

Innsworth Preschool Staff Professionalism, Conduct, and Appearance Policy Last Updated: 1st January 2026

1. Purpose and Scope

1.1 Overview: This policy outlines the required standards of professional conduct and personal appearance for all staff at Innsworth Preschool.

1.2 Objective: Its aim is to ensure a lawful, professional, and safeguarding-compliant environment that upholds the wellbeing of children, supports staff, and protects the integrity of the setting.

2. Legal and Statutory Framework

2.1 Compliance: This policy is strictly underpinned by our statutory duties and best practice guidance:

- The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS): Our primary statutory framework.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE): We follow EYFS safeguarding requirements and apply safer recruitment/online safety best practice, drawing on KCSIE principles where relevant.
- The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.
- The Equality Act 2010.
- The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (Whistleblowing).
- The Employment Rights Act 1996.

2.2 Hierarchy: Where any conflict arises between policies regarding staff conduct or safety, the **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy** prevails.

3. Core Principles

3.1 Standards: Our professional standards are guided by the following principles:

- **Child-Centred Practice:** The safety, rights, and welfare of children are paramount at all times.
- **Professional Accountability:** Staff are responsible for their behaviour and decisions and must act as exemplary role models.
- **Respect:** Staff must treat children, colleagues, and families with dignity, courtesy, and respect.
- **Safeguarding Leadership:** Every staff member has a proactive and continuous responsibility for safeguarding.

4. Professional Standards and Responsibilities in Practice

4.1 Interactions with Children: In line with EYFS safeguarding and welfare requirements and our **Staff Code of Conduct / Positive Handling Policy**, interactions must always be positive, age-appropriate, and professional.

- **Physical Contact:** Must be respectful, focused on care, and suitable for the child's age. All intimate care (e.g. nappy changing) must be carried out in strict accordance with our **Intimate Care Policy**.
- **Recording:** Any physical intervention used to prevent harm must be recorded as soon as practicable and always before the end of the working day (unless exceptional circumstances apply) in the Incident Log/Body Map.

- **Boundaries:** Staff must maintain professional boundaries at all times, avoiding favouritism or overly personal disclosures.

4.2 Interactions with Families: All communication with parents and carers must be professional, respectful, and confidential. Staff must not engage in gossip or criticism that brings the preschool into disrepute.

- **Private Arrangements (Babysitting):** To prevent conflicts of interest and safeguarding risks, staff must declare any private arrangements. Private babysitting for current families requires written management permission and is subject to strict conditions: no soliciting arrangements on site; no discussion of setting matters; and no transport of children without written parental consent. Management reserves the right to refuse authorisation.

4.3 Use of Technology, Phones and Social Media:

- **Personal Phones:** The use of personal mobile phones is strictly prohibited in child-access areas. Personal phones may only be used in the designated staff room/office during breaks. At all other times, they must be stored in the designated secure lockers.
- **Staff Recording:** Staff must not take photos, videos, or audio recordings on personal devices. Setting devices only are to be used for approved purposes, in line with our **Online Safety Policy**.
- **Social Media:** Staff must ensure their online conduct is appropriate and never brings the setting into disrepute. "Friending" parents of current children on personal social media accounts is prohibited.

4.4 Professional Integrity: We do not tolerate bullying or harassment. All concerns will be addressed promptly and fairly under the **Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures**, ensuring due process is followed. Staff must comply with all preschool policies, including those regarding confidentiality and health and safety.

5. Professional Appearance and Dress Code

5.1 Clothing and Footwear: Clothing must be clean, professional, and practical for a physically active role that involves bending, kneeling, and outdoor play.

- **Prohibited Items:** To ensure safety and professional standards, potentially dangerous items (such as long cords or tassels) or revealing clothing (including crop tops, low-cut tops, and very short skirts or shorts) are not permitted.
- **Slogans:** Clothing must not display offensive, discriminatory, or inflammatory slogans/images. No political campaign material is permitted while on duty. These rules are applied consistently and proportionately.
- **Footwear:** For safety reasons, footwear must be comfortable, fully enclosed (covering the entire foot), flat, and provide adequate grip suitable for outdoor terrain. Open-toed sandals, flip-flops, Crocs, heeled shoes, or backless shoes are prohibited.

5.2 Personal Grooming and Hygiene:

- **Hair:** Long hair (shoulder length or longer) must be tied back securely. This is for hygiene, practicality, and safety during close-contact care, messy play, and food handling.
- **Scents:** Appearance must be professional and suitable for close-contact care tasks. Strong perfumes or lotions are prohibited due to the potential for sensory sensitivities or allergies among the children.

- **Nails:** To minimise infection and scratch risks, nails must be kept short and clean. False nails and extensions are not permitted. Nail varnish is permitted only if intact and not chipped.

5.3 Jewellery and Smartwatches:

- **Jewellery:** Permitted jewellery is restricted to one plain wedding band and one pair of small, plain stud earrings. Exceptions are made for medical alert jewellery and religious items (subject to risk assessment). Lanyards must have breakaway clips.
- **Smartwatches:** Smartwatches or fitness trackers with data, camera, or recording capabilities are **not permitted** in child-accessible areas. They must be stored in lockers during working hours.

5.4 Practical Safety (PPE and Outdoors):

- **Farm School/Outdoors:** Staff must wear suitable outerwear (waterproofs, layers) for outdoor/Farm School sessions.
- **PPE:** Staff must wear appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (gloves, aprons) for intimate care, food handling, and messy play as detailed in the **COSHH Policy** and risk assessments.

5.5 Equality Act Exceptions: We are committed to inclusive practice. Exceptions to the dress code for religious or cultural reasons (e.g. head coverings) will be considered via a **written Risk Assessment**, ensuring that safety remains the overriding priority.

6. Core Statutory and Professional Duties

6.1 Safeguarding and Reporting: Safeguarding is the primary responsibility of all staff.

- **Low-Level Concerns:** Staff must report any 'low-level' concerns about a colleague's conduct to the Manager without delay; these will be recorded in the confidential Low-Level Concerns Log.
- **Whistleblowing:** If a concern relates to the Manager or Owner, staff must report this directly to the **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)**, the **NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline**, or Ofsted. Current contact details for these bodies are maintained in the **Key Contacts Appendix** on the Staff Noticeboard.

6.2 Health and Safety: All staff must carry out daily safety checks, report hazards immediately, use equipment safely, and maintain active supervision of children at all times, as required by the *Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974*.

7. Gifts and Professional Boundaries

7.1 Protocol: To maintain professionalism and avoid any perception of favouritism, small token gifts (e.g. chocolates or cards with a value under £10) may be accepted but must be declared to the Manager. Gifts of significant monetary value must be politely refused or treated as a donation to the setting.

8. Prohibited Conduct (Gross Misconduct)

8.1 Examples: Certain behaviours are considered Gross Misconduct and may result in dismissal. These include:

- Discriminatory, threatening, or abusive behaviour.
- Failure to report a safeguarding concern.
- Working under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Serious breaches of confidentiality or GDPR.
- Any fundamental breach of the trust required for the role.
- Full details are available in the **Disciplinary Policy** and ACAS guidance.

9. Management of Non-Compliance

9.1 Authority: The Preschool Manager is responsible for ensuring this policy is consistently applied.

- **Rectification:** Staff arriving in unsuitable attire will be asked to rectify it. If a staff member is not suitably dressed to work safely, they may be sent home to change. Pay treatment will follow the employment contract and applicable law (including National Minimum Wage rules).
- **Escalation:** Persistent breaches will be addressed via the formal Disciplinary Procedure.

10. Training and Induction

10.1 Requirements: All staff are required to read and sign this policy during their induction to confirm understanding. Updates will be communicated and, where required, consulted on in line with employment law. Professional standards are reinforced through annual safeguarding training and regular supervision.

