



# Staff Code of Conduct and Behaviour

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Prepared by:	Adopted by Board of Directors
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## 1. Statement of intent

All AET policies are written to support our schools and communities. We do this by ensuring they are always in line with our Colleague Values:

Applying these values to everything we do means always acting with integrity, in the interests of others, being honest, open and transparent and putting the safety of our children first.

## 2. Objective, scope and principles

This Code of Conduct is designed to give clear guidance on the standards of behaviour all employees are expected to observe. Employees working in the Aspire Educational Trust (AET) are role models and in a position of influence and must demonstrate behaviour that sets a good example to all pupils within schools. Every employee has an individual responsibility to maintain their reputation and the reputation of their school and the AET, whether inside or outside working hours.

In adopting this policy, the Aspire Educational Trust is committed to working towards creating a working environment in which all employees are treated fairly, with dignity and respect and where unacceptable behaviour will not be tolerated.

This Code of Conduct applies to all employees. This Code of Conduct does not form part of the contract of employment.

Where the word “employee(s)” is used in this document this includes: principals, teaching staff, support staff, casual workers and members of the central trust team) and for any other persons working with our children and/or on our academy premises (for example, agency staff, volunteers, and contracted services).

This Code is based on good practice to ensure a consistent and fair approach. The application of the Code of Conduct will be fair, equitable, objective and will not discriminate either directly or indirectly on the grounds of an employee’s gender, age, disability, gender re-assignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy,

maternity status, race (including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

In addition to this Code of Conduct, all employees engaged to work under “Conditions of Service for School Teachers in England and Wales” have a statutory obligation to adhere to the most recent “Teachers’ Standards” and in relation to this policy, part 2 of the Teachers’ Standards – Personal and Professional Conduct.

### **3. Compliance**

Employees must familiarise themselves and comply with all school and AET policies and procedures.

By reading this policy and clicking the ‘Confirm as read’ green button on Compliance Manager, employees are confirming that they have read, understood and agree to comply with the Code of Conduct. This will create an audit trail.

Employees should be aware that a failure to comply with this Code of Conduct could result in a disciplinary investigation and action including but not limited to dismissal in accordance with the AET Disciplinary Policy.

### **4. Setting an example**

This Code helps all employees to understand what behaviour is and is not acceptable.

Employees must not discriminate, harass or victimise someone because they have or are perceived to have a protected characteristic as defined by the Equality Act 2010 or are associated with someone who has a protected characteristic.

Employees must set good examples of behaviour and demonstrate high standards of conduct in order to encourage our pupils to do the same. Standards expected of employees can be found in Appendix 1.

Employees must avoid using inappropriate or offensive language and must avoid behaving in a way that humiliates pupils, discriminates against or favours pupils. Employees should consider their conduct so that misinterpretations by pupils are minimised. Employees should consider if they have any unconscious bias and should seek to avoid this being evident in their practice and behaviour.

Employees must avoid putting themselves at risk of allegations of abusive or unprofessional conduct.

### **4.Safeguarding pupils**

Employees have a duty to safeguard pupils from physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, verbal abuse and neglect.

The duty to safeguard pupils includes the duty to report concerns about a pupil, or colleague to the school’s Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) for Child Protection.

Employees must make themselves aware of the name of their school's DSO. This information is available on notice boards in the staffroom and around each school.

Employees must take reasonable care of pupils under their supervision with the aim of ensuring their safety and welfare.

Employees must never promise that they will not act on information that they are told by a pupil.

Employees are provided with access to the following documents and must become familiar with these:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection policy
- Whistleblowing procedure
- The DfE Statutory Guidance Document ["Keeping Children Safe in Education"](#)
- The ["Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who work with Children and Young People in Education Settings"](#)

All employees are required to undertake annual Child Protection training and complete any revised updates that may arise during the year.

## **5. Relationships with pupils**

It is paramount for employees to treat pupils with dignity, to build relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times to observe proper boundaries appropriate for their professional position. Employees must have regard for the need to safeguard students' well-being in accordance with statutory provisions and fundamental British values (such as democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs). In addition, employees should ensure that their personal beliefs are not expressed in ways to exploit students' vulnerability.

Employees must not behave in a way that may be perceived as sarcastic, nor should they make jokes at the expense of pupils, embarrass or humiliate pupils, discriminate against or favour pupils.

Employees should make every effort to ensure their own behaviour cannot be brought into question, does not appear to encourage inappropriate boundaries and be aware that infatuations may carry the risk of their words or actions being misinterpreted. Any concerns of this type of staff behaviour, whether low-level will be addressed under the Reporting Low-Level Safeguarding Concerns Policy.

Physical relationships with pupils are strictly forbidden and may lead to a criminal conviction. This may also apply to former pupils and advice must be sought before commencing any such relationship.

Employees should declare any close relationships with pupils outside of school to the principal; this may include mutual membership of social groups, tutoring or family

connections. Employees should not assume that the school is aware of any such connections.

Private tuition of students within the same school that the employee is based might cause a conflict of interest. Any requests for tutoring should be taken to the principal whose decision on the matter will be final. It must also be made clear that any tutoring is a strictly private and external arrangement and unconnected to the school or the AET.

## 6. Professional relationships with colleagues

The Aspire Educational Trust is committed to providing a work environment that is free of harassment, bullying and intimidation, and ensuring that all employees are treated with dignity and respect at work.

As a result, the school has a zero-tolerance approach towards bullying and harassment, and those found to be in breach of these procedures may be subject to disciplinary action, up to, and including, summary dismissal.

Employees must help create a positive working environment and behave in a manner which ensures and promotes acceptable behaviour. Examples of acceptable behaviour and unacceptable behaviour can be found in Appendix 1.

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. For further detail employees should refer in the first instance to the **Grievance Procedure (including Dignity at work)**, to determine the most appropriate course of action.

Where a close personal relationship already exists or develops with another member of staff with the potential to create a conflict of interest, both parties should immediately declare this relationship to their line manager(s) who will, together with them, appraise the risks and identify possible options to avoid any conflict of interest.

## 7. Honesty and integrity

Employees must maintain high standards of honesty and integrity in their work. This includes handling and claiming money and the use of school and AET property and facilities.

Employees must comply with the Bribery Act 2010. A person may be guilty of an offence of bribery under this act if they offer, promise or give financial advantage or other advantage to someone; or if they request, agree or accept, or receive a bribe from another person. If you believe that a person has failed to comply with the Bribery Act, you should refer your concerns to the attention to your Principal or where the concern relates to a Principal or member of the Central Team to the CEO or Deputy CEO. If the concern relates to the CEO or Deputy CEO this should be referred to the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

Employees must not accept gifts or hospitality from suppliers or associates of the school or AET, with the exception of “one off” token gifts from parents eg for special occasions or by way of thank you. A record will be kept of all gifts received.

Employees must make known to the Principal/ line manager and LAC/Trustees all financial and non-financial interests that could bring them into conflict with the school's or AET's interests.

All personal relationships with contractors, or potential contractors should be made known by the employee to the Principal/ line manager and LAC/Trustees with responsibility for the contract.

Where there is a recruitment process, employees must immediately inform their Principal/Line Manager if they have a personal relationship with the applicant inside or outside of work.

Without fear of recrimination, employees can report any impropriety or breach of procedures using the process laid out within the Whistleblowing Policy.

## **8. Conduct outside of work**

The AET recognises an employee's right to a private life. Employees should be mindful however of engaging in conduct that might bring into question their ability to effectively carry out their role. Where there is a question over the appropriateness of behaviour of an employee outside of work and its relevancy of the conduct to the workplace and/or the risk to the school or AET's reputation an investigation will be carried out under either of the following policies:

- Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy and Procedure; and/or
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.
- Reporting Low-Level Safeguarding Concerns Policy

A disciplinary investigation will also be carried out where behaviour outside of the work could be considered a transferable risk to the school and could lead to potential harm of a child.

Behaviour or activities that have the potential to make employees unsuitable for the role they are employed to perform will be dealt with under the Disciplinary Policy. This includes criminal offences that involve violence or possession or use of illegal drugs (subject to the employer's duty of care to employees who may have substance or dependency issues) or sexual misconduct.

Employees must inform the Principal of any potential issue/incident that has occurred outside of work which could give cause for concern in the workplace.

## **9. Employment outside of AET**

Employees may undertake work outside of the AET, either paid or voluntary, provided that it does not conflict with the interests of the AET, not be at a level which may contravene the Working Time Regulations or affect an individual's work performance in the AET. Employees must declare and discuss secondary employment with their Principal/line manager.

## **10. Social Media, e-safety and internet use**

Employees must exercise caution when using information technology and be aware of the risks to themselves and others. Regard should be given to the AET's policies and guidance on both ICT use and Social Media.

The AET recognises an employee's right to a private life. Employees should be mindful however of engaging in social media use that might bring into question their ability to effectively carry out their role. Where there is a question over the appropriateness of social media content and its relevancy of the individual's conduct to the workplace, and/or the risk to the AET's reputation, an investigation will be carried out under the Disciplinary policy.

Employees must not engage in inappropriate use of social network sites which may bring themselves, the AET, its community or school into disrepute. Employees should ensure that they adopt suitably high security settings on any personal profiles they may have.

Employees must not respond to negative comments posted online relating to the AET, the school or its stakeholders but bring this to the attention of the Principal/line manager.

Employees must exercise caution in their use of all social media and any other web-based presence that they may have, including written content, videos or photographs, and views expressed either directly or by "liking" certain pages or posts established by others. This may also include the use of dating websites, where employees could encounter pupils either with their own profile or acting covertly.

Employees must not link themselves with the school or AET on any social network site they use unless with the prior consent of the Principal.

Employees must not use equipment belonging to the AET to access pornography; neither should personal equipment containing pornographic images or links to them be brought into the workplace. Doing so will raise serious concerns about the suitability of the employee to continue to work in schools.

Employees must only contact pupils via school/AET authorised mechanisms. At no time should personal telephone numbers, email addresses or communication routes via personal accounts on social media platforms be used to communicate with pupils (unless under the provisions of section 5).



Employees must report to the Principal any contact by a pupil by an inappropriate route.

Photographs/still images or video footage of pupils should only be taken using school equipment, for purposes authorised by the school. Any such use should always be transparent and only occur in accordance with the AET's Privacy Notice or where parental consent has been given. The resultant files from such recording or taking of photographs must be stored in accordance with the AET's procedures on school equipment.

## **11. Confidentiality**

Employees must not reveal confidential information about pupils or their parents or carers except to those colleagues who have a professional role in relation to the pupil.

Employees are likely at some point to witness actions which need to be confidential to the school. For example, where a pupil is bullied by another pupil (or by another employee), this needs to be reported and dealt with in accordance with the appropriate AET procedure. It must not be discussed outside the school, including with the pupil's parent or carer, nor with colleagues in the school except with a senior member of staff with the appropriate authority to deal with the matter.

## **12. Dress and appearance**

Employees must dress in a manner that is appropriate to a professional role and promotes a professional image.

Employees must not dress in a manner that could be regarded by others as offensive, or revealing.

Employees must not wear clothes with political or other contentious slogans.

If your post requires you to wear protective clothing or use equipment, then you must adhere to the instructions provided by your manager.

## **Appendix 1 – Acceptable/unacceptable behaviour and employee standards**

### **Examples of Acceptable Behaviour and Standards Expected of all employees**

People behave acceptably when they:

- Maintain and role model standards of behaviour in keeping with the interests and standing of the school and Aspire Educational Trust. This includes behaviour outside of working hours and in any form that is visible to the public, including social networking or any other electronic medium.
- Follow all appropriate safeguarding procedures.
- Devote full attention while at work to the duties of their position and in doing so act with responsibility, good judgement and in good faith.
- Carry out any reasonable instructions given by those with authority to do so.
- Afford dignity, trust and respect for everyone and themselves.
- Have awareness of the effects of their behaviour on others and only make reasonable and manageable demands.
- Communicate honestly and openly.
- Provide and are receptive to honest feedback based on evidence.
- Carry out their role consistently with any standards set by their appropriate professional body.
- Challenge discriminatory language and behaviour in an appropriate way.
- Take steps to address any unacceptable behaviour.
- Observe the rules, regulations and instructions adopted by the Aspire Educational Trust.

In addition to the above, the expectations of those employed in management/senior leadership roles are to:

- ensure the standards expected from employees are role-modelled, monitored and managed effectively
- effectively manage all applicable statutory and non-statutory obligations
- appropriately manage all alleged incidents and/or allegations.

## Examples of Unacceptable Behaviour

People behave unacceptably when they:

- Use aggressive, threatening, demeaning or ridiculing language, repeatedly shouting or ignoring people.
- Bring up someone's private life inappropriately.
- Make demeaning comments about a colleague
- Make unreasonable demands on a colleague.
- Criticise people or maliciously gossip about them in their absence.
- Use sexual innuendo
- Make comments or jokes, about distinctive peoples and nationalities
- Make frequent comments about aspects of physical appearance.
- Threaten or imply, without reason, that as a colleague, you will cause the person to lose their job or fail to get a promotion or suffer another form of career difficulty or financial disadvantage.
- Coerce someone to join the harassment/bullying of another person.
- Exclude or marginalise someone or refuse to engage with them appropriately.
- Breach confidentiality.
- Abuse position of power eg member of staff gathering information about their child or a friend's child within the school day.

This list is not exhaustive. It is simply a guide to help individuals consider their own and other behaviours and gain understanding of what behaviours are unacceptable in the workplace.