CODE OF CONDUCT

Version 3.0

Statutory

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Example 1.0	*06.01.2026*	*Page 4 – update to the relevant legislation* *Page 6 – update to the role holder in the Trust*	*Operational*	*CEO*
3.0		Re-write in all areas	Operational	Trust Board

Contents

1 Purpose 4
2 Principles 4
3 Safeguarding, promoting the welfare of children and recognising low-level concerns 4
4 Duty of Care 5
5 Health and Safety 5
6 Honesty and Personal Integrity 6
7 Tackleing Discrimination and Harassment 6
8 Professional Boundaries and Relationships 7
9 Confidentiality and Data Protection 7
10 Physical Contact with Students 8
11 Behaviour Management 8
12 Social Contact with Students 8
13 Photography, Video's and other Images/ Media 9
14 IT Acceptable Use 9
15 Personal Phones, Tablets and Meta Glasses 9
16 Personal Belongings 9
17 Drugs, Alcohol and Substance Misuse 10
18 Dress Code 10
19 Working one-to-one with Students 10
20 Gifts and Hospitality 11
21 Keeping within the Law 11
22 Conduct outside of work and work related functions 12
23 Agency Workers 12
24 Review 12

Code of Conduct

1 Purpose

1.1 This document provides a clear code of professional expectations of all employees employed within Esteem Multi-Academy Trust, including those within their probation period, along with Members, Trustees, Governors, Contractors, Agency Staff, Volunteers, and those on student/work experience placements working on behalf of the Trust. Note: for ease of reading, this framework will refer to all those listed above as employees.

1.2 Throughout this policy "Headteachers" will be referred to, for the purpose of the policy, this will term will be used to include Executive Headteacher and Head's of School.

1.3 This code together with our values and behaviours underpins our culture and clearly sets out the expectations of how we work with each other to achieve our vision and the priorities of our Trust.

1.4 This code is intended to support and encourage employees to achieve and maintain satisfactory standards of conduct and behaviour both inside and outside of the workplace, including online.

1.5 There is an expectation that all employees within the Trust will conduct themselves with the highest standard in order to maintain public trust and confidence and be beyond reproach in the performance of their duties.

1.6 Each employee has a duty to ensure that the appropriate standards of conduct are upheld both by themselves and by colleagues. Please see the Safeguarding policy and/or the Whistleblowing Policy for more information.

1.7 This code should be read in conjunction with the Disciplinary Policy, the Performance & Capability Policy, Teacher's Standards and Keeping Children Safe in Education.

2 Principles

2.1 Employees must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the Trust, and maintain high standards in their own conduct, performance, attendance and punctuality.

2.2 Employees are expected to provide the highest possible standard of service. Where employees are aware of any contraventions of this code, illegality, misconduct, or breach of procedure they should notify their Headteacher either in person or via Confide.

2.3 As recognisable figures in the local community, the behaviour and conduct of employees outside of work, including online, can impact their employment. Therefore, conduct outside of work may be treated as a disciplinary matter if it is considered that it is relevant to employment in line with the disciplinary policy.

3 Safeguarding, promoting the welfare of children and recognising low-level concerns

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.

All employees must be aware of the signs of abuse and neglect and know what action to take if these are identified.

3.3 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 school/ Trust may have acted in a way that:

- Is inconsistent with the 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).

3.4 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; 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 Trust guidance at all times.

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

3.7 As a Trust, we are required to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. This is known as the Prevent duty. To discharge this duty, employees must be alert to changes in a student's behaviour or attitude that could indicate that they are at risk of being radicalised or drawn into extremism or terrorism, including non-violent extremism. Concerns of this nature should be reported in the same way as any other safeguarding concern. Employees must not, in any context, whether inside or outside work, promote or encourage, extremist or terrorist ideologies. This obligation applies equally to online activity, social media, and any other form of communication.

4 Duty of Care

Employees 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 Avoid any conduct that could amount to discrimination or harassment.

4.5 Ensure their actions are warranted, proportionate, safe, and applied equitably; and

4.6 Take responsibility for their own actions and behaviour.

5 Health and Safety

All employees must ensure that they:

5.1 Read and understand the Trust's Health and Safety Policy.

5.2 Comply with health and safety regulations or instructions and use any safety equipment and protective clothing which is supplied to you by the school or Trust.

5.3 Comply with any hygiene requirements.

5.4 Comply with any accident reporting requirements.

5.5 Never act in a way which might cause risk or damage to any other members of the school or Trust's, community, or visitors; and

5.6 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 governors.

6.3 Employees uphold public trust in our Trust and schools, 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' wellbeing, 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; and
- Ensuring that personal beliefs are not expressed in ways which exploit students' vulnerability or might lead them to break the law.

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

7 Tackleing Discrimination and Harassment

7.1 Employees are required to understand the types of discrimination, harassment, and bullying that students and colleagues may be subject to. Employees are required to have read and understood our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, Harassment and Bullying Policy and Sexual Harassment 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 and Esteem Multi-Academy Trust has a duty to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of its employees at work.

7.3 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 questions about someone's sex life.
- Telling sexually offensive jokes/pranks and or sharing pornographic or sexual images.
- Unwanted touching, kissing, or assault.

7.4 To report an incident of sexual harassment or to raise a concern follow the sexual harassment policy.

7.5 Employees must not ignore any form of discrimination or harassment. Employees must positively promote equity, 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 students, which means that the relationship between an employee and a student is not one of equals. It is a specific offence for a person aged 18 or over 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. The Trust would consider any sexual relationship with a formal pupil of any age to be a potential abuse of power and therefore unacceptable.

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 an employee 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 them or to develop an infatuation. If any employee becomes aware of an infatuation, they should discuss it with their Headteacher 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 or line manager for the Central Team 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 Employees may have access to confidential information about students, colleagues or other matters relating to the Trust. This could include personal and sensitive data, for example information about a student's home life. Employees should never use this information to their own personal advantage, or to humiliate, intimidate or embarrass others. Employees should never disclose this information unless this is in the proper circumstances and with the proper authority.

9.2 If an employee is ever in doubt about what information can or cannot be disclosed, they should speak to the Safeguarding or People & Culture team.

9.3 We will comply with the requirements of data protection legislation (including the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), the Data Protection Act 2018 and any implementing laws, regulations and secondary legislation, as amended or updated from time to time). Records will be kept on the employee's personal file in accordance with our Data Protection Policy, and in line with the requirements of data protection legislation. 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 on the Esteem Intranet.

10 Physical Contact with Students

10.1 There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for employees to have physical contact with students. Employees must ensure that they only do so in ways that are appropriate to their professional role and in response to the student's needs at the time. This should be of limited duration and appropriate to the age, stage of development, gender, and background of the student. Employees should always be able to explain why they have made physical contact with a student. Employees should ensure that they have read and understood the school's policy for physical intervention and have received team teach training or similar.

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 in line with the school's procedures.

10.3 Employees may legally physically intervene with students to prevent them from committing a crime, injuring themselves or others, causing damage to property, engaging in behaviour prejudicial to good order and to maintain good order and discipline. Physical force should never be used as a form of punishment.

10.4 Sexual contact, including grooming patterns of behaviour with students 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 student. The use of sarcasm, demeaning or insensitive comments towards students is completely unacceptable.

11.2 Where students 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 Students

12.1 Employees should not establish or seek to establish social contact, via any channels (including social media), with students or their families for the purposes of securing a friendship or to pursue or strengthen a relationship. Employees should use their work provided equipment only for communicating electronically with students. If there are any circumstances in which an employee has had to provide their personal contact details, including phone numbers, email address etc, to any student then they should report this to their Headteacher or DSL.

12.2 The Trust's advice to employees is not to connect to students via social media or other communication channels unless this is for professional purposes, and that the employee can demonstrate that this is the case.

12.3 Our Trust is part of our community, and we recognise that, as members of the community, employees will come into contact with students outside of the school. We expect employees to use their professional judgement in such situations and to report to their Headteacher or DSL any contact that they have had with a student or families outside of school, that they are concerned about or that could be misinterpreted by others. If there is a pre-existing relationship, between an employee and a family, your Headteacher should be informed.

12.4 Employees must not post disparaging or defamatory statements about the school and/or Trust, our students or their parents or carers, our governors or employees, suppliers and vendors, and other affiliates and stakeholders. Employees should avoid social media communications that might be misconstrued in a way that could damage the school and/ or Trust's reputation, even indirectly.

12.5 If you see content in social media that disparages or reflects poorly on a school and/ or the Trust or our stakeholders, you should print out the content and contact your Headteacher. All employees are responsible for protecting our schools and Trust's reputation.

13 Photography, Video's and other Images/ Media

13.1 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 students at or on behalf of the school and/ or Trust.

13.2 The Trusts guidance is not to share public images of students, further information of this guidance can be found in the Publishing Images of Pupils document.

14 IT Acceptable Use

14.1 Employees should only use ICT systems and resources (email and phone) for all school and/ or Trust business or only in line with what is allowed.

14.2 Employees should read and understand our ICT Acceptable Use Policy.

15 Personal Phones, Tablets and Meta Glasses

15.1 Employees must not use personal electronic communication devices such as mobile phones, tablets or meta glasses as cameras or recording device in school or Trust offices. Any photographs/video footage must have the correct consent and be taken using school equipment. Employees must only save images on school IT hardware/computers.

15.2 Employees should not use personal mobile phones or other smart technology with similar functionality to mobile phones (such as smart watches and meta glasses) for personal reasons in front of pupils throughout the school day, including during lessons, times between lessons, breaktimes and lunchtimes. This does not apply where an exception has been agreed in advance with the Headteacher, including where this is necessary as a reasonable adjustment for a disability, to manage a medical condition, or due to other individual circumstances.

15.3 During the school day, personal mobile phones, similar and smart/ AI devices should be stored securely and kept out of sight.

15.4 Personal mobile phones should only be used during authorised breaks and outside of the school day in areas of the school where pupils are not present, unless explicitly approved by the Headteacher.

15.5 Meta glasses are not permitted on any school site including Trust offices.

15.6 Where Employees need to carry out professional tasks during the school day, such as issuing homework, recording rewards or sanctions, or completing multi factor authentication, school equipment should be used. A personal mobile phone or similar device may only be used for such purposes where school equipment is not available, or it is not practicable to use it and permission has been requested from your Headteacher in advance. This may include maintaining appropriate professional contact during school trips, activities and events.

15.7 Employees should read and understand our Mobile Phone Policy.

16 Personal Belongings

16.1 Employees are expected to maintain responsibility for their personal belongings at all times while on school and Trust premises or taking part in any school activities, such as trips. The school and/ or Trust is not liable for any loss, theft, or damage to personal property. Employees should ensure that their belongings are stored securely and are not disruptive to the workplace environment and not left in places where they might be vulnerable. Employees are strongly advised against bringing items of significant or sentimental value into schools.

16.2 Any electrical items brought into Trust locations should meet all health and safety requirements and it is the employee's responsibility to ensure this.

16.3 Should employees bring any items into the school, for purposes of supporting teaching and learning or to assist them in undertaking their duties, they should ensure the items are not hazardous and dangerous. Employees should ensure they have approval from their Headteacher, where items would not be considered everyday resources.

16.4 Respect for the personal property of others is paramount, and any interference with or damage to another person's belongings may result in disciplinary action.

17 Drugs, Alcohol and Substance Misuse

17.1 It is unacceptable to report to work under the influence of controlled drugs and/ or alcohol. If an employee is thought to be under the influence of controlled drugs and/ or alcohol this should be reported to the People & Culture team.

17.2.1 Employees are expected to arrive at work fit to carry out their job and be able to perform their duties safely without any limitations due to the use of or aftereffects of alcohol or drugs. For the Code of Conduct "use" includes the controlled drugs, psychoactive (or mind-altering) substances formally know as "legal-highs", and the misuse of proscribed over-the-counter medication.

17.3 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.

17.4 If an employee is required to take medication prescribed to them by a GP or medical professional, which may have side effects that may affect them at work. This must be reported immediately to the Headteacher and/ or the School Business Manager and advice must be taken from the People & Culture team, including advice from Occupational Health and ensuring a risk assessment has been considered, were necessary.

18 Dress Code

18.1 Employees should dress in a professional and appropriate manner, in order to set examples to our students.

18.2 Clothing should not be overly revealing or offensive and an employee lanyard must be worn at all times.

18.3 Glasses may be prone to damage during work time. The Trust or individual school is not liable for any damage to personal property or clothing. The Westfield scheme can support with partial costs towards replacement items such as glasses.

18.4 Each school will have their own specific details regarding dress code, that is appropriate for the nuances of their setting, which must be adhered to.

19 Working one-to-one with Students

19.1 There will be times where an employee is working one-to-one with a student and this is acceptable. Employees should work in conjunction with the Loan Working Policy.

19.2 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 one-to-one work being in a secluded area
- Ensure that the door to the room is open or that there is visual access into the room.
- Inform a colleague or line manager beforehand; and
- Report to your line manager if the student becomes distressed or angry.

20 Gifts and Hospitality

20.1 For many of our employees there will be a limited opportunity to accept gifts and hospitality, but all employees must be aware that it is not acceptable for employees to accept bribes. Therefore, any gift, promotional offer or hospitality, intended either for the employee or for the school that exceeds a nominal value of £15.00 must be declared to the Headteacher 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.

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 employees at certain times throughout the academic year. This code of conduct is not designed to stop that practice. Employees may accept gifts from students and their parents or carers provided that they meet this definition. Any employees receiving a gift with a value of greater than £15.00 should inform the Headteacher. The Headteacher will then decide whether the gift can be accepted. Employees 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.

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

21 Keeping within the Law

21.1 Employees 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:

- Uphold the law at work.
- Never commit a crime away from work which could damage public confidence in them or the school and/ or Trust, or which makes them unsuitable for the work they do. This includes, for example:
    1. Submitting false or fraudulent claims to public bodies (for example, income support, housing, or other benefit claims).
    2. Breaching copyright on computer software or published documents.
    3. Sexual offences which will render them unfit to work with children or vulnerable adults; and

4. Crimes of dishonesty which render them unfit to hold a position of trust.

- 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 or become subject to any DBS barring decision whilst they are employed at the Trust in any capacity (this includes outside of their working hours). The Headteacher and/or CEO will then need to consider whether this charge or conviction damages public confidence in the school and/ or Trust or makes the employee unsuitable to carry out their duties.

22 Conduct outside of work and 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 Employees must not engage in conduct outside work which could seriously damage the reputation and standing of the school and/ or 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 school or Trust or affect the school or Trust's reputation will be addressed under our disciplinary procedure.

a. We therefore expect employees to make us aware immediately of any such situations that have happened outside of the school and specifically if this may affect their suitability to work with children.

b. Employees are required to demonstrate responsible behaviour at work-related functions and work-related social events that take place outside of normal work hours and to act in a way that will not have a detrimental effect on our reputation.

c. Employees 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).

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.

24 Review

24.1 This code of conduct is reviewed and amended every 2 years by the Trust.