



# QUANTOCK

## EDUCATION TRUST

### Code of Conduct Policy

LINKS: Allegations of Abuse against Staff Policy, Disciplinary Policy, Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Teachers' Standards, Keeping Children Safe In Education (2022)

DATE: November 2024

POSTHOLDER RESPONSIBLE: HR Manager

TRUSTEES/GOVERNORS COMMITTEE:

AUDIENCE: All schools, employees and volunteers within the Quantock Education Trust

STATUS: Ratified

DATE RATIFIED: December 2024

DATE OF NEXT REVIEW: This Policy will be reviewed every 2 years

STATUTORY/NON-STATUTORY: Non Statutory

## Summary of Changes

<b>Date</b>	<b>Para</b>	<b>Revision</b>
Nov 24	3.4	List of behaviours amended
	4	Staff duty of Care list amended
	7	Tackling Discrimination section amended
	All	Updated to recognise Preventing Sexual Harassment legislation

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## 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 policy, 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 the Headteacher.
- 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 consultants, casual and agency staff, volunteers and self-employed contractors although, unlike employees, breaches of the Code will not be managed through the disciplinary policy.
- 2.2 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.

## 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 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.
- 3.3 All employees must be aware of the signs of abuse and neglect and know what action to take if these are identified.
- 3.4 All employees must be aware of low-level concerns, 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 Trust 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 allegations threshold or is otherwise not considered serious enough to consider a referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

Examples of such behaviour could include, but is 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;
- humiliating pupils, or,
- humiliating children

3.5 To do this, employees must have fully read and understood our Child Protection and Safeguarding policy, be aware of our systems for keeping children safe and must follow the guidance in these policies at all times.

3.6 All employees must cooperate with colleagues and with external agencies where necessary.

## 4 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 pupils' best interests
- Avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and/or intentions
- Avoid any conduct that could amount to discrimination or harassment;
- Ensure their actions are warranted, proportionate, safe and applied equitably
- Take responsibility for their own actions and behaviour

## 5 Health & Safety

All employees must ensure that they:

- Familiarise themselves with the Health and Safety statements produced by the Trust
- 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.

## 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 our Trust.
- 6.2 Employees must comply with any lawful or reasonable instructions issued by managers or executive senior leaders and Trustees.
- 6.3 Employees uphold public trust in our Trust and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school, by:
- Treating pupils 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 pupils' 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 pupils' vulnerability or might lead them to break the law.
- 6.4 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.
- 6.5 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 Tackling discrimination and harassment

- 7.1 Employees are required to understand the types of discrimination and bullying that pupils and colleagues may be subject to. Employees are required to have read and understood our Equality and Diversity Policy, Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy Preventing Sexual Harassment at Work Policy.
- 7.2 The law protects employees, workers, contractors, self-employed staff, apprentices, those undertaking vocational training, volunteers, former workers and job applicants from sexual harassment the QET has a duty to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of its staff at work.

Examples of sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:

- Flirting, gesturing, making sexual remarks about someone's appearance in any means of communication.
- Asking question about someone's sex life.
- Telling sexually offensive jokes/pranks and or sharing pornographic or sexual images.
- Unwanted touching, kissing or assault.

To report an incident of sexual harassment or to raise a please refer to the Preventing Sexual Harassment at Work Policy for details of how QET responds to a report of sexual harassment.

- 7.3 Employees must not ignore any form of discrimination or harassment. Employees must positively promote equality and diversity and inclusion at all times and not display any behaviour that constitutes any form of discrimination, bullying or harassment.

## 8 Professional boundaries and relationships

- 8.1 Employees in our Trust are in a position of trust in relation to our pupils which means that the relationship between an employee and a pupil 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.
- 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 pupils.
- 8.3 Employees must not make sexual remarks to any pupil or discuss their own sexual relationships with, or in the presence of pupils. Employees must not discuss a pupil's sexual relationships in inappropriate settings or contexts. Any sexual behaviour by a member of staff towards any pupil 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 pupil and should not allow pupils to engage in any type of behaviour that could be seen to be inappropriate. Pupils are not employees' friends and should not be treated as such.
- 8.5 Employees should be aware that it is not uncommon for pupils 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 the Trust we expect that they identify this to the Headteacher 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 Confidentiality and data protection

- 9.1 Members of staff may have access to confidential information about pupils, colleagues or other matters relating to the Trust. This could include personal and sensitive data, for example information about a pupil'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 the UK General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018) and any implementing laws, regulations and secondary legislation, as amended or updated from time to time. 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.
- 9.4 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 from the HR Department.

## 10 Physical contact with pupils

- 10.1 There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for staff to have physical contact with pupils. Employees must ensure that they only do so in ways that are appropriate to their professional role and in response to the pupil's needs at the time. This should be of limited duration and appropriate to the age, stage of development, gender and background of the pupil. Employees should always be able to explain why they have made physical contact with a pupil. Employees should ensure that they have read and understood their School Physical Contact/Physical Restraint Policy.
- 10.2 There may also be occasions where a pupil 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 your line manager.
- 10.3 Staff may legally physically intervene with pupils 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.
- 10.4 Sexual contact, including grooming patterns of behaviour, with pupils is unlawful and unacceptable in all circumstances.

## 11 Behaviour management

- 11.1 Employees should not use any form of degrading or humiliating treatment to punish a pupil. The use of sarcasm, demeaning or insensitive comments towards pupils is completely unacceptable.



- 11.2 Where pupils display difficult or challenging behaviour, employees should follow the school's behaviour policy using strategies appropriate to the circumstance and situation.

## 12 Social contact with pupils

- 12.1 Employees should not establish or seek to establish social contact, via any channels (including social media), with pupils 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 pupils. 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.
- 12.2 The Trust's advice to staff is not to connect to pupils via social media or other communication channels unless this is for professional purposes and that the employee can demonstrate that this is the case.
- 12.3 Our Trust is part of our community and we recognise that, as members of the community, employees will come into contact with pupils outside of the Trust. We expect staff to use their professional judgement in such situations and to report to the Headteacher any contact that they have had with a pupil, outside of school, that they are concerned about or that could be misinterpreted by others.
- 12.4 Employees should read and understand our Acceptable Use policy for guidance on use of social media and other technologies.
- 12.5 Employees must not post disparaging or defamatory statements about our Trust or any school in our Trust, our pupils or their parents or carers; our governors, staff or trustees; suppliers and vendors; and other affiliates and stakeholders. Employees should avoid social media communications that might be misconstrued in a way that could damage our Trust's reputation, even indirectly.
- 12.6 If employees become aware of any content on social media that disparages or reflects poorly on our Trust or any school in our Trust or our stakeholders, they should print out the content and contact the Headteacher or CEO (as appropriate). All staff are responsible for protecting our Trust's reputation.

## 13 Photography, videos and other images/media

Many educational activities involve recording images. These may be undertaken for 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 pupils at or on behalf of the Trust.

## 14 Acceptable use of Technology

Employees should only use the ICT systems and resources (email and phone) for all Trust business or only in line with what is allowed. Employees should read our Acceptable Use policy.

## 15 Personal Phones and Tablets

- 15.1 Employees must not use personal electronic communication devices such as mobile phones or iPads as cameras in school. Any photographs/video footage must be taken using school equipment. Employees must only save images on school IT hardware/computers.
- 15.2 Employees who are in contact with pupils should not use personal mobile phones in school during their directed/paid hours of employment unless there are exceptional circumstances and they have requested and been given explicit permission to do so by the Headteacher.

## 16 Alcohol and Substance Misuse

- 16.1 Employees are expected to arrive at work fit to carry out their job and to be able to perform their duties safely without any limitations due to the use or after effects of alcohol or drugs. In this policy drug use includes the use of controlled drugs, psychoactive (or mind-altering) substances formerly known as "legal highs", and the misuse of prescribed or over-the-counter medication.
- 16.2 Alcohol and drug-related problems may develop for a variety of reasons and over a considerable period of time. Therefore the Trust will seek, where appropriate, to treat these problems in a similar way to other health issues. Support may be provided at this point, in order to aid a full recovery, allowing a return to work/effective performance and the full range of duties.

## 17 Working one to one with pupils

- 17.1 There will be times where an employee is working one to one with a pupil 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 school
  - 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 pupil becomes distressed or angry.

## 18 Curriculum

- 18.1 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 pupils 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.
- 18.2 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.

## 19 Dress and appearance

- 19.1 Working in our Trust employees are role models to our pupils 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 or politically contentious logos or writing, or are ripped or torn. Tattoos which could be considered offensive (e.g. provocative, discriminatory or of political images or slogans) should be covered. Earrings, if worn, must not be obtrusive. A small single nose stud is acceptable. 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's dress or appearance is not acceptable, they will be informed.

## 20 Gifts and hospitality

- 20.1 All employees should read and adhere to the Trust's Financial Procedures, Administration and Control Policy regarding the acceptance of gifts and hospitality.
- 20.2 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 £10.00 should inform the Headteacher who 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.

## 21 Keeping within the law

- 21.1 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.
- 21.2 Employees must ensure that they:
- 21.2.1 Uphold the law at work
- 21.2.2 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.

21.2.3 Write and tell the Headteacher (CEO if they are the Headteacher) immediately if they are 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/or governors 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.

## 22 Conduct outside of work and at work related functions

22.1 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.

22.2 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 affect the Trust's reputation will be addressed under our disciplinary policy.

22.3 We therefore expect employees to make us aware immediately of any such situations that have happened outside of the Trust.

22.4 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.

22.5 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 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).

22.6 We therefore expect employees to make us aware immediately of any such situations that have happened outside of the Trust.

## 23 Agency workers

23.1 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.

- 23.2 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.

## 24 Review

This Code of Conduct is reviewed and amended every two years by the Trust. We will monitor the application and outcomes of this code of conduct to ensure it is working effectively.