WALTHAMSTOW MONTESSORI SCHOOL

CODE Of CONDUCT FOR STAFF, VOLUNTEERS AND STUDENTS

All staff, volunteers and students must recognise that caring for children places them in a position of trust. The safety, welfare and best interests of children must always remain the highest priority. All individuals must act professionally, maintain appropriate boundaries and uphold the setting's safeguarding policies and procedures in accordance with the current Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework.

Professional Responsibilities:

- All staff, volunteers and students are expected to comply with reasonable management instructions, fulfil their roles and responsibilities diligently, and maintain appropriate standards of conduct, professionalism and performance.

Teamwork and Co-operation:

- All staff, volunteers and students must work collaboratively and respectfully with colleagues, the Principal, parents and carers, and relevant external professionals and agencies, including the local authority, to promote the children's safety, wellbeing, learning and development.

School Property and Equipment:

- School property, resources and equipment must be used responsibly and for authorised purposes only. No equipment or property may be removed from the premises without prior authorisation from the Principal. Any loss, damage or misuse of school property must be reported promptly to a member of the senior team.

Damage to Property:

- Any damage to school property or equipment resulting from misuse, negligence or carelessness will be investigated and managed in accordance with the school's procedures and applicable employment legislation.

Political Impartiality:

- Where applicable, staff must ensure that teaching and learning activities do not promote partisan political views. Where political issues are brought to children's attention through the curriculum, school activities or promotional materials,

reasonable steps must be taken to ensure that opposing views are presented in a balanced and age- appropriate manner. Any discussion of sensitive or controversial issues must be handled professionally, taking into account the children's age, stage of development, understanding and wellbeing.

Safeguarding and Children's Welfare

- Fitness to Work: Staff, students and volunteers must not be under the influence of alcohol or any substance that may impair their ability to care for children safely. Anyone taking prescribed or over-the-counter medication that may affect their ability to work safely must seek medical advice and inform the principal in accordance with WMS' procedures.

- Respectful and Inclusive Behaviour: All staff, students and volunteers must treat children, families and colleagues with dignity, fairness and respect. Racist, sexist, discriminatory, abusive or otherwise offensive language and behaviour will not be tolerated. WMS is committed to promoting equality, inclusion and the welfare of every child.

- Appropriate Supervision: Staff must ensure that children are adequately supervised at all times and that staffing arrangements meet the requirements of the current EYFS statutory framework. Wherever practicable, activities should take place in environments that allow appropriate visibility and accountability. Where one-to-one care is necessary, staff must follow the setting's safeguarding procedures and ensure that the activity, its purpose and the arrangements are known to other appropriate adults.

- Physical Contact and Personal Care: Any physical contact with a child must be appropriate, necessary, proportionate and in the child's best interests. Staff must respect each child's wishes, dignity, privacy and personal boundaries. Comforting a distressed child or providing physical assistance must be guided by the child's individual needs and circumstances. Staff should encourage children to develop independence in personal care and toileting, offering sensitive, age-appropriate assistance when needed. Intimate care must be provided in accordance with WMS' intimate care and safeguarding policies, taking into account the child's age, developmental stage, individual needs and any relevant care plan.

- Support for Colleagues: Staff must support new and inexperienced colleagues, students and volunteers by modelling appropriate professional practice, sharing relevant guidance and helping them understand and follow the setting's safeguarding procedures. Such support must not replace the required induction, training or supervision.

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures: All staff, students and volunteers must familiarise themselves with and follow WMS' Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, in accordance with the current EYFS statutory framework and other applicable safeguarding guidance. They must understand how to recognise signs of abuse, neglect and other safeguarding concerns; respond appropriately if a child makes a disclosure; record concerns accurately and objectively; and report concerns promptly to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or deputy DSLs. Staff must never promise a child confidentiality or attempt to investigate a concern themselves.

- Seeking Advice and Reporting Concerns: Anyone who is unclear about any aspect of the safeguarding procedures must seek advice from the DSL, deputy DSLs without delay. All safeguarding concerns must be reported promptly and managed in accordance with WMS' procedures. If a child is at immediate risk of harm, urgent action must be taken to secure their safety. Concerns or allegations relating to the conduct of a member of staff, student or volunteer must also be reported in accordance with WMS' safeguarding and allegations procedures.

- Familiarisation with Policies and Procedures: All staff, students and volunteers must read, understand and comply with WMS' relevant policies and procedures. They must seek clarification from the Principal or a senior colleague whenever they are uncertain about their responsibilities or the correct procedures to follow.

Behaviour Code

- All staff, students and volunteers are expected to promote positive behaviour through respectful relationships, consistent expectations and age-appropriate support, taking into account each child's individual needs, stage of development and circumstances.

- No Physical Punishment: Physical punishment or chastisement, including smacking, hitting, shaking or any other form of physical punishment, must never be used. Children must be treated with kindness, dignity and respect at all times.

- Respect and Equality: Treat every child, parent, carer and colleague with respect, fairness and consideration. Respect individual differences, cultural backgrounds, abilities, identities and rights, ensuring that every child feels valued, included and safe.

- Positive Role Modelling: Maintain high standards of personal and professional conduct. Staff must model the calm, respectful and considerate behaviour they

wish children to develop, including appropriate communication, emotional regulation and positive ways of resolving conflict.

- Children's Safety and Rights: Help children understand, in ways appropriate to their age and stage of development, that they have the right to feel safe, to be listened to and to be treated with respect. Any concerns about a child's safety or wellbeing must be reported promptly in accordance with the setting's safeguarding procedures.

- Positive Relationships and Self-Esteem: Listen carefully to children, acknowledge their feelings and views, and recognise their achievements and efforts. Encourage confidence, independence, resilience and positive self-esteem through praise, reassurance, encouragement and supportive interactions.

- Consistent and Positive Behaviour Support: Work collaboratively with colleagues to establish clear, realistic and consistent expectations for behaviour. Use positive approaches to support children in understanding boundaries, developing self-regulation and learning to manage their emotions and relationships. Responses to behaviour must be appropriate to the child's age, developmental stage and individual needs.

- Respectful Responses to Challenging Behaviour: When addressing a child's behaviour, focus on the behaviour itself rather than labelling or criticising the child. Explain calmly and clearly why a behaviour is inappropriate, help the child understand its impact on others, and guide them towards safer and more appropriate alternatives. Never shame, humiliate, threaten or intimidate a child.

- Individual Needs and Inclusion: Recognise that behaviour may communicate an unmet need, distress or difficulty with communication or emotional regulation. Staff should respond sensitively, consider possible underlying causes and work with parents and carers, and other relevant professionals where appropriate, to provide consistent and effective support.

Dress Code and Personal Appearance

- All staff, volunteers and students must dress professionally, maintain appropriate standards of personal hygiene and wear clothing suitable for working safely with young children. Clothing and footwear must be appropriate for the setting's daily routines, indoor and outdoor activities, and the need to participate in practical and sometimes messy play experiences.

- Appropriate Clothing: Clothing must be clean, comfortable, practical and suitable for a professional childcare environment. Denim jeans, tracksuits and trainers should not be worn unless specifically permitted by the Principal for particular activities or where required for health, safety, comfort or reasonable

adjustments. Clothing must not be excessively revealing or restrict movement when working with children.

- Length and Suitability: Trousers, skirts and dresses must allow staff to move freely, bend, sit on the floor and participate safely in activities with children. Clothing must provide appropriate coverage during these activities and must not create a safeguarding, hygiene or health and safety concern.

- Footwear: Footwear must be secure, comfortable and suitable for active work with young children. High heels, strapless sandals, open footwear or other shoes that may present a slipping, tripping or injury risk must not be worn where they are unsuitable for the duties being undertaken.

- Practical Clothing and Logos: Staff, volunteers and students must wear clothing appropriate for the activities and routines of the setting, including messy play and outdoor learning. Logos, slogans and wording displayed on clothing must be appropriate for a childcare environment and must not be offensive, discriminatory or unsuitable for children.

- Jewellery and Accessories: Jewellery must be kept to a minimum and must not present a risk of injury, choking, entanglement or infection when caring for children or participating in activities. Wristwatches and small, secure rings, including wedding and engagement rings, may be worn where they do not pose a risk. Bracelets, necklaces, chains and other accessories should be removed or securely managed where they could present a risk to children.

- Piercings and Earrings: Earrings must be small and secure. Small studs or hoops may be worn where they do not present a risk of injury or entanglement. Large hoops, dangling earrings and other visible piercings or accessories that could be pulled by a child or otherwise present a safety risk must not be worn while working directly with children.

- Health, Safety and Individual Needs: All staff, volunteers and students must comply with WMS' health and safety requirements relating to clothing, footwear, jewellery and personal presentation. Reasonable adjustments will be considered where necessary to accommodate disability, medical needs, religion or other protected characteristics, while maintaining appropriate safeguarding and safety standards.

- The Principal and senior leadership team are responsible for ensuring that this dress code is applied fairly and consistently, taking into account the duties being undertaken, the safety of the children and staff, and the individual circumstances of those working in the setting.

Mobile Phones and Personal Electronic Devices

- The safety, welfare and safeguarding of children are paramount. The use of personal mobile phones and electronic devices must not compromise children's safety, supervision, privacy or confidentiality. o

- Personal Devices: Staff, students and volunteers may bring personal mobile phones and electronic devices into the setting for personal use. All devices must be protected by an appropriate passcode or other security measure and must not contain, display or be used to access illegal, inappropriate or offensive material.

- Storage of Devices: Personal mobile phones, smartwatches with communication or recording functions, cameras and other personal electronic devices must be switched off or silenced and stored securely in the office or other 'phone safe areas' during contact time with children, as detailed in WMS' Mobile Phone, Camera and IT Usage policy.

- Calls and Personal Use: Personal calls, messages and other non-work- related use of personal devices must take place only during authorised breaks or outside working hours, away from children and in designated staff areas. Staff must remain attentive to their responsibilities and ensure that children are appropriately supervised at all times.

- Emergencies: Where a personal emergency arises, staff, students and volunteers may use the setting's telephone or seek permission from the Principal or a member of the Senior Management Team to use a personal device in an appropriate area away from children. Any arrangements must ensure that children remain safely supervised.

- Photography, Video and Audio Recording: Staff, students and volunteers must never use personal devices to photograph, film, audio-record or otherwise capture images, recordings or personal information relating to children, parents, carers or colleagues while undertaking their duties. Images or recordings of children may only be taken using devices authorised by the setting and in accordance with WMS' Mobile Phone, Camera and IT Usage policy, safeguarding procedures and applicable consent arrangements.

- Contact During Working Hours: Staff, students and volunteers should provide the setting's telephone number to family members, schools and other relevant contacts for use in emergencies during working hours. Personal calls should not interrupt the care, supervision or learning of children.

- Safeguarding Concerns and Reporting: All staff, students and volunteers must remain vigilant regarding the use of mobile phones and electronic devices. Any suspected misuse, inappropriate photography or recording, breach of confidentiality, or other safeguarding concern must be reported promptly to the Principal or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads (DDSLs), in accordance with WMS' Safeguarding Policy and Whistleblowing Policy. All concerns will be recorded, taken seriously and addressed appropriately.

- Failure to comply with this policy may result in action under WMS' disciplinary or conduct procedures. Any safeguarding concern or allegation will be managed in accordance with WMS' safeguarding and allegations procedures. These requirements apply to all staff, students and volunteers and must be followed consistently to protect children's safety, privacy and wellbeing

Smoking

- We have a strict NO SMOKING policy within our premises and all individuals must abide by this policy. This policy also applies to the use of e- cigarettes.

Annual Leave

- All annual leave must be taken out of term time only, as stated in staff's contracts of employment, unless strictly agreed by the Principal.

Late Arrival and Early Departure

- Staff must obtain prior authorisation from the Principal if they need to arrive late or leave before their agreed finishing time, except where an emergency makes this impracticable. Students and volunteers must also inform the Principal of any expected lateness or early departure.

Reporting Absence:

- Anyone who is unable to attend work must notify the Principal as soon as possible. In the case of an unexpected absence, **the Principal must be notified by telephone no later than 6:00 am on the day of absence**, unless exceptional circumstances prevent this. **Text messages and WhatsApp messages are not acceptable methods of reporting unexpected absence**. Staff, students and volunteers must also follow WMS' absence reporting procedure and provide information about the expected duration of their absence where possible.

Sickness Absence and Medical Evidence:

- Employees must keep the Principal informed of their sickness absence and expected return date. Employees may self-certify sickness absence lasting

seven calendar days or fewer, including weekends and bank holidays. Employees may self-certify sickness absence lasting seven calendar days or fewer. If sickness absence continues for more than seven consecutive calendar days, employees must provide a fit note from an appropriate healthcare professional. Employees must also keep the Principal informed of any continuing absence and their expected return- to-work date.

- Where a fit note is delayed or alternative medical evidence is provided, WMS will consider the circumstances and act in accordance with current statutory guidance and applicable employment legislation. Employees must follow WMS's sickness reporting procedures and keep the setting informed of any continuing absence. All medical information will be handled securely, confidentially and in accordance with applicable data protection legislation.

Statutory Sick Pay:

- Pay and Timekeeping: Eligible employees will receive Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) in accordance with the legislation in force at the time of their sickness absence. From 6 April 2026, SSP is payable from the first qualifying day of sickness absence, subject to the applicable statutory eligibility and payment rules. Any contractual sick pay entitlement will be administered in accordance with the employee's contract of employment and WMS' relevant procedures.

- Persistent Poor Timekeeping: Repeated poor timekeeping, failure to follow absence reporting procedures or unauthorised early departure may result in formal action in accordance with WMS' disciplinary procedure. Relevant circumstances, including disability, reasonable adjustments and other protected circumstances, will be considered where applicable.

Health and Safety

- All staff, students and volunteers must familiarise themselves with the setting's Health and Safety Policy, risk assessments, emergency procedures and other relevant safety arrangements. They must follow all reasonable safety instructions and use any required protective equipment or clothing correctly.

- Everyone has a responsibility to take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of children, colleagues and others who may be affected by their actions or omissions.

- All accidents, injuries, incidents and near misses must be reported promptly to the Principal or a member of the Senior Management Team and recorded in the setting's accident and incident records in accordance with its procedures and applicable reporting requirements.

- Any hazards, unsafe equipment, defects or concerns that could put children or adults at risk must be reported immediately. Staff must take appropriate action to prevent harm, within the limits of their role and training.

- Staff must follow safeguarding, fire safety, emergency evacuation, infection prevention, food hygiene and other relevant procedures at all times.

Outside Activities and Other Employment

- Staff must ensure that any outside employment, business activity or other commitment does not conflict with their duties to WMS, create a significant conflict of interest, compromise confidentiality or adversely affect their ability to perform their role safely and effectively.

- Employees must disclose any actual or potential conflict of interest to the Principal and comply with any reasonable contractual requirements relating to additional employment. Where the contract requires prior approval for other employment, that requirement must be followed.

- Staff, students and volunteers must maintain appropriate professional boundaries when undertaking activities outside the setting, particularly where these involve children, families or colleagues connected with WMS.

- Staff must use social media, social networking sites and other online platforms responsibly. They must not disclose confidential information, share identifiable information or images of children, post discriminatory or harassing material, or publish content that unlawfully damages the reputation or legitimate interests of WMS or other individuals.

- Staff must not use social media to discuss confidential matters concerning children, parents, carers, colleagues or the setting. Any concerns about the setting should be raised through the appropriate management, safeguarding or whistleblowing procedures.

Changes in Personal Details

- Staff, students and volunteers must inform the appropriate manager promptly of any changes to their personal details relevant to their role, including their name, address, telephone number and emergency contact details.

- Employees must also notify the setting of any change that may affect their ability to undertake their role safely or meet relevant employment or safeguarding requirements.

- WMS will maintain and process personal information in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), the Data Protection Act 2018, as amended, and other applicable data protection legislation. Personal information will be handled securely and accessed only by authorised individuals for legitimate purposes.

Gross Misconduct

- The following are examples of conduct that may be regarded as gross misconduct and may result in dismissal without notice or pay in lieu of notice, where lawful and following a fair process. This list is illustrative and not exhaustive. Each matter will be considered considering the circumstances, the seriousness of the conduct, the evidence available and the setting's disciplinary procedure.

    - Theft, fraud, deliberate dishonesty or other serious breaches of trust.
    - Deliberate falsification of working hours, attendance records, safeguarding records, employment documents or other official records.
    - Smoking or vaping in prohibited areas, where the circumstances warrant treatment as gross misconduct.
    - Sleeping while responsible for supervising or caring for children, where this creates a serious safeguarding or safety risk.
    - Assault, violence, threats of violence or serious aggression towards a child, parent, carer, colleague or other person.
    - Bullying, harassment, victimisation or serious discriminatory conduct.
    - Use of abusive, threatening, obscene or seriously offensive language or behaviour.
    - Possession or use of illegal drugs at work or attending work under the influence of alcohol or drugs in circumstances that impair safe working or create a serious risk.
    - Deliberate or serious damage to property belonging to WMS, children, families, colleagues or other individuals.
    - Serious insubordination or refusal to follow a lawful and reasonable management instruction, particularly where safeguarding or safety is affected.
    - Serious misconduct that brings, or is likely to bring, WMS into disrepute.
    - Unlawful discrimination, serious harassment, acts of indecency or other serious breaches of the setting's Equality and Inclusion Policy.
    - Serious or deliberate breaches of health and safety procedures that endanger children, staff or others.
    - Serious breaches of confidentiality, including the unauthorised disclosure of sensitive information about children, families, colleagues or the setting.
    - Unauthorised access to, misuse of, or disclosure of confidential computer data or information systems.
    - Deliberate misuse of IT systems, including unauthorised copying or distribution of software in breach of applicable law or licensing terms.
    - Bribery, corruption, serious dishonesty or other improper financial conduct.

- Gambling during working time where prohibited, or gambling- related conduct that seriously compromises professional responsibilities or the setting's interests.
- Serious breaches of safeguarding procedures, including inappropriate physical contact with a child, failure to report a safeguarding concern, unauthorised photography or recording of children, or other conduct that places a child at risk.
- Any safeguarding concern or allegation involving a member of staff, student or volunteer will be managed in accordance with WMS' safeguarding and allegations procedures and any applicable statutory requirements. Where necessary, the Principal will make referrals or notifications to the appropriate external agencies.

- Depending on the circumstances, misconduct may result in informal management action, a formal warning, a final written warning or dismissal. Any disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with WMS' disciplinary procedure and applicable employment law.

Disciplinary Procedure

- Any allegation of misconduct will be handled in accordance with WMS's disciplinary procedure and applicable employment law. The setting will investigate allegations fairly, give the employee an appropriate opportunity to respond and consider the evidence and circumstances before reaching a decision. Where appropriate, possible outcomes may include informal management action, a formal warning, a final written warning or dismissal.

- Where a safeguarding concern or allegation involves a member of staff, student or volunteer, it will be managed in accordance with the setting's safeguarding and allegations procedures and applicable statutory requirements. Referrals or notifications will be made to the appropriate external agencies where required. Employees will be informed of the outcome of formal disciplinary proceedings and their right of appeal in accordance with the setting's disciplinary procedure.

Date last reviewed: 14th October 2026

Date to be reviewed: 1st October 2027