

HUMAN RESOURCES: STAFF CODE OF CONDUCT POLICY

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MEMBER OF STAFF WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR REVIEW	HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES

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1. Introduction

This Code of Conduct is designed to give clear guidance on the standards of behaviour all employees are expected to observe. The Trust expects all employees to promote and maintain high standards of personal conduct to sustain the good reputation of the Trust and to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. In particular employees are expected to:

- Perform their duties to the highest possible standards, with honesty, integrity and impartiality and be accountable for their own actions.
- Maintain the confidence and respect of the general public and those with whom they work.
- Treat others with respect, fairness and dignity at all times.
- Communicate promptly any relevant concerns they may have about the quality of provision or the safety and welfare of children and young people.
- Familiarise themselves with systems and procedures, including reporting requirements, within the School that support the protection of children and to attend training and read safeguarding briefings provided to ensure that they remain up to date.
- Be aware that their behaviour inside and outside the workplace, as well as the behaviour of others in their personal lives, could compromise their position within the School in relation to the protection of children, loss of trust and confidence or bringing the employer into disrepute. It could also result in action by regulatory bodies.

All adults have a duty to keep pupils safe, promote their welfare and to protect them from radicalisation (the Prevent Duty), abuse (sexual, physical and emotional), neglect and safeguarding concerns. This duty is, in part, exercised through the development of respectful, caring and professional relationships between adults and pupils and behaviour by adults that demonstrates integrity, maturity and good judgement. Following this Code will help to safeguard adults from being maliciously, falsely or mistakenly suspected or accused of misconduct in relation to pupils.

This Policy applies to all employees of the Wandle Learning Trust. It does not form part of the terms and conditions of any employee's employment with the Trust and is not intended to have contractual effect. However, it reflects the Trust's current practices and employees are strongly encouraged to familiarise themselves with its content.

All policies incorporate the following schools or organisations within Wandle Learning Trust (WLT).

The terms Academy, School, Organisation and Trust are considered interchangeable in the context of all Trust policies.

Where appropriate, in this policy the term:

"Executive Team" means the Trust's Executive Headteachers and includes the Trust's Chief Operating Officer (COO) who manage the day-to-day business of the Trust.

"Headteacher" includes the appropriate School Headteacher.

"Trustees or Trust Board" are appointed trustees who oversee the business of Wandle Learning Trust, agreeing the overarching strategic direction and ensuring robust governance.

"Local Academy Committee (LAC)" includes appointed Governors at a local Academy level and support each schools Leadership Teams to implement policies and improvement plan priorities.

"Chair" heads the board of Trustees or LAC, provides leadership to the Trust's Executive Team and/or relevant Headteachers and leads the charge on key Board decisions.

"Head of Governance" provides an administrative resource for the Trust and LAC Boards and ensures the smooth running of its functions, processes and meetings.

“Stakeholders” are any individuals or companies who are invested in the welfare and success of the Trust and/or School and its students, including staff members, students, parents, community members, LAC or Trust members, trade unions, local business leaders etc.

2. Scope

This Code takes account of the most recent versions of the following guidance (statutory and non-statutory):

- ‘Keeping Children Safe in Education’ Department of Education (‘DfE’) (statutory)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children’ HM Government (statutory)
- ‘Guidance for Safer Working Practice for those Working with Children and Young People in Education Settings’ (non-statutory)

This Code cannot provide an exhaustive list of what is, or is not, appropriate behaviour for adults. However, it does highlight behaviour that is illegal, inappropriate or inadvisable in relation to the required professional standards. There will be occasions and circumstances in which adults have to make decisions or take action in the best interests of the pupil where no specific guidance has been given. Adults are expected to make responsible and informed judgements about their own behaviour in order to secure the best interests and welfare of the pupils.

Any behaviour in breach of this Code by employees may result in action under our disciplinary procedure. Such behaviour may constitute gross misconduct and, as such, may result in summary dismissal. The Local Authority Committees and Board of Trustees will take a strict approach to serious breaches of this Code. Some breaches may be considered low level concerns which may be dealt with informally or formally under the disciplinary procedure.

3. Compliance

Employees must familiarise themselves and comply with all school and Wandle Learning Trust policies

Each year, employees must complete a form to confirm they have read, understood and agreed to comply with the Code of Conduct. This form should then be signed and dated. A record of this will be retained on file.

All staff should behave at all times in such a manner as to demonstrate personal courtesy, integrity and enhance the dignity and standards of the school in which they work. In addition, they should strive constantly to develop their own skills and expertise.

All staff must read the code carefully and any other documents referred to within it, which are relevant to their own work. Any queries, should be raised them with the School’s Headteacher, Director of WLP or CFOO in the first instance.

4. Safeguarding

Adults have a duty to act in accordance with their School’s Safeguarding Policy is available from the School’s Safeguarding Lead or School office.

It is a statutory requirement that every member of staff employed by the Trust is responsible for safeguarding all children within the school. If anyone discloses something to you or you witness something which you think puts the students or other members of the community at risk, you must refer this immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) at the School. If in doubt, details of who the DSL can be accessed from the school office or any member of the senior leadership team.

If the DSL(s) are not available you must refer to another member of the Senior Leadership team who will follow up on your concerns.

Employees are provided with access to the DfE Statutory Guidance Document 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' and must read, understand and abide by the document. Safeguarding training will be conducted for all staff at the beginning of each academic year and it is expected that all staff attend.

5. Low Level Concerns

In accordance with Part Four of Keeping Children Safe in Education, a low level concern is defined as behaviour towards a child that does not meet the harm threshold, but is a concern that an adult, working in or on behalf of the School, may have acted in a way that:

- is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work, and
- does not meet the threshold or is otherwise not considered serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO.

Examples of low level concerns could include, but are not limited to:

- being over friendly with children;
- having favourites;
- 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,
- using inappropriate sexualised, intimidating or offensive language.

The Trust is committed to creating and embedding a culture of openness, trust and transparency in which the school's values and expected behaviours, as set out in this policy, are adhered to, monitored and reinforced by all staff. All adults have a duty to report low level concerns, in addition to concerns that meet the harm threshold, to those with designated safeguarding responsibilities to ensure matters are dealt with promptly and appropriately.

In the event that an adult has found themselves in a situation which could be misinterpreted, might appear compromising to others, and/or on reflection they believe they have behaved in such a way that they consider falls below the expected professional standards, the adult should self-refer to those with designated safeguarding responsibilities.

6. Health and Safety

Employees should always observe their school's or service's specific health and safety rules and guidance, as well as the Trust's Health and Safety Policy.

Employees should never:

- Breach the Academy health and safety policies;
- Act in a manner likely to endanger themselves, fellow workers, members of the public, the Academy's property or that of a third party;
- Ignore anything that has the potential to cause harm. It should be immediately brought to the attention of the line manager;
- Check classrooms and work areas are safe and that equipment is safe to use, using protective equipment as needed;
- Smoke either cigarette or vape, in School buildings or in the grounds of the school. This includes work vehicles.

7. Whistleblowing

Adults must raise concerns they have about the safeguarding or child protection practices by following the Whistleblowing Policy, which is available from the School's or service's HR Department. An adult who raises a matter under the whistleblowing policy or makes a public interest disclosure will have the protection of the relevant legislation.

8. Allegations of Abuse Against Staff

Where it is alleged that an adult has:

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

the Trust's Procedure for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse Against Staff and the guidance set out in Part Four of Keeping Children Safe in Education DfE will be followed.

9. Attendance at work

Employees should attend for work at all agreed times and should obtain prior authorisation for any absence.

Employees should:

- Observe any designated hours of work;
- Always observe the Academy's requirements on the notification of absence by reason of sickness, outlined in the Trust's Sickness Absence and Sick Pay Policy;
- Never work elsewhere when absent from the Academy without line manager's authorisation. Examples of absence include sickness, suspension and leave related to work and families;
- Comply with the Academy's leave policies (such as [Additional Paid and Unpaid Leave, Annual Leave, Maternity Leave, Paternity Leave, Shared Parental, Parental, Time off for Dependents etc.])
- Never leave work during designated/ agreed working hours without permission.

10. Drug, alcohol and substance misuse

The Trust prohibits the drinking of alcohol by employees, workers, (and contractors) in the workplace or on Academy business other than reasonable drinking of alcohol in connection with approved social functions.

The Trust will take all reasonable steps to prevent employees (and contractors) carrying out work-related activities if they are considered to be unfit/unsafe to undertake the work as a result of alcohol consumption or substance abuse.

The Trust expressly prohibits the use of any illegal drugs or any prescription drugs that have not been prescribed for the user. It is a criminal offence to be in possession of, use or distribute an illicit substance. If any such incidents take place on School premises, in School vehicles or at a School related function, they will be regarded as serious, will be investigated by the Trust, and may lead to disciplinary action and potential dismissal and possible reporting to the Police.

Should an employee be taking prescription drugs or over the counter medication which may affect their ability to perform duties normally, they must inform their line manager. Failure to do so may be considered a disciplinary matter.

Smoking, either cigarette or vape, is not allowed in School buildings or in the grounds of the school.

11. Expected Professional Standards

All adults, as appropriate to the role and/or job description of the individual, must:

- Place the well-being and learning of pupils at the centre of their professional practice;
- Have high expectations for all pupils, be committed to addressing underachievement, and work to help pupils progress regardless of their background and personal circumstances;
- Treat pupils fairly and with respect, take their knowledge, views, opinions and feelings seriously, and value diversity and individuality;
- Model the characteristics they are trying to inspire in pupils, including enthusiasm for learning, a spirit of enquiry, honesty, tolerance, social responsibility, patience, and a genuine concern for other people;
- Respond sensitively to the differences in the home backgrounds and circumstances of pupils, recognising the key role that parents and carers play in pupils' education;
- Seek to work in partnership with parents and carers, respecting their views and promoting understanding and co-operation to support the young person's learning and wellbeing in and out of School;
- Reflect on their own practice, develop their skills, knowledge and expertise, and adapt appropriately to learn with and from colleagues;
- Ensure that the same professional standards are always applied regardless of culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity or any other protected characteristic.

Teachers are required to comply with the Teachers' Standards, in particular, Part 2 Personal and Professional Standards. All adults must be familiar with and act in accordance with the most recent versions of the following documents:

- Working Together to Safeguard Children HM Government (statutory);
- Prevent Duty Guidance HM Government (statutory);
- 'The Prevent Duty Departmental Advice for Schools and Childcare Providers' DfE;
- 'Guidance for Safer Working Practice for those Working with Children and Young People in Education Settings' (non-statutory).

An employee who fails to bring a matter of concern to the attention of senior management and/or the relevant agencies is likely to be subject to disciplinary action.

12. Equality

Wandle Learning Trust seeks to achieve an environment in which all are included and in which discrimination is not tolerated. The Academy is committed to promoting equality of opportunity regardless of gender, gender reassignment, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief or age. Everyone should be treated with respect and dignity and establish a culture where diversity is valued.

Employees should always observe the Trust's Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy.

13. Confidentiality

Confidentiality should be maintained in accordance with statutory and School's regulations and procedures in all forms of communication.

Employees are expected to always comply with the Trust's Data Protection and Freedom of Information policies and procedures with regard to the retention, disposal security and disclosure of personal data.

Employees must never disclose confidential information to any other person or party without consent (unless specifically required to do so by law) and must never search confidential files to which access has not been granted.

If an adult is in any doubt about the storage or sharing of information they must seek guidance from the School's Data Protection Officer. Any media or legal enquiries must be passed to senior management.

14. Disclosure of Information

It is a disciplinary offence to speak to the press in the capacity as a spokesperson for an Academy school or the Trust, without prior permission from the Headteacher or one of the Executive Heads of the Trust.

Headteachers, Teachers and Non-teaching Staff should not use any information obtained in the course of their employment for personal gain or benefit, nor should they pass it on to others who might use it in such a way.

Intellectual property or copyright created during the course of employment by the Trust shall remain the property of the trust and must not be used by employees in a personal capacity without prior permission.

15. Outside Commitments

All Staff should be clear about their contractual obligations and should not take up outside work or personal services, paid or unpaid, which may conflict with the trust's or school's interest, be directly linked with pupils of the school and/or their families, impact on the individual's performance or attendance, or could affect their professional standing. If in doubt please seek advice from your Headteacher/Director in the first instance.

Staff **must** obtain written consent from their Headteacher/Director before taking up any outside work or services.

16. Personal Interests

All staff must declare any financial or non-financial interest including personal relationships, which may influence, or be seen by another party to influence a particular situation. It is not possible to define all possible situations but a good test is to ask the question, "If other people knew the facts, might they reasonably think I had an interest." The Executive Headteacher/ Headteacher must declare in writing any similar interest to the Chair of Trustees or LAC respectively.

17. Unacceptable Use of ICT Facilities and Monitoring

This section should be read in conjunction with the School's Acceptable Use of ICT Facilities Policy/Social Media Policy. Posting, creating, accessing, transmitting, downloading, uploading or storing any of the following material (unless it is part of an authorised investigation) is likely to amount to gross misconduct and result (where the adult is employed) in summary dismissal (this list is not exhaustive):

- Pseudo-images of children (child abuse images), pornographic or sexually suggestive material or images of children or adults which may be construed as such in the circumstances (that is, writing, texting, pictures, films and video clips of a sexually explicit or arousing nature);
- Any other type of offensive, obscene or discriminatory material, criminal material or material which is liable to cause distress or embarrassment to the School or others.

If indecent images of children are discovered at the premises or on the School's equipment/devices, an immediate referral should be made to the School's designated Safeguarding Lead and Headteacher (unless they are implicated) and the external Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and, if relevant, the police contacted. The images/equipment should be secured, should not be used by others and should be isolated from the network. There should be no attempt to view, tamper with or delete the images as this could jeopardise any necessary criminal investigation. If the images are of children are known to the School, a referral should also be made to children's social care in accordance with local arrangements.

The contents of our ICT resources and communications systems are the Trust's property. We reserve the right to monitor, intercept and review, without prior notification or authorisation from adults, any of the Trust's IT resources and communications systems, telephone, e-mail, messaging, voicemail, CCTV, internet and social media postings and activities are monitored to ensure that our rules are being complied with and for the following purposes:

- To monitor whether the use of the e-mail system or the internet is legitimate and in accordance with this Code;
- To assist in the investigation of alleged wrongful acts;
- To comply with any legal obligation.

A CCTV system monitors the School(s) 24 hours a day. This data is recorded and may be used as evidence of any alleged wrongdoing.

Personal data will be stored in accordance with the Trust's Privacy Notices and Data Protection Policy. We may store copies of data or communications for a period of time after they are created, and may delete such copies from time to time without notice. If necessary information may be handed to the police in connection with a criminal investigation.

18. Propriety, Behaviour and Appearance

All adults working with children have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of pupils. They should adopt high standards of personal conduct in order to maintain the confidence and respect of their colleagues, pupils and the public in general. An adult's behaviour or actions, either in or out of the workplace, must not compromise their position within the work setting, or bring the School or Trust into disrepute. Non-exhaustive examples of unacceptable behaviour are contained in the Trust's Disciplinary policy.

Adults are required to notify the School immediately of any allegation/s of misconduct that are of a safeguarding nature made against them (or implicating them), by a child or adult in relation to any outside work or interest (whether paid or unpaid) and, of any arrest or criminal charge whether child-related or not. Where employees fail to do so, this will be treated as a serious breach of this Code and dealt with under our disciplinary procedure.

Individuals should not behave in a manner which would lead any reasonable person to:

- Question their suitability to work with children;
- Act as an appropriate role model;
- Make, or encourage others to make sexual remarks to, or about, a pupil;
- Use inappropriate language to or in the presence of pupils;
- Discuss their personal or sexual relationships with or in the presence of pupils;
- Make, or encourage others to make, unprofessional personal comments which scapegoat, demean or humiliate, or might be interpreted as such.

Behaving in an unsuitable way towards children may result in disqualification from childcare under the Childcare Act 2006, prohibition from teaching by the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA), a bar from engaging in regulated activity, or action by another relevant regulatory.

A person's dress and appearance are matters of personal choice, self-expression, religious and cultural customs. However, adults must maintain an appropriate standard of dress and personal appearance at work which promotes a positive and professional image. Reference should also be made to any relevant school or service Dress Code Policy.

Personal property of a sexually-explicit nature or property which might be regarded as promoting radicalisation or otherwise inappropriate such as books, magazines, CDs, DVDs or such material on any electronic media including links to such material must not be brought onto or stored on School premises or on any School equipment.

19. Relationships with Students/Pupils

Employees must:

- Maintain professional boundaries with students appropriate to their position and must always consider whether their actions are warranted, proportionate, safe and applied equitably;
- Act in an open and transparent way that would not lead any reasonable person to question their actions or intent;
- Think carefully about their conduct so that misinterpretations are minimised;
- Be mindful of section 16 of The Sexual Offences Act 2003.

Employees must not:

- Establish or seek to establish social contact with students for the purpose of securing a friendship or to pursue or strengthen a relationship. If a young person seeks to establish social contact you should exercise your professional judgement in making a response and be aware that such social contact could be misconstrued;
- Develop personal or sexual relationships with students and should not engage in any sexual activity with a student;
- Make sexual remarks to a student, discuss their own sexual relationships with, or in the presence of, students or discuss a pupil's sexual relationships in an inappropriate setting or context.

Contact with students should be through the Academy's authorised mechanisms only. Personal phone numbers, email addresses or communication routes via all social media platforms should not be used and staff should not share their home address with students. If contacted via an inappropriate route the member of staff must inform a senior member of staff immediately.

Employees must not accept friend invitations or become friends with any student of the Academy on any social media platform. Employees should also refrain from following the Twitter or other similar social media accounts of students or their parents.

It is acknowledged that adults may have genuine friendships and social contact with parents or carers of pupils, independent of the professional relationship. However, you should report these friendships to your line manager where this extends beyond the usual parent/carers/professional relationship.

Some employees may, as part of their professional role, be required to support a parent or carer. If that person comes to depend upon the employee or seeks support outside of their professional role this should be discussed with senior management and, where necessary, referrals made to the appropriate support agency.

20. Relationships with Colleagues

Employees must help create a positive working environment and behave in a manner which ensures and promotes acceptable behaviour.

Employees must strive toward and promote harmonious and professional relationships with all colleagues. It is understood that, at times, differences of opinions can occur and at such times it is expected that employees will attempt to resolve matters informally in the first instance unless they feel unable to do so in which case they should refer the matter to their line manager in line with relevant HR policy and procedure.

21. Infatuations and Crushes

A child or young person may develop an infatuation with an adult who works with them. An adult, who becomes aware (may receive a report, overhear something, or otherwise notice any sign, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant) that a pupil has become or may be becoming infatuated with them or a colleague, must report this without delay to the Headteacher or the most senior manager, so that appropriate action can be taken to avoid any hurt, distress or embarrassment. The situation will be taken seriously and the adult should be careful to ensure that no encouragement of any kind is given to the pupil. It should also be recognised that careless and insensitive reactions may provoke false accusations.

22. Gifts, Rewards, Favouritism and Exclusion

Adults need to take care that they do not accept any gift that might be construed by others as a bribe, or lead the giver to expect preferential treatment. There are occasions when pupils or parents/carers wish to pass small tokens of appreciation to adults e.g. at Christmas or as a thank you and this is acceptable. However, it is unacceptable to receive gifts on a regular basis or of any significant value. Any gifts offered should be considered against the Trust's Gifts and Hospitality Policy.

Personal gifts must not be given or offered to pupils or their families/carers without prior permission from the Headteacher/Director. A gift can be a financial or non-financial item, service, benefit, favour, etc. that an employee provides or arranges for any reason. Any reward given or offered to a pupil should be consistent with the School's behaviour or rewards policy, recorded, and not based on favouritism.

Care should be taken when selecting children for specific activities, jobs, privileges and when pupils are excluded from an activity in order to avoid perceptions of favouritism or injustice. Methods of selection and exclusion should be subject to clear, fair and agreed criteria.

23. Physical Contact, Personal Privacy and Personal Care

There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for employees to have physical contact with pupils, but it is crucial that they only do so in ways appropriate to their professional role and in relation to the pupil's individual needs and any agreed care plan. When physical contact is made with pupils this should be in response to their needs at the time, of limited duration and appropriate given their age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity, culture and background. Employees must use their professional judgement at all times. It is not possible to be specific about the appropriateness of each physical contact, since an action that is appropriate with one pupil in one set of circumstances may be inappropriate in another, or with a different pupil.

There may be occasions when a distressed pupil needs comfort and reassurance. This may include age-appropriate physical contact. Adults should remain self-aware at all times in order that their contact is not threatening, intrusive or subject to misinterpretation. Adults should always tell a colleague when and how they offered comfort to a distressed pupil. Where an adult has a particular concern about the need to provide this type of care and reassurance they should seek further advice from a senior manager.

Some employees, for example, those who teach PE and games, or who provide music tuition will on occasions have to initiate physical contact with pupils in order to support a pupil so they can perform a task safely, to demonstrate the use of a particular piece of equipment/instrument or assist them with

an exercise. This should be done with the pupil's agreement. Contact under these circumstances should be for the minimum time necessary to complete the activity and take place in a safe and open environment. Adults should remain sensitive to any discomfort expressed verbally or non-verbally by the pupil.

Employees with a job description which includes intimate care duties will have appropriate training and written guidance including a written care plan for any pupil who could be expected to require intimate care. No other adult should be involved in intimate care duties except in an emergency. Employees should not assist with personal or intimate care tasks which the pupil is able to undertake independently.

24. Reporting Misconduct and Concerns

Employees are expected to:

- Report violations or suspected violations of law, relevant policies or the standards set out in this Code of Conduct. In these situations you should contact your line manager.
- Comply with the Academy's [Whistleblowing Policy] in the event of concerns or evidence of malpractice in connection with the Academy.
Note: Any information provided by employees will be kept confidential in accordance with the Whistleblowing Policy, unless otherwise required by law and may be made without concern of retribution.
- Report all/any suspicions of fraud or theft to their line manager.

All adults must report concerns and incidents in accordance with the guidance set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE) and the Trust's Managing Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy. In the event of an allegation being made, or incident being witnessed, the relevant information should be immediately recorded and reported to the Headteacher, Senior Manager or Designated Safeguarding Lead, as appropriate.

Where low level concerns are raised the Headteacher (as mentioned in section 5), the Senior Manager or Designated Safeguarding Lead should speak to the individual involved and any witnesses and consider the matter under the Disciplinary Procedure which may result in informal or formal action. If any concerns are raised via a third party, the Headteacher, Senior Manager or Designated Safeguarding Lead should collect as much evidence as possible. An employee who fails to bring a matter of concern to the attention of senior management and/or the relevant agencies may be subject to disciplinary action.

25. Further Guidance

Employees requiring further clarification on this document should contact the Trust's Head of HR.