



## **Shikshantar School Community Dignity and Respect Policy**

The respect and dignity of all within and involved with the school, which includes students, facilitators/staff members, parents and visitors irrespective of age, gender, ability, socio-economic and cultural background, is of paramount importance in Shikshantar at all times. Thus, Shikshantar is committed to inclusion and will always work to develop a culture of equity and safety in its policies and practices that include all members of the school community.

All school community members – students, teachers, administrative staff, auxiliary staff, substitute teachers, visiting faculty and parents are entitled to be treated with courtesy, fairness and dignity at all times. Only through the commitment and ongoing attention of each one of us to a safe, caring and supportive environment can we achieve our larger objective of enabling all students to become capable, compassionate, responsible and lifelong learners.

Any kind of behaviour or statement by any member of the school community/extended school community which degrades, humiliates, harasses or stereotypes an individual on the basis of age, gender, ability, cultural or socioeconomic background is unacceptable.

### ***Verbal Exchanges:***

Parents and team members at Shikshantar work hand in hand towards providing a nurturing and secure space for all children. There are multiple occasions, school events and other forums such as one on one meetings or collective meetings which become opportunities for parents and school team members to closely interact with each other.

- a) All such interactions are expected to be set on the premise of mutual respect and trust and in keeping with the school philosophy, culture and ethos.
- b) All parents and team members are expected to use respectful and appropriate language at all times. Use of harsh language and condescending tone has to be avoided at all times. Keeping the tone of a conversation positive nurtures a sense of respect and partnership.
- c) Each meeting/interaction must remain within the defined context or agenda. Casual conversations, ridicule, comparisons or reference to any other child, parent, facilitator or other school community members is unacceptable.
- d) Irresponsible and personal comments which violate the dignity and respect of any child, staff member or parent will not be tolerated.
- e) Sarcasm, criticism or negative comments in the presence of children is completely unacceptable.

- f) Verbal abuse includes yelling, screaming, threats and abusive language. School team members have the right to discontinue and not remain in any meetings where such violation or discomfort occurs.
- g) When in school, it is the facilitators' time with children. Casual exchanges or conversations during departure or arrival time, in the corridors or when they are with children; takes away their focus from who they are here for – 'children'. Therefore, team members have the right to discourage and not engage in such exchanges.
- h) All situations /concerns are an outcome of a larger context which needs to be holistically assessed and understood. Each and every child is different, the nature and layers of work therefore vary.
- i) During their work with children in school, facilitators are expected to define thoughtful boundaries with a lot of sensitivity. Facilitators come with a 'loving authority' and not 'hierarchical authority'. Firmness with specific children in classrooms has to be understood holistically with respect to specific contexts and situations. In cases where a sensitive interaction has not happened, action will be taken.

A shared vision and shared goals for children bring us together as a community. There might be differences in thoughts/perspectives which may emerge during a meeting or a discussion. Respectful listening, keeping the larger goals in mind and together looking for constructive solutions is fundamental during all such meetings or discussions. We are committed to resolving conflicts through an open and positive dialogue. Raised or threatening voice tones or intimidations quoting media threats or law will be completely unacceptable.

***Non Verbal Exchanges:***

A positive body language strengthens communication, conveys acceptance and trust. Misunderstandings can lead to frustration and have a negative impact on relationships. All school community members are expected to be mindful of their body language. Inappropriate gestures, aggressive, fearful or humiliating body language will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

- a) Any disruptive behavior which interferes or threatens to interfere with the school's day to day functioning or activities anywhere on school premise will not be allowed.
- b) As mature adults, all school community members are expected to be perceptive and discerning while reaching out to children, staff or other parents. They are expected to exercise caution, avoid and not encourage any kind of physical contact with children, staff members or other parents. Where incidents occur which might be otherwise misconstrued, this will be reported to the concerned Supervisor/respective School Committee and adequate action will be taken.

- c) School diaries and emails are tools of maintaining communication between the school and parents. All stakeholders are expected to be sensitive in their choice of words. Communication has to be to specific, simple and crisp.
- d) A lot of time and effort is invested in giving timely responses to all communication received from parents which also includes e mails. They are expected to be judicious regarding 'what requires attention' and what needs to be highlighted or brought to the school's notice through e mails.
- e) While school has no control over social media – WhatsApp groups/Facebook communities/sms texts or phone messages; it is expected that all school community members use these tools with a sense of responsibility and sensitivity. These spaces should not be used to create panic, fear or prejudices.

**Online activities which we consider inappropriate:**

- Emails circulated or sent directly with abusive or personal comments about staff, children or other parents.
- Posting images or videos of children, staff or parents.
- Posting defamatory or labelling comments.
- Breaching school security procedures.
- Using social media to challenge and criticize school practices and policies or discuss issues about individual children, staff or other parents.

Inappropriate usage of social media with respect to the above mentioned points will be taken up very seriously.

***Beyond School Exchanges:***

The personal space and privacy of all school community members needs to be acknowledged and respected. After school hours is their time with family and for other engagements. In emergency or critical situations, the parent reps or PTA reps can get in touch with the concerned school team members.

- a) At times children/parents might want to invite teachers for birthday celebrations or any other celebration outside school. Teachers are expected to abstain from being part of these celebrations or any other such social gatherings.

***School Committees/PTA/Managing Committee:***

All school committees, PTA and the Managing Committee are platforms where parents and school team members come together to create a positive and uplifting environment for

children and all those who work with children. To address issues and concerns through mutual collaboration and in an amicable manner.

- a) All members part of such forums are expected to view their roles as supportive.
- b) The flow, nature and manner of all discussions and deliberations is expected to be in alignment with the school philosophy and ethos.
- c) All members are expected to maintain confidentiality and transparency where required.
- d) These forums cannot be quoted as threats to children, staff members or other parents.
- e) School has the right to replace any member who violates the school ethos and does not work in alignment with school policies and practices.

**Shikshantar seeks agreement and support to the above mentioned expectations from all school community members.**

In case of any uncomfortable situation or a concern being reported by any school community member (children/staff members, parents) the steps to be followed are:

- Hearing out the individual or group patiently.
- Trusting the concerned person and assuring confidentiality.
- Not being in a hurry to make an assumption or judgement of the situation.
- Reporting it to the concerned coordinator /supervisor immediately in case of any abuse that they suspect based on behaviour indicators or any other evidence that they may have.
- **Immediate information to core team members through the Coordinators/Supervisors.**
- **Authorizing the respective School Committee for an investigation to be conducted in strictest confidentiality.**
- **Documentation of all details such as the date, person or persons involved, and any additional relevant information.**
- **A thorough investigation including documentation of all steps and aspects would lead to the resulting action within four weeks.**
- **School reserves the right to take the required action.**