



# Code of Conduct

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## DOCUMENT PROVENANCE

This policy was approved by –

E-ACT Board of Trustees – Personnel Committee Date: September 2018

Frequency of review: Two years

Next review date: December 2023

ELT Owner: Director of People, Partnerships and Organisational Development

Summary of changes at last review:

- Updated to comply with GDPR
- Provides advice on social contact with students including use of social media
- States that staff should not be using their personal devices to contact students.

Related documents:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Information Security Policy
- Social Media Guidelines

This policy will be interpreted and applied in accordance with the employers' duty to respect the rights of employees under the Human Rights Act, particularly the rights to freedom of speech, privacy, freedom of religion and belief and the right to freedom of association.

Recognised trade unions have been consulted on this policy.

## **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 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 procedure, Teachers' Standards and the statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education.
- 1.2 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.
- 1.3 This Code does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

## **2. Scope**

- 2.1. 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.
- 2.2. As recognisable figures in the local community the behaviour and conduct of E-ACT staff outside of work can impact on their employment. Therefore conduct outside work may be treated as a disciplinary matter under E-ACT's Disciplinary Policy if it is considered that it is relevant to the employee's employment.

## **3. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children**

- 3.1. 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.
- 3.2. All employees must be aware of the signs of abuse and neglect and know what action to take if these are identified.
- 3.3. To do this employees must have fully read and understood our child protection / safeguarding / any other policies, be aware of our systems for keeping children safe and must follow the guidance in these policies at all times.
- 3.4. All employees must cooperate with colleagues and with external agencies where necessary.

## **4. Duty of care**

Staff must:

- 4.1. Understand the responsibilities, which are part of their employment or role, and be aware that sanctions will be applied if these provisions are breached
- 4.2. Always act, and be seen to act, in our students' best interests

- 4.3. Avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and/or intentions
- 4.4. Take responsibility for their own actions and behaviour.

## **5. Health & Safety**

All employees must ensure that they:

- 5.1. Familiarise themselves with E-ACT's Health and Safety policy(ies).
- 5.2. Read and understand the Health and Safety Policy(ies).
- 5.3. Comply with Health and Safety Regulations and use any safety equipment and protective clothing which is supplied to you by E-ACT.
- 5.4. Comply with any hygiene requirements.
- 5.5. Comply with any accident reporting requirements.
- 5.6. Never act in a way which might cause risk or damage to any other members of the Trust community or visitors.
- 5.7. 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.

## **6. Honesty and personal integrity**

- 6.1. 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 E-ACT.
- 6.2. Employees uphold public trust in E-ACT and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school, 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.
- 6.3. Employees must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of E-ACT and maintain high standards in their own attendance and punctuality.

- 6.4. Staff must maintain high standards of honesty and integrity in their work. This includes the handling and claiming of money and the use of E-ACT's property and facilities.

## **7. Tackling discrimination**

- 7.1. Employees are required to understand the types of discrimination and bullying that students and colleagues may be subject to.
- 7.2. 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.

## **8. Professional boundaries and relationships**

- 8.1. Employees at E-ACT 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.
- 8.2. 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.
- 8.3. 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.
- 8.4. 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.
- 8.5. 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 line manager immediately so that they can receive support on the most appropriate way to manage the situation.
- 8.6. For employees who are in a relationship with a colleague, parent or carer, or any other person associated with E-ACT, we expect that they identify this to their Headteacher (academy staff)/Regional Director (educational and operational regional staff)/ ELT Director (National staff) and ensure that this does not create a conflict of interest or affect their professional judgement or responsibilities in any way.

## **9. Confidentiality and protection of data**

- 9.1. Members of staff may have access to confidential information about students, colleagues or other matters relating to E-ACT. 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.
- 9.2. If an employee is ever in doubt about what information can or can't be disclosed they should speak to their line manager.

- 9.3. We will comply with the requirements of Data Protection Legislation (being (i) unless and until the GDPR is no longer directly applicable in the UK, the General Data Protection Regulation ((EU) 2016/679) 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). Employees are expected to comply with the [school/academy/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.
- 9.4. Employees must ensure that they have read and understood all of our policies that relate to data including our IT policies.

## **10. Physical contact with students**

- 10.1. 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.
- 10.2. 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 their line manager.
- 10.3. Staff may legally physically intervene with students to prevent them from committing a crime, injuring themselves or others, or causing damage to property. Physical force should never be used as a form of punishment.
- 10.4. Sexual contact, including grooming patterns of behaviour, with students is unlawful and unacceptable in all circumstances.

## **11. Social contact with students**

- 11.1. 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 only use their equipment provided by work for communicating electronically with students. Employees should not be using their personal devices to contact students. If there are any exceptional circumstances<sup>1</sup> 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 their line manager.
- 11.2. E-ACT's advice to staff is not to connect to students or parents via social media or other communication channels unless this is for professional purposes and that the employee can demonstrate that this is the case.
- 11.3. E-ACT is part of a community and we recognise that, as members of the community, employees will come into contact with students outside of our academies. We expect staff to use their

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<sup>1</sup> Exceptional circumstances may relate to a school trip

professional judgement in such situations and to report to their line manager any contact that they have had with a student, outside of school, that they are concerned about or that could be misinterpreted by others.

11.4. Employees should read and understand our Social Media policy.

## **12. Working one to one with students**

12.1. 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.

## **13. Dress and appearance**

13.1. E-ACT 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.

## **14. Gifts and hospitality**

14.1. For many of our employees there will be a limited opportunity to accept gifts and hospitality, but all staff must be aware that it is not acceptable for staff to accept bribes. Therefore any gift, promotional offer or hospitality, intended either for the employee or for the academy that exceeds a nominal value of £20 must be declared to your line manager and permission must be obtained before accepting. If an employee is ever unsure, then the best course of action is to politely decline the offer.

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

## **15. Keeping within the law**

15.1. Staff are expected to operate within the law. Unlawful or criminal behaviour, at work or outside work, 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.

15.2. Employees must ensure that they:

- Uphold the law at work
- 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.
- Write and tell the appropriate Headteacher/or Regional Director/ or ELT Director immediately if they are questioned by the police, charged with, or convicted of, any crime whilst they are employed at E-ACT (this includes outside of their working hours). The Headteacher/Regional Director/ELT Director will then need to consider whether this charge or conviction damages public confidence in E-ACT or makes the employee unsuitable to carry out their duties.

## **16. Conduct outside of work and at work related functions**

- 16.1. 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.
- 16.2. 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 academy or affect the academy's reputation will be addressed under our disciplinary procedure.
- 16.3. We therefore expect employees to make us aware immediately of any such situations that have happened outside of the academy.
- 16.4. 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.

## **17. Review**

This Code of Conduct is reviewed and amended as required by E-ACT. We will monitor the application and outcomes of this code of conduct to ensure it is working effectively.