



CORE
EDUCATION
TRUST

Employee Code of Conduct
September 2022

This policy will be reviewed annually on or before September
2023.



Contents

1. Introduction
2. Purpose
3. Scope
4. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children
5. Duty of care
6. Health & Safety
7. Honesty and personal integrity
8. Tackling discrimination
9. Professional boundaries and relationships
10. Confidentiality and data protection
11. Physical contact with students
12. Behaviour management
13. Social contact with students
14. Photography, videos and other images/media
15. Working one to one with students
16. Curriculum
17. Dress and appearance
18. Gifts and hospitality
19. Keeping within the law
20. Conduct outside of work and at work related functions
21. Communication and social media
22. Allegations that may meet the harm threshold
23. Low-level concerns about members of staff
24. Whistle-blowing
25. Agency workers

1 Introduction

It is essential that all employees of CORE Education Trust establish and maintain professional working relationships which exemplify and support the CORE Values in order for the organisation to be most effective. It is through highly effective relationships, that the Trust and its academies can perform at its best and sustainable improvement and innovation can be achieved.

CORE Education Trust is built on four core values of Collaboration, Opportunity, Respect and Excellence. As an educational trust, the expectation is that all aspects of the Code of Conduct standards should be applied by employees in their dealings with colleagues, young people, all other stakeholders and anyone encountered within their duties/association to the Trust.

The Employee Code of Conduct sets out the standard of conduct expected of all employees, agency workers and self-employed contractors when carrying out their duties for CORE Education Trust and by association aspects of their personal conduct beyond work. Employees are expected to maintain a high standard of professionalism both in their professional and personal lives. The policy is designed to promote public confidence in the actions of employees and encourage employees not only to avoid actual impropriety, but avoid suspicion or appearance of it in person, through correspondence, association or within social media/online. This policy also complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

The Code supports the Trust's wider promotion of organisational integrity and the Teachers Standards. Where there is any doubt as to the interpretation of this Code, it shall be interpreted to give effect to the principles set out. This Code also supports compliance with the seven principles of Public Life as drawn up by the Nolan Committee. Employees are required to apply the following principles in the conduct of their employment. (see Appendix 1)

This Code represents the standard against which all employees will be judged by the Trust. It is the responsibility of each employee to comply with the Code, Teacher's Standards, all Trust and 'policies and all related statutory guidance. Any breaches will be treated seriously and will be dealt with under the Disciplinary procedure which could result in dismissal. If in any doubt employees should seek advice from their Headteacher or the HR department.

2 Purpose

- 2.1 The aim of this Code of Conduct for employees is to set out the standards of conduct expected of all staff and to provide further information for employees. This should be read in conjunction with our disciplinary procedures, Teachers' Standards, the latest statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education, the latest Guidance for Safer Working Practices for Those Working with Children & Young People in Educational Settings and related guidance and policies.
- 2.2 This Code should make it clear to employees the expectations the Trust has of them. Employees should note that this Code is not exhaustive in defining acceptable and unacceptable standards of conduct and employees must use common sense in adhering to the underpinning principles. If any employee is ever unsure what the expectations are in any given circumstance, they should speak to their Line Manager.

- 2.3 This Code does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

3 **Scope**

- 3.1 The Code applies to all employees regardless of length of service including those in their probationary period. It also applies to agency workers and self-employed contractors although, unlike employees, breaches of the Code will not be managed through the disciplinary procedure.
- 3.2 As recognisable figures in the local community the behaviour and conduct of staff of the Trust outside of work can impact on their employment. Therefore, conduct outside work may be treated as a disciplinary matter if it is considered that it is relevant to the employee's employment [see disciplinary procedure].

4 **Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children**

- 4.1 All employees are responsible for safeguarding children and promoting their welfare. This means that employees are required to take action to protect children from maltreatment, prevent impairment of children's health or development and ensure that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care. This will enable all children to have the best outcomes. The safeguarding and child protection policy is located in the policies section of the CORE Education Trust website section of and on the safeguarding section of individual academy websites.
- 4.2 All employees should be prepared to identify children who may benefit from early help. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges at any point in a child's life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years.
- 4.3 All employees must be aware of the signs of abuse and neglect and know what action to take if these are identified.
- 4.4 Employees must have fully read and understood our Child protection and safeguarding policies, together with Keeping Children Safe in Education regulations. Employees should be aware of our systems for keeping children safe and must follow the guidance in these policies at all times.
- 4.5 All employees must cooperate with colleagues and with external agencies where necessary.

5 **Duty of Care**

Staff must:

- Understand the responsibilities, which are part of their employment or role, and be aware that sanctions will be applied if these provisions are breached
- Always act, and be seen to act, in our students' best interests
- Avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and/or intentions
- Take responsibility for their own actions and behaviour

6 **Health & Safety**

All employees must ensure that they:

- Familiarise themselves with the Health and Safety statements produced by the Trust as published
- Read and understand the Trust's Health and Safety Policy
- Comply with Health and Safety Regulations or instructions and use any safety

equipment and protective clothing which is supplied to you by the Trust

- Comply with any hygiene requirements
- Comply with any accident reporting requirements
- Never act in a way which might cause risk or damage to any other members of the Trust community or visitors.
- Inform their line manager of any paid work undertaken elsewhere. This is to comply with the Working Time Regulations, which are a Health and Safety initiative.

7 **Honesty and personal integrity**

7.1 Employees are expected to demonstrate consistently high standards of personal and professional conduct. The following statements define the behaviour and attitudes which set the required standard for conduct at our Trust

7.2 Employees must comply with any lawful or reasonable instructions issued by managers or governors.

7.3 Employees uphold public trust in our Trust and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside the academy, by:

- Treating students with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to their professional position
- Having regard for the need to safeguard students' well-being, in accordance with statutory provisions
- Showing tolerance of and respect for the rights of others
- Not undermining fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs
- Ensuring that personal beliefs are not expressed in ways which exploit students' vulnerability or might lead them to break the law.

7.4 Employees must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of our Trust and maintain high standards in their own attendance and punctuality. Employees must treat all colleagues with respect, dignity, fairness and courtesy at all times.

7.5 Staff must maintain high standards of honesty and integrity in their work. This includes the handling and claiming of money and the use of Trust property and facilities.

7.6 Employees must use any equipment or facilities provided by the Trust for use in the course of their employment in a proper and responsible manner.

7.7 An employee must not use any public funds entrusted to or handled by them in a responsible and lawful manner; and not make personal use of property or facilities of the Trust unless properly authorised to do so. Failure to follow the Trust policy/procedure may lead to disciplinary action under the Trust's Disciplinary Code.

8 **Tackling discrimination**

8.1 Employees are required to understand the types of discrimination and bullying that students and colleagues may be subject to. Employees are required to have read and understood our Equality and Diversity policy and the Bullying and Harassment policy.

8.2 Employees must not ignore any form of discrimination. This includes inappropriate jokes and banter. Employees must positively promote equality and diversity and inclusion at all times.

9 **Professional boundaries and relationships**

9.1 Employees in our Trust are in a position of trust in relation to our students which means that the relationship between an employee and a student is not one of equals. It is a specific offence for a person aged 18 or over (e.g. teacher, youth worker) to have a sexual relationship with a child under 18 where that person is in a position of trust in respect of that child, even if the relationship is consensual.

9.2 Employees must ensure that they avoid behaviour which might be misinterpreted by others. This includes any type of communication that they may have with students.

9.3 Employees must not make sexual remarks to any student or discuss their own sexual relationships with, or in the presence of students. Employees must not discuss a student's sexual relationships in inappropriate settings or contexts. Any sexual behaviour by a member of staff towards any student is unacceptable and illegal.

9.4 Employees must ensure that professional boundaries are maintained at all times. This means that employees should not show favouritism to any student and should not allow students to engage in any type of behaviour that could be seen to be inappropriate. Students are not employees' friends and should not be treated as such.

9.5 Employees should be aware that it is not uncommon for students to become strongly attracted to a member of staff or to develop an infatuation. If any member of staff becomes aware of an infatuation, they should discuss it with their Headteacher and the Designated Safeguarding lead immediately so that they can receive support on the most appropriate way to manage the situation.

9.6 For employees who are in a relationship with a colleague, parent or carer, or any other person associated with the Trust we expect that they identify this to the Headteacher, and the Designated Safeguarding lead of the Trust and ensure that this does not create a conflict of interest or affect their professional judgement or responsibilities in any way. Where an employee has managerial authority over another employee with whom they are in a close personal relationship, the Trust reserves the right to transfer one or both employees to another role in the Trust following appropriate consultation with both employees in order to seek agreement to the transfer.

9.7 All employees must declare in writing to the Headteacher/Trust all financial or non-financial interests that they consider could bring about conflict with the Trust's interests. Membership of a trade union is exempted from this requirement.

9.8 Employees must declare to the Trust, membership of any organisation not open to the public without formal membership and commitment of allegiance and which has secrecy about its rules or membership or conduct, for example Freemasons.

9.9 Employees who have an interest, financial or non-financial, should not involve themselves in any decision on allocation of Trust services or resources from which they, their friends or family might benefit, and should ensure that the matter is referred immediately to the Headteacher or Deputy CEO.

- 9.10 Employees must not be involved in the appointment or any other decision relating to the discipline, promotion, pay or conditions of another employee, or prospective employee, who is a relative or friend.

In this paragraph –

- “relative” means a spouse, partner, parent, parent-in-law, son, daughter, stepson, stepdaughter, child of a partner, brother, sister, grandparent, grandchild, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece, or the spouse or partner of any of the preceding persons.
- “partner” in sub-paragraph (a) above means a member of a couple who live together.

- 9.11 Employees ideally must not line manage an employee, who is a relative or friend. In this paragraph –

- a) “relative” means a spouse, partner, parent, parent-in-law, son, daughter, stepson, stepdaughter-, child of a partner, brother, sister, grandparent, grandchild, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece, or the spouse or partner of any of the preceding persons.
- b) “partner” in sub-paragraph (a) above means a member of a couple who live together.

10 **Confidentiality and data protection**

- 10.1 Members of staff may have access to confidential information about students, colleagues or other matters relating to the Trust. This could include personal and sensitive data, for example information about a student's home life. Employees should never use this information to their own personal advantage, or to humiliate, intimidate or embarrass others. Employees should never disclose this information unless this is in the proper circumstances and with the proper authority.
- 10.2 If an employee is ever in doubt about what information can or can't be disclosed, they should speak to their Headteacher.
- 10.3 We will comply with the requirements of Data Protection Legislation (being (i) the General Data Protection Regulation ((EU) 2016/679) (unless and until the GDPR is no longer directly applicable in the UK) and any national implementing laws, regulations and secondary legislation, as amended or updated from time to time, in the UK and then (ii) any successor legislation to the GDPR or the Data Protection Act 1998, including the Data Protection Act 2018). Employees are expected to comply with the Trust's systems as set out in our Data Protection Policy. If any employee becomes aware that data is at risk of compromise or loss or has been compromised or lost, they must report it immediately to the Data Protection Officer, in order (where applicable) for relevant breaches to be reported to the Information Commissioners Office within 72 hours.
- 10.4 Employees must read and understand our Data Protection Policy and other relevant policies including in relation to criminal records information, recruitment and safer recruitment, internet, email and communications, information security, copies of which are available.

11 **Physical contact with students**

- 11.1 There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for staff to have physical contact with students. Employees must ensure that they only do so in ways that are appropriate to their professional role and in response to the student's needs at the time.

This should be of limited duration and appropriate to the age, stage of development, gender and background of the student. Employees should always be able to explain why they have made physical contact with a student. Employees should ensure that they have read and understood our Physical Contact Policy.

- 11.2 There may also be occasions where a student is in distress and needs comfort and reassurance which may include age-appropriate physical contact. If an employee is in this position, then they should consider the way in which they offer comfort, ensuring that it is not open to misinterpretation and is always reported to the Headteacher and the Designated Safeguarding lead.
- 11.3 Staff may legally physically intervene with students to prevent them from committing a crime, injuring themselves or others, causing damage to property, engaging in behaviour prejudicial to good order and to maintain good order and discipline. Physical force should never be used as a form of punishment.
- 11.4 Sexual contact, including grooming patterns of behaviour, with students is unlawful and unacceptable in all circumstances.

12 **Behaviour management**

- 12.1 Employees should not use any form of degrading or humiliating treatment to punish a student. The use of sarcasm, demeaning or insensitive comments towards students is completely unacceptable.
- 12.2 Where students display difficult or challenging behaviour, employees should follow the Trust's behaviour policy using strategies appropriate to the circumstance and situation.

13 **Social contact with students**

- 13.1 Employees should not establish or seek to establish social contact, via any channels (including social media), with students for the purposes of securing a friendship or to pursue or strengthen a relationship. Employees should use their work provided equipment only for communicating electronically with students. If there are any circumstances in which an employee has had to provide their personal contact details, including phone numbers, email address etc, to any student then they should report this to the Headteacher and the Designated Safeguarding lead.
- 13.2 The Trust's advice to staff is not to connect to students via social media or other communication channels unless this is for professional purposes and that the employee can demonstrate that this is the case.
- 13.3 Our Trust is part of our community and we recognise that as members of the community, employees will come into contact with students outside of the academy. We expect staff to use their professional judgement in such situations and to report to the Headteacher and to the Designated Safeguarding lead any contact that they have had with a student, outside of the academy, that they are concerned about or that could be misinterpreted by others.
- 13.4 Employees should ensure that they take time to read and understand the Trust's Social Media policy.

14 **Photography, videos and other images/media**

Many educational activities involve recording images. These may be undertaken or

displays, publicity, to celebrate achievement and to provide records of evidence of the activity. Under no circumstances should employees use their personal equipment to take images of students at or on behalf of the Academy or Trust. Permission to take images and use these images for academy purposes should always be obtained from the parent of the child.

15 **Working one to one with students**

There will be times where an employee is working one to one with a student and this is acceptable. Employees need to understand that this means that they may be more vulnerable to allegations being made against them. Therefore, it is important that employees:

- Avoid meeting on a one-to-one basis in secluded areas of the academy
- Ensure that the door to the room is open or that there is visual access into the room
- Inform a colleague or line manager of the meeting, preferably beforehand
- Reports to their line manager if the student becomes distressed or angry

16 **Curriculum**

16.1 Many areas of the curriculum can include or raise subject matter which is sexually explicit or of a political or sensitive nature. Care should be taken to ensure that resource materials cannot be misinterpreted and clearly relate to the learning outcomes identified by the lesson plan. This can be supported by developing ground rules with students to ensure sensitive topics can be discussed in a safe learning environment. This plan should highlight particular areas of risk and sensitivity and care should especially be taken in those areas of the curriculum where usual boundaries or rules are less rigorously applied e.g. Health and Social Care, PSHE, Drama.

16.2 The curriculum can sometimes include or lead to unplanned discussion about subject matter of a sexually explicit, political or otherwise sensitive nature. Responding to children's questions requires careful judgement and employees should take guidance in these circumstances from the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

17 **Dress and appearance**

Working in our Trust, employees are role models to our students and how they present themselves is important. Our expectation is that staff are decently, appropriately and professionally dressed in work at all times. We do not permit the wearing of clothes that are revealing, allow underwear to be seen, have offensive logos or writing, or are ripped or torn at any times. If an employee is unsure whether any item of clothing is inappropriate, then they should not wear it to work. Employees can always speak to their line manager if they are unsure. Where we identify that an employee is wearing clothing that we do not find acceptable they will be informed.

18 **Gifts and hospitality**

The Trust has an Anti-bribery/Gifts and Hospitality policy and employees should read and adhere to this. It is traditional for students and their parents or carers to give gifts as a small token of appreciation or as a thank you to members of staff at certain times throughout the academic year. This Code of Conduct is not designed to stop that practice. Staff may accept gifts from students and their parents or carers provided that they meet this definition. Any member of staff receiving a gift with a value of greater than £15.00 should inform the Headteacher. The Headteacher will then decide whether the gift can be accepted. Staff should make the Headteacher aware of any student who is giving them gifts on a regular basis, or any student or

parent or carer who expects something in return for a gift, as this would not be acceptable.

Staff should not give gifts to students unless this is part of a recognised practice in line with our behaviour policy.

19 **Keeping within the law**

19.1 Staff are expected to operate within the law. Unlawful or criminal behaviour, at work or outsidework, may lead to disciplinary action, including dismissal, being taken. However, being investigated by the police, receiving a caution or being charged will not automatically mean that an employee's employment is at risk.

19.2 Employees must ensure that they:

19.2.1 Uphold the law at work

19.2.2 Never commit a crime away from work which could damage public confidence in them or the Trust, or which makes them unsuitable for the work they do. This includes, for example:

- submitting false or fraudulent claims to public bodies (for example, income support, housing or other benefit claims)
- breaching copyright on computer software or published documents
- sexual offences which will render them unfit to work with children or vulnerable adults
- crimes of dishonesty which render them unfit to hold a position of trust.

19.2.3 Write and tell the Headteacher (or a member of the executive team in case of a Headteacher) immediately if they are arrested, questioned by the police, charged with, or convicted of, any crime whilst they are employed at the Trust (this includes outside of their working hours). The Headteacher and the Trust will then need to consider whether this charge or conviction damages public confidence in the Trust or makes the employee unsuitable to carry out their duties.

20 Conduct outside of work and at work related functions

- 20.1 Unlike some other forms of employment, working at our Trust means that an employee's conduct outside of work could have an impact on their role.
- 20.2 Staff must not engage in conduct outside work which could seriously damage the reputation and standing of the Trust or the employee's own reputation or the reputation of other members of the Trust community. Employees should be aware that any conduct that we become aware of that could impact on their role within the Trust or that could affect the Trust's reputation will be addressed under our disciplinary procedure.
- 20.3 We therefore expect employees to make us aware immediately of any such situations that have happened outside of the Trust.
- 20.4 Employees are required to demonstrate responsible behaviour at work-related functions and work-related social events that take place outside normal work hours and to act in a way that will not have a detrimental effect on our reputation.
- 20.5 Whilst employees' off-duty activities are their own concern, there can be instances where private interests may conflict with the duties of an employee's post. If employees are contemplating additional paid employment or other activities which could involve some conflict of interest, employees should consult the Headteacher for advice. Employees should obtain the express consent of the Headteacher prior to engaging in any business or appointment.
- 20.6 If consent is given in relation to additional paid employment or other activities, employees must not undertake any work or activities in support of this additional paid employment or activity in the Trust workplace or use the Trust's facilities, equipment and resources e.g. use of phones/IT equipment/photocopying.
- 20.7 Staff must not behave in a way outside work that may impact on their suitability to work with children. This includes behaviour which does not directly involve a child/children. Should we become aware of any such incident or behaviour, we may be required to treat the issue as a safeguarding matter and manage it in accordance with the Keeping Children Safe in Education statutory guidance document. Employees should be aware that any behaviour that we consider may impact on an employee's suitability to work with children will be addressed under our disciplinary procedure and may lead to a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and the Teaching Regulation Agency (where appropriate).
- 20.8 We therefore expect employees to make us aware immediately of any such situations that have happened outside of the academy.

21 Communication and social media

- 21.1 Academy staff's social media profiles should not be available to students. If they have a personal profile on social media sites, they should not use their full name, as students may be able to find them. Staff should consider using a first and middle name instead and set public profiles to private.
- 21.2 Staff should not attempt to contact students or their parents via social media, or any other means outside academy, in order to develop any sort of relationship. They will not make any efforts to find students' or parents' social media profiles.

- 21.3 Staff must ensure that they do not post any images online that identify children who are students at the academy without their consent.
- 21.4 Staff should be aware of the academy's online safety policy.

22 **Allegations that may meet the harm threshold**

- 22.1 This section is based on 'Section 1: Allegations that may meet the harm threshold' in part 4 of Keeping Children Safe in Education. 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
- 22.2 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.
- 22.3 An investigating officer will lead any investigation. This will be a member of staff of suitable seniority as decided by the trust.

23 **Low-level concerns about members of staff**

- 23.1 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 students
- 23.2 Low-level concerns can include inappropriate conduct inside and outside of work.
- 23.3 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.
- 23.4 All reports will be handled in a responsive, sensitive and proportionate way.
- 23.5 Unprofessional behaviour will be addressed, and the staff member supported to correct it, at an early stage.
- 23.6 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.

23.7 Reporting and responding to low-level concerns are covered in more detail in our child protection and safeguarding policy. This is available in the policies section of the CORE Education Trust website section of and on the safeguarding section of the academy website.

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

24 Whistle-blowing

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

- Students’ 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

24.2 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.

24.3 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.

24.4 Staff should report their concern to the Headteacher. If the concern is about the Headteacher, 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 the governing board.

24.5 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.

24.6 The whistle-blowing process is detailed in the trust whistle-blowing policy.

25 Agency Workers

25.1 We will investigate allegations made against agency workers with the cooperation of the agency. Whilst we may decide to cease using the services of an agency worker, this will not prevent us from investigating allegations and liaising with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) to determine a suitable outcome. We expect agency workers and agencies to cooperate with our investigations and with external agencies where applicable.

25.2 We will discuss with the agency whether it may be appropriate for them to consider suspending an agency worker, or whether we are prepared to redeploy an agency worker during an investigation.

CORE Employee Code of Conduct			
Publication Date	September 2022	Owner	ER/RSM