

Staff Code of Conduct

Policy Control Page

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1/11/23	1.1	SR	Policy reviewed for changes as per Guidance from The Key – none required Updated to show policy applicable to Fearnside House
3/3/25	1.2	JS	Policy updated to include relevant updates to internal academy policies and reference to new legislation relating to sexual harassment
Jun 26		JS	No changes

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1. Aims, scope and principles

It is important that all adults working with children and young people understand that the nature of their work and their responsibilities places them in a position of trust. This Code of Conduct provides clear information on appropriate and safe behaviours for all adults working with children and young people in paid or unpaid capacities.

This policy aims to set and maintain standards of conduct that we expect all staff to follow.

By creating this policy, we aim to ensure our Academy is an environment where everyone is safe, happy and treated with respect.

Academy staff have an influential position in the Academy and will act as role models for children and young people by consistently demonstrating high standards of behaviour.

We expect all staff, including support staff, governors, trustees, and volunteers to act with personal and professional integrity, respecting the safety and wellbeing of others.

Failure to follow the code of conduct may result in disciplinary action being taken, as set out in our staff disciplinary procedures.

Please note that this code of conduct is not exhaustive. If situations arise that are not covered by this code, staff will use their professional judgement and act in the best interests of the Academy and its children and young people.

2. Legislation and guidance

In line with the statutory safeguarding guidance [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#), we have a staff code of conduct, which covers low-level concerns, allegations against staff and whistle-blowing, as well as acceptable use of technologies (including the use of mobile devices), staff/pupil relationships and communications, including the use of social media. Staff should refer to the respective detailed policies relating to these areas and familiarise themselves with the expectations of conduct.

3. General obligations

Staff set an example to children and young people. They will:

- Maintain high standards in their attendance and punctuality
- Never use inappropriate or offensive language in the Academy
- Treat children, young people and others with dignity and respect
- Show tolerance and respect for the rights of others
- Not undermine fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs
- Understanding and respecting that we work in a Deaf/Hearing, bilingual environment and that all staff should be made to feel included and have appropriate access
- All staff to take ownership for their professional development and ensuring they are up to date with required training for the performance of their role
- Not express personal beliefs in a way that exploits children and young people's vulnerability or might lead them to break the law
- Understand the statutory frameworks they must act within
- To adhere to the professional standards relevant to the professional bodies applicable to their role

4. Safeguarding

Staff have a duty to safeguard children and young people from harm, and to report any concerns they have. This includes physical, emotional, sexual abuse, and neglect.

Staff will familiarise themselves with our child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures, and the Prevent initiative, and ensure they are aware of the processes to follow if they have concerns about a child or young person.

Our child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures are available on SharePoint and the Academy website. New staff will also be given copies on arrival. Staff will engage with any relevant learning and support through the Welfare Team when situations and de-briefs, including safeguarding updates and formal training relevant to the Academy's setting.

4.1 Allegations that may meet the harm threshold

This section applies to all cases in which it is alleged that anyone working in the Academy, including a supply teacher, volunteer or contractor, has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child, and/or
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, and/or
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children, and/or
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children – this includes behaviour taking place inside or outside of Academy

We will deal with any such allegation quickly and in a fair and consistent way that provides effective child protection while also supporting the individual who is the subject of the allegation.

The Academy's Managing Allegations Against Staff Policy and Procedure is included in our Safeguarding and Child Protection policy.

4.2 Low-level concerns about members of staff

A low-level concern is a behaviour towards a child by a member of staff that does not meet the harm threshold, is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, and may be as simple as causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt'. For example, this may include:

- Being over-friendly with children
- Having favourites
- Taking photographs of children on a personal device
- Engaging in 1-to-1 activities where they can't easily be seen
- Humiliating children and young people

Low-level concerns can include inappropriate conduct inside and outside of work.

All staff should share any low-level concerns they have using the reporting procedures set out in our child protection and safeguarding policy. We also encourage staff to self-refer if they find themselves in a situation that could be misinterpreted. If staff are not sure whether behaviour would be deemed a low-level concern, we encourage staff to report it.

All reports will be handled in a responsive, sensitive and proportionate way.

Unprofessional behaviour will be addressed, and the staff member supported to correct it, at an early stage. Where early intervention has not addressed the recurrence of low level concerns, further referral to the Staff Capability Policy may be considered.

This creates and embeds a culture of openness, trust and transparency in which our values and expected behaviour are constantly lived, monitored and reinforced by all staff, while minimising the risk of abuse. Reporting and responding to low-level concerns is covered in more detail in our child protection and safeguarding policy. This is available on SharePoint and on the Academy website.

Our procedures for dealing with allegations will be applied with common sense and judgement.

4.3 Whistle-blowing

Whistle-blowing reports wrongdoing that it is “in the public interest” to report. Examples linked to safeguarding include:

- Children and young people’ or staff’s health and safety being put in danger
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation or statutory requirement
- Attempts to cover up the above, or any other wrongdoing in the public interest

Staff are encouraged to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible. Their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated, and their confidentiality will be respected.

Staff should consider the examples above when deciding whether their concern is of a whistle-blowing nature. Consider whether the incident(s) was illegal, breached statutory or Academy procedures, put people in danger or was an attempt to cover any such activity up.

Staff should report their concern to the Principal. If the concern is about the Principal, or it is believed they may be involved in the wrongdoing in some way, the staff member should report their concern to the Chair of Governors.

Concerns should be made in writing wherever possible. They should include names of those committing wrongdoing, dates, places and as much evidence and context as possible. Staff raising a concern should also include details of any personal interest in the matter.

For our Academy’s detailed whistle-blowing process, please refer to our whistle-blowing policy.

5. Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is any unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature that has a purpose or effect of violating a person’s dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. It also includes treating someone less favourably because they’ve submitted or refused to submit to unwanted conduct of a sexual nature in the past, or harassment related to sex or gender reassignment. When this behaviour is unwanted, it includes (but isn’t limited to):

- Unwanted physical conduct or ‘horseplay’ including touching, pinching, pushing and grabbing
- Continued suggestions for sexual activity after it has been made clear that such suggestions are unwelcome
- Sending or displaying material that is pornographic, or that some people might find offensive
- Unwelcome sexual advances or suggestive behaviour (which the harasser may perceive as harmless)
- Offensive emails, text messages or social media content
- Comments and jokes of a sexual nature
- Sexually suggestive looks and staring
- Sexual propositions and advances
- Promising things in return for sexual favours
- Physical contact such as massaging, hugging or kissing

- Sexual contact on social media

Staff will help create a positive environment that works to prevent sexual harassment. This includes calling out sexual harassment that they witness. All witnesses will be provided with appropriate support and will be protected from victimisation.

If a staff member is concerned at any point about incidents of sexual harassment (either directed at them or someone else), they should report their concern to their Senior Leader, or HR Team. If the concern is about their Senior Leader, or it is believed they may be involved in the wrongdoing in some way, the staff member should report their concern to the Principal and CEO (issues relating to the Principal and CEO should be the Chair of Governors). The academy will investigate any complaints in a timely, respectful and confidential manner.

All staff will receive training on recognising and responding to incidents of sexual harassment. The academy will monitor the treatment and outcomes of any complaints of sexual harassment or victimisation received to make sure that they are properly investigated and resolved, those who report or act as witnesses are not victimised, repeat offenders are dealt with appropriately, cultural clashes are identified and resolved and workforce training is targeted where needed.

6. Staff-pupil relationships

Staff will observe proper boundaries with children and young people that are appropriate to their professional position. They will act in a fair and transparent way that would not lead anyone to reasonably assume they are not doing so.

If staff members and children and young people must spend time on a one-to-one basis, staff will ensure, where possible, that:

- This takes place in a public place that others can access
- Others can see into the room
- A colleague or line manager knows this is taking place

Staff should avoid contact with children and young people outside of Academy hours if possible, unless the circumstances relate to a prior agreement that has been disclosed to HR and agreed through the 'Other Employment' approval process

Personal contact details should not be exchanged between staff and children and young people. This includes social media profiles.

While we are aware many children and young people and their parents may wish to give gifts to staff, for example, at the end of the Academy year, gifts from staff to children and young people are not acceptable.

Physical touch is an important part of Deaf Culture, can be necessary in gaining attention and can also be essential in building relationships with children and young people. Staff should be mindful and confident of the appropriateness of any physical contact, obtain consent and be aware of the individual and their specific needs. If in any doubt, please speak with a member of the Welfare Team for advice and support

If a staff member is concerned at any point that an interaction between themselves and a pupil may be misinterpreted, or if a staff member is concerned at any point about a fellow staff member and a pupil, this should be reported in line with the procedures set out in our child protection and safeguarding policy.

7. Communication and social media

Academy staff's social media profiles should not be available to children and young people. If they have a personal profile on social media sites, they should consider not using their full name, as children and young people may be able to find them. For example, staff could consider using a first and middle name instead and should set all public profiles to private.

Staff should not attempt to contact children and young people or their parents via social media, or any other means outside the Academy, in order to develop any sort of relationship. They will not make any efforts to find children and young people's or parents' social media profiles.

Staff will ensure that they do not post any images online that identify children or young people at the Academy without their consent.

Staff should be aware of the Academy's Social Media Policy.

8. Acceptable use of technology

Staff will not use technology in the Academy to view material that is illegal, inappropriate or likely to be deemed offensive. This includes, but is not limited to, sending obscene emails, gambling and viewing pornography or other inappropriate content.

Staff will not use personal mobile phones or cameras to take pictures of children and young people.

We have the right to monitor emails and internet use on the Academy IT system.

9. Confidentiality

In the course of their role, members of staff are often privy to sensitive and confidential information about the Academy, staff, children and young people and their parents.

This information should never be:

- Disclosed to anyone unless required by law or with consent from the relevant party or parties
- Used to humiliate, embarrass or blackmail others
- Used for a purpose other than what it was collected and intended for

This does not overrule staff's duty to report child protection concerns to the appropriate channel where staff believe a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm, as detailed further in our child protection and safeguarding policy.

Staff should be mindful that confidential conversations could be overheard or signing observed, particularly offsite or in communal areas, such as Reception where external visitors may be present. Staff should also take extreme care with other forms of confidential information i.e., electronic or printed. Printed documents should only be taken offsite when absolutely necessary.

All staff whether as part of their induction or during the course of their employment should familiarise themselves with the Data Protection policy and completed all training as required. Upon leaving the academy, staff are reminded of their contract of employment clauses still remain and confidentiality should be continue to be adhered to.

10. Honesty and integrity

Staff should maintain high standards of honesty and integrity in their role. This includes when dealing with children and young people, handling money, claiming expenses and using Academy property and facilities.

Staff will not accept bribes. Gifts that are worth more than £10 must be declared and recorded on the gifts and hospitality register.

Staff will ensure that all information given to the Academy is correct. This should include:

- Background information (including any past or current investigations/cautions related to conduct outside of Academy)
- Qualifications
- Professional experience

Where there are any updates to the information provided to the Academy, the member of staff will advise the Academy as such as soon as reasonably practicable. Consideration will then be given to the nature and circumstances of the matter and whether this may have an impact on the member of staff's employment.

11. Dress code

Staff will dress in a professional, appropriate manner.

Outfits will not be overly revealing, and clothes will not display any offensive or political slogans.

12. Conduct outside of work

Staff will not act in a way that would bring the Academy, or the teaching profession, into disrepute. This covers conduct including but not limited to relevant criminal offences, such as violence or sexual misconduct, as well as negative comments about the Academy on social media.

13. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually but can be revised as needed. It will be approved by the Governing Board.

Our governing board will ensure this code of conduct is implemented effectively, and will ensure appropriate action is taken in a timely manner to safeguard children and deal with any concerns.

14. Links with other policies

This policy links with our policies on:

- Staff disciplinary procedures, which will be used if staff breach this code of conduct. It also sets out examples of what we will deem as misconduct and gross misconduct
 - Staff Capability procedures, which will be used when an improvement in staff performance has been identified
 - Staff grievance procedures
 - Child protection and safeguarding
 - Managing Allegations Against Staff Policy and Procedure
- Social Media Policy
- Whistle-blowing
 - Physical intervention policy
 - Behaviour policy