6. **State that you wish to work with them to solve this particular problem.** Indicate that you wish to move forward rather than focusing on blame. Suggest a relatively simple 1 to 3 part constructive way forward, "We must try to..." / "You must try to..."
7. **Ask the person to give their views on the issue. From now on, your role is to listen carefully and attentively.** This is not the time to defend your earlier statements. You have invited them to tell you how they are feeling. Your task is to listen to them.