

# Staff Code of Conduct



**Approved by:** The Trust Board

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## Document Control

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### Authorisation (Responsible Owner)

Name	Role	Approval Date
Jemma Lynch	Trust Safeguarding Lead	5 July 2023

### Approval (Accountable Owner)

Name	Role	Approval Date
Ian Jacobs	Named Trustee for Safeguarding	19 July 2023

### Distribution List – Once authorised (Informed)

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### Review Period (at least annually or whenever statutory guidance changes)

Date Document Reviewed	By Whom
5 July 2023	Jemma Lynch – Trust Safeguarding Lead

## Contents

1. Aims, scope and principles .....	3
2. Legislation and guidance .....	4
3. Equality and diversity .....	4
4. General obligations .....	4
5. Low level concerns .....	5
6. Safeguarding.....	6
7. Staff/pupil relationships.....	6
8. Relationships between staff.....	7
9. Communication and social media.....	7
10. Acceptable use of technology.....	7
11. Confidentiality .....	8
12. Honesty and integrity .....	8
13. Dress code .....	8
14. Conduct outside of work .....	9
15. Monitoring arrangements.....	9
16. Links with other policies .....	9
17. Further advice .....	9

## 1. Aims, scope and principles

Our vision: Making remarkable change happen – Unity Schools Partnership transforms lives.

Our values: Ethical leadership, inclusion, excellent communication, endless ambition, strong relationships and belief in success for all.

[The Seven Principles of Public Life](#) apply to all those appointed to work in education. The Seven Principles are Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty and Leadership.

This code of conduct is designed to give clear guidance regarding the standards of behaviour all staff are expected to observe, and each school should notify staff of this code and the expectations upon them. School staff are in a unique position of influence and must adhere to behaviour that sets a good example, acting as role models to all pupils within the trust. In this document, 'staff' includes both paid and unpaid roles, e.g. volunteers. [Guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings](#)<sup>1</sup> must be read in conjunction with this code of conduct.

All staff have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of pupils. They must adopt high standards of personal conduct to maintain the

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<sup>1</sup> [Professional and Personnel Relationships \(safeguardingchildren.co.uk\)](https://www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk/professional-and-personnel-relationships)

confidence and respect of their peers, pupils and the public in general. An individual's behaviour, either in or out of the workplace, must not compromise their position within the work setting or bring the school or trust into disrepute. All staff who work in schools provide a role model for behaviour and conduct which can be copied by pupils. All staff must, therefore, demonstrate high standards of conduct to encourage pupils to do the same.

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 trust is an environment where everyone is safe, happy and treated with respect.

Many of the principles in this code of conduct are based on the [Teachers' Standards](#)<sup>2</sup>.

Staff have an influential position and will act as role models for pupils by consistently demonstrating high standards of behaviour.

We expect that all teachers will act in accordance with the personal and professional behaviours set out in the Teachers' Standards.

We expect all support staff, governors and volunteers to also 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 the trust's disciplinary policy and procedure.

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 trust's pupils.

## 2. Legislation and guidance

In line with the statutory safeguarding guidance [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)<sup>3</sup> (KCSiE), we should have a staff code of conduct, which should cover acceptable use of technologies, staff/pupil relationships and communications, including the use of social media.

This policy also complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

## 3. Equality and diversity

The trust promotes inclusivity and values diversity. We seek to ensure that the work environment for our staff is supportive and one where individual respect is shown to all. All members of staff and pupils, regardless of their age, (dis)ability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, ethnic background, culture, sexual orientation, religion or belief, sex, socio-economic status, or any other factor will be treated equally, supported, and encouraged to perform to their potential.

## 4. General obligations

Staff set an example to pupils. They will:

- Maintain high standards in their attendance and punctuality
- Never use inappropriate or offensive language in school
- Treat pupils 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

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<sup>2</sup> [Teachers' Standards guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

- Express personal beliefs in a way that will not overly influence pupils, and will not exploit pupils' vulnerability or might lead them to break the law
- Not consume or be under the influence of alcohol or any substance, including the misuse of prescribed medication, when professionally active and responsible for either pupils, parents, other colleagues and/or trust property
- Understand the statutory frameworks they must act within
- Adhere to the Seven Principles of Public Life
- Adhere to the Teachers' Standards (if applicable)

During their employment, staff must inform the school/trust, as their employer, of any circumstance relevant to their employment in a position of trust, such as police action in relation to their conduct, either inside or outside of school.

Any allegation of inappropriate behaviour made against a member of staff by a pupil, parent or other professional, unless manifestly malicious or vexatious, will be investigated and a record kept of it. HR advice must be sought, and it may be appropriate for some initial fact finding to be undertaken to decide whether a full investigation is necessary and, if so, what form it should take and who should conduct it.

Where the allegation is of a safeguarding nature it will be referred to the local authority designated officer (LADO) in all cases in which it meets the harms threshold, i.e., it is alleged that a current member of staff or volunteer has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child, or
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, or
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she may pose a risk of harm to children, or
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

The trust Safeguarding Lead and the trust's Director of HR must be informed of any referrals to LADO. Please refer to the trust's safeguarding policy for more details on handling allegations of abuse made against staff. Please also refer to the trust's whistleblowing policy.

## 5. Low level concerns

Low level concerns that do not meet the harms threshold set out above should be reported to the Headteacher. If they are about the Headteacher (or a relative of the Headteacher working at the school), they should be reported to the relevant Director of Education. If they are a member of the trust central team, they should be reported to the Chief Executive Officer. All low-level concerns will be recorded in writing by the person to whom they are reported. The record should include details of the concern, the context in which the concern arose, action taken and the rationale for decisions.

The term 'low level' concern does not mean that it is insignificant. A low level concern is any concern – no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a nagging doubt – that an adult working in or on behalf of the school/trust may have acted in a way that is inconsistent with this code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work, but that does not meet the harms threshold for referral to the LADO. Examples of such behaviour could include, but are not limited to:

- being over friendly with children;
- having favorites;
- taking photographs of children on their mobile phone;

- engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door; or,
- humiliating pupils.

Such behaviour can exist on a wide spectrum, from the inadvertent or thoughtless, or behaviour that might look inappropriate but might not be in specific circumstances, through to that which is intended to enable abuse. Sharing, recording, and dealing with low level concerns appropriately not only keeps children safe but also protects those working in or on behalf of schools, and enables schools and the trust to continue to create a culture of vigilance.

Staff are encouraged and should feel confident to self-refer where, for example, they have found themselves in a situation which could be misinterpreted, might appear compromising to others, and/or, on reflection, believe they have behaved in a way they consider falls below the expected professional standards.

## **6. Safeguarding**

Staff have a duty to safeguard pupils from harm, and to report any concerns they have. This includes physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, neglect, exploitation, or radicalisation.

In addition to this code of conduct, staff who work directly with children must read at least Part one and Annex B of KCSiE. Staff who do not work directly with children must read at least Annex A (a condensed version of Part one). All staff must read the trust's safeguarding policy and their school's child protection procedures and behavior policy, and ensure they are aware of the processes to follow if they have concerns about a child.

The trust's safeguarding policy and your school's child protection procedures are available in the staff room, from the school office and on the school's website. New staff will also be given copies on arrival as part of their induction pack.

## **7. Staff/pupil relationships**

Staff will observe proper boundaries with pupils 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.

Any sexual behaviour, whether homosexual or heterosexual, by a member of staff, volunteer, or governor with or towards a child or young person is illegal. Children and young people are protected by the same laws as adults in relation to non-consensual sexual behaviour. They are additionally protected by specific legal provisions regardless of whether there is consent or not. It is an abuse of trust, and never appropriate, to have an intimate relationship with a pupil who attends the school where you work/volunteer. This remains the case even if the pupil is over the age of 18.

If staff members and pupils must spend time on a one-to-one basis, staff will ensure 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 must never groom pupils in preparation for abuse. The responsibility not to groom continues once pupils leave the school and until they reach the age of 18. Staff must avoid contact with pupils and their parents outside of school hours if possible. Any personal relationships between staff and pupils or their parents must be declared to the DSL (Designated Safeguarding Lead) at the school, who will keep a register. Staff not attached to schools, including members of the Central Team, must inform the Trust Safeguarding Lead (01440 333 400) of any personal relationships they have with pupils or their parents, who will maintain a register of these declarations.

Personal contact details must not be exchanged between staff and pupils or their parents. This includes social media profiles.

While we are aware many pupils and their parents may wish to give gifts to staff, for example, at the end of the school year, gifts from staff to pupils are not acceptable, unless sanctioned by the Headteacher.

If a staff member is concerned that an interaction between themselves and a pupil may be misinterpreted, this must be reported to the Headteacher (see section 5, above).

## **8. Relationships between staff**

The trust requires staff to disclose workplace relationships. This will allow the trust to take pre-emptive steps to avoid conflicts of interest. One such example may be changing reporting lines, in the case of an employee reporting to their partner. Failure to disclose a relationship could give rise to disciplinary proceedings.

Disclosures of relationships should be made to the Headteacher for school-based staff, and should it involve the Headteacher the relevant director of education. Disclosures from central team staff should be made to their line manager and should involve their line manager and the relevant director for their departmental area. Directors' disclosures should be reported to the Chief Executive and the Chief Executive should report disclosures to the Trust Board.

## **9. Communication and social media**

Staff using social media should conduct themselves with professionalism and respect.

Staff should always remain aware of both professional and social boundaries and should not therefore accept or invite 'friend' requests from pupils, or ex-pupils under the age of 18, or from parents on their personal social media accounts. All communication with parents via social media should be through the school/trust's social media accounts.

Staff must not use private social media or any other means to contact pupils or their parents outside school to develop any relationship. They will not make any efforts to find pupils' or parents' social media profiles. Staff will ensure they do not upload any content onto social media sites confidential to the school/trust or its staff, amounts to bullying, discrimination, harassment, victimization or is unlawful.

Staff will ensure that they do not post any images online that identify children who are pupils at trust schools without their consent. Any message, photos or information must comply with existing policies.

Staff should be aware of their school, and trust's online safety policy. Staff must not upload any content which could bring the school/trust, or teaching profession into disrepute, as outlined in the trust's disciplinary policy and procedure and teaching standards.

## **10. Acceptable use of technology**

Staff will not use technology in school 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. If you may have viewed or attempted to view illegal, inappropriate, or offensive material (including pornography or obscene material), either by accident or deliberately, you must report this immediately to your headteacher. If you are a headteacher you must report to your director of education. If you work for the central trust team, you must self-report to the Trust Safeguarding Lead. Failure to do so may lead to disciplinary action.

Staff will not use personal mobile phones and laptops/tablets, or school equipment for personal use, in front of pupils, except in case of emergency.

Staff should, where possible, only use IT equipment provided by the trust. Where this is not possible, advice should be sought from the Trust Safeguarding Lead and Head of IT Operations.

Whenever possible, images of pupils will be recorded on equipment provided by the trust (e.g., a school camera or iPad). However, if, in exceptional circumstances, personal equipment is used to record these images, staff will be mindful that they must be able to justify images of pupils in their possession. Staff will take care when recording images that pupils are appropriately dressed and are not participating in activities that might bring the individuals or the trust into disrepute. Staff will delete such images from both the device and any cloud storage as soon as they have been downloaded to the school's network. Any personal devices used must not be set to automatically upload images to any shared platforms, e.g., Family Sharing. Images of pupils must be downloaded from designated school devices as soon as possible and the images deleted from the device.

Staff must not undertake covert recordings, including audio and video recordings. Any recordings must have the explicit consent of those present and participating in the activity/meeting/discussion. Any breach of this will be considered a misconduct issue and could constitute a breach of data protection regulations.

We have the right to monitor emails and internet use on IT systems used by the trust. Staff must ensure all email communication is appropriate and professional; this includes but is not limited to the language used, tone of emails and how they may be interpreted.

Staff should be aware of the trust's Acceptable use of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) Policy, and Photograph and Video Policy.

## **11. Confidentiality**

In their role, staff members are often privy to sensitive and confidential information about trust, schools, staff, pupils, and their parents/carers. This information will never be:

- Disclosed to anyone without the relevant authority
- Used to humiliate, embarrass, or blackmail others
- Used for a purpose other than that which it was collected and intended for

This does not overrule the staff's duty to report child protection and safeguarding concerns through the appropriate channels where staff believe a child is at risk of harm.

## **12. Honesty and integrity**

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

Staff will not accept bribes. Gifts (including modest gifts of a promotional character, e.g., calendars, diaries, and other comparable articles) worth less than £25 do not have to be declared.

For any gift worth between £25 and £50 a declaration should be completed (Appendix B of the Gifts and Hospitality Policy), within 28 days (about 4 weeks), by the member of staff, authorised by the Headteacher and retained for seven years. Gifts worth more than £50 should be refused or donated to charity. Where parents club together to buy their child's teacher a gift that is worth more than £50, it is reasonable for the school to divide the value of the gift by the number of people who contributed.

Staff will ensure that all information given to the trust about their qualifications and professional experience is correct.

## **13. Dress code**

Please refer to the trust's staff dress guidance.



## **14. Conduct outside of work**

Staff will not act in a way that would bring trust, any of its schools or the teaching profession into disrepute. This covers relevant criminal offences, such as violence or sexual misconduct, and negative comments about Unity School Partnership on social media.

## **15. Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed at least every three years but can be revised as needed. It will be ratified by the board of trustees.

## **16. Links with other policies**

This policy links with the following policies and procedures:

- Disciplinary policy and procedure, 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 grievance procedures
- Safeguarding policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Child protection procedures
- Acceptable use of ICT policy
- Whistleblowing

## **Combined data protection and freedom of information policy17. Further advice**

If any staff, contractor, or visitor requires any further information or support regarding this code of conduct, they should either ask the Headteacher or contact the HR Helpdesk at [hrhelpdesk@unitysp.co.uk](mailto:hrhelpdesk@unitysp.co.uk) or telephone 01440 333 401.