Colleague code of conduct

Elm Tree Primary Academy

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Primary Academy

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1. Aims, scope and principles

This policy aims to set and maintain standards of conduct that we expect all staff to follow.

By creating this policy, we aim to ensure our school is an environment where everyone is safe, happy and treated with respect.

Many of the principles in this code of conduct are based on the Teachers' Standards

School colleagues have an influential position in the school and will act as role models for pupils by consistently demonstrating high standards.

We expect that all teachers will act in accordance with the personal and professional behaviours set out in the Teachers' Standards.

We expect all support staff, governors and volunteers to also act with personal and professional integrity, respecting the safety and wellbeing of others.

At Elm Tree we adopt a neuroaffirming approach which accepts, validates and appreciates diversity amongst our pupils and colleagues. This includes accepting and validating all forms of communication, maintaining dignity and respect at all times and striving to understand the individual needs and preference of everyone in our community. It is our duty to ensure our pupils feel safe and secure in school and that trusting, healthy relationships promote the best interest of each child.

Failure to follow the code of conduct may result in disciplinary action being taken, as set out in our staff disciplinary procedures.

Please note that this code of conduct is not exhaustive. If situations arise that are not covered by this code, staff will use their professional judgement and act in the best interests of the school and its pupils.

The policy should be read in conjunction with Victoria Academies Trust Staff Code of Conduct.

2. Legislation and guidance

In line with the statutory safeguarding guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education, we should have a staff code of conduct, which should (among other things) cover low-level concerns, allegations against staff and whistle-blowing, as well as acceptable use of technologies (including the use of mobile devices), staff/pupil relationships and communications, including the use of social media.

3. General obligations

Colleagues set an example to pupils. They will:

- Maintain high standards in their attendance and punctuality
- Never use inappropriate or offensive language in school
- Treat pupils and others with dignity and respect
- Show tolerance and respect for the rights of others
- Not undermine fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs
- Not express personal beliefs in a way that exploits pupils' vulnerability or might lead them to break the law
- Understand the statutory frameworks they must act within
- Adhere to the Teachers' Standards

4. Safeguarding

Colleagues have a duty to safeguard pupils from harm, and to report any concerns they have. This includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse, and neglect.

Colleagues will familiarise themselves with our child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures, and the Prevent duty, and ensure they are aware of the processes to follow if they have concerns about a child.

Our child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures are available in the shared area and on the website. New colleagues will also be given copies on arrival.

4.1 Allegations that may meet the harm threshold

This section applies to all cases in which it is alleged that anyone working in the school, including a supply teacher, volunteer or contractor, has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child, and/or
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, and/or
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children, and/or
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children – this includes behaviour taking place inside or outside of school

We will deal with any such allegation quickly and in a fair and consistent way that provides effective child protection while also supporting the individual who is the subject of the allegation.

A 'case manager' will lead any investigation. This may be the headteacher, deputy headteacher, or the chair of the academy council or a member of the Executive Leadership Team where the headteacher is the subject of the allegation.

4.2 Low-level concerns about members of Colleagues

A low-level concern is behaviour towards a child by a colleagues that does not meet the harm threshold, but is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, and may be as simple as causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt'. For example, this may include:

- Being over-friendly with children
- Having favourites
- Taking photographs of children on a personal device
- Engaging in 1-to-1 activities where they can't easily be seen
- Humiliating pupils
- **Inappropriate physical interaction**
- **Inappropriate verbal interaction**
- **Failure to supervise children effectively**
- **Failure to ensure health and safety of pupils**

Low-level concerns can include inappropriate conduct inside and outside of work.

All colleagues should share any low-level concerns they have using the reporting procedures set out in our child protection and safeguarding policy. We also encourage colleagues to self-refer if they find themselves in a situation that could be misinterpreted. If colleagues are not sure whether behaviour would be deemed a low-level concern, we encourage colleagues to report it.

All reports will be handled in a responsive, sensitive and proportionate way.

Unprofessional behaviour will be addressed, and the colleague supported to correct it, at an early stage.

This creates and embeds a culture of openness, trust and transparency in which our school values and expected behaviour are constantly lived, monitored and reinforced by all colleagues, while minimising the risk of abuse.

Reporting and responding to low-level concerns is covered in more detail in our child protection and safeguarding policy. This is available on the shared area and on the website.

Our procedures for dealing with allegations will be applied with common sense and judgement.

4.3 Whistle-blowing

Whistle-blowing reports wrongdoing that it is "in the public interest". Examples linked to safeguarding include:

- Pupils' or colleagues' health and safety being put in danger
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation or statutory requirement
- Attempts to cover up the above, or any other wrongdoing in the public interest

Colleagues are encouraged to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible. Their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated, and their confidentiality will be respected. The school aims to encourage openness and will support whistleblowers who raise genuine concerns under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

Colleagues should consider the examples above when deciding whether their concern is of a whistle-blowing nature. Consider whether the incident(s) was illegal, breached statutory or school procedures, put people in danger or was an attempt to cover any such activity up.

Colleagues should report their concern to the head teacher or a member of the senior leadership team. If the concern is about the the headteacher or it is believed they may be involved in the wrongdoing in some way, the staff member should report their concern to a **member of the Executive Leadership Team.**

Concerns should be made in writing wherever possible. They should include names of those committing wrongdoing, dates, places and as much evidence and context as possible. Colleagues raising a concern should also include details of any personal interest in the matter. The school will investigate any complaints in a timely, respectful and confidential manner.

For our the detailed whistle-blowing process, please refer to **our Victoria Academies Trust whistle-blowing policy.**

5. Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is any unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature that has a purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. It also includes treating someone less favourably because they've submitted or refused to submit to unwanted conduct of a sexual nature in the past, or harassment related to sex or gender reassignment. When this behaviour is unwanted, it includes (but isn't limited to):

- Unwanted physical conduct or 'horseplay' including touching, pinching, pushing and grabbing
- Continued suggestions for sexual activity after it has been made clear that such suggestions are unwelcome
- Sending or displaying material that is pornographic, or that some people might find offensive
- Unwelcome sexual advances or suggestive behaviour (which the harasser may perceive as harmless)
- Offensive emails, text messages or social media content
- Comments and jokes of a sexual nature
- Sexually suggestive looks and staring
- Sexual propositions and advances
- Promising things in return for sexual favours
- Physical contact such as massaging, hugging or kissing
- Sexual contact on social media

Colleagues will help create a positive environment that works to prevent sexual harassment. This includes calling out sexual harassment that they witness. All witnesses will be provided with appropriate support and will be protected from victimisation.

If a colleagues is concerned at any point about incidents of sexual harassment (either directed at them or someone else), they should report their concern to the headteacher. If the concern is about the headteacher, or it is believed they may be involved in the wrongdoing in some way, the colleague should report their concern to a member of **the Executive Leadership Team**. The school will investigate any complaints in a timely, respectful and confidential manner.

All colleagues will receive training on recognising and responding to incidents of sexual harassment. The school will monitor the treatment and outcomes of any complaints of sexual harassment or victimisation received to make sure that they are properly investigated and resolved, those who report or act as witnesses are not victimised, repeat offenders are dealt with appropriately, cultural clashes are identified and resolved and workforce training is targeted where needed.

6. Adult-pupil relationships

Colleagues will observe proper boundaries with pupils that are appropriate to their professional position. They will act in a fair and transparent way that would not lead anyone to reasonably assume they are not doing so.

If colleagues and pupils must spend time on a 1-to-1 basis, colleagues will make sure that:

- This takes place in a public place that others can access
- Others can see into the room
- A colleague or line manager knows this is taking place
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Colleagues should avoid contact with pupils outside of school hours if possible.

Personal contact details should not be exchanged between colleagues and pupils. This includes social media profiles.

While we are aware many pupils and their parents/carers may wish to give gifts to colleagues , e.g. at the end of the school year, gifts from colleagues to pupils are not acceptable.

If a colleagues is concerned at any point that an interaction between themselves and a pupil may be misinterpreted, or if a colleagues is concerned at any point about a fellow colleagues member and a pupil, this should be reported in line with the procedures set out in our child protection and safeguarding policy.

7. Communication and social media

Colleague social media profiles should not be available to pupils. If they have a personal profile on social media sites, they should not use their full name, as pupils may be able to find them. Colleagues should consider using a first and middle name instead, and set public profiles to private.

Colleagues should not attempt to contact pupils or their parents/carers via social media, or any other means outside school, in order to develop any sort of relationship. They will not make any efforts to find pupils' or parents/carers' social media profiles.

Colleagues will ensure that they do not post any images online that identify children who are pupils at the school without their consent.

Colleagues should be aware of the school's online safety policy.

8. Acceptable use of technology

Colleagues will not use technology in school or belonging to the school to view material that is illegal, inappropriate or likely to be deemed offensive. This includes, but is not limited to, sending obscene emails, gambling and viewing pornography or other inappropriate content.

Colleagues will not use personal mobile phones and laptops, or school equipment for personal use, in school hours or in front of pupils. Any personal use must be in the employee's own time (before or after working hours or during unpaid lunch breaks). All personal use must comply with the standards and restrictions set out in this Code. They will also not use personal mobile phones or cameras to take pictures of pupils.

Photographs/stills or video footage of students should only be taken using school equipment for purposes authorised by the school. Any such use should always be transparent and only occur where parental consent has been given. The resultant files from such recording or taking of photographs must be retained and destroyed in accordance with the schools Record Management Policy and Disposal Schedules

We have the right to monitor emails and internet use on the school IT system.

9. Confidentiality

In the course of their role, colleagues are often privy to sensitive and confidential information about the school, colleagues, pupils and their parents/carers.

This information should never be:

- Disclosed to anyone unless required by law or with consent from the relevant party or parties
- Used to humiliate, embarrass or blackmail others
- Used for a purpose other than what it was collected and intended for

This does not overrule a colleagues duty to report child protection concerns to the appropriate channel where colleagues believe a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm, as detailed further in our child protection and safeguarding policy.

10. Honesty and integrity

Colleagues should maintain high standards of honesty and integrity in their role. This includes when dealing with pupils, handling money, claiming expenses and using school property and facilities.

Gifts from suppliers or associates of the school must be declared to the Headteacher with the exception of "one off" token gifts from students or parents. Personal gifts from individual members of staff or volunteers to students are inappropriate and could be misinterpreted and may lead to disciplinary action. A record will be kept of all gifts received.

Colleagues will ensure that all information given to the school is correct. This should include:

- Background information (including any past or current investigations/cautions related to conduct outside of school)
- Qualifications
- Professional experience

Where there are any updates to the information provided to the school, the colleague will advise the school as such as soon as reasonably practicable. Consideration will then be given to the nature and circumstances of the matter and whether this may have an impact on the member of Colleagues 's employment.

11. Dress code

All colleagues must dress in a manner that is appropriate to a professional role and promoting a professional image.

Colleagues should dress in a manner that is appropriate to their role. Remember that they are role models for pupils, and that their dress and appearance should reflect this, not dress in a way that would cause embarrassment to pupils, parents, colleagues or other stakeholders

Colleagues should dress in a manner that is absent from political or other contentious slogans.

Clothing must be safe and appropriate to the need of the children, e,g, no dangling jewelry, no open toed shoes, no high heels

We advise long hair to be tied back

12. Conduct outside of work

Colleagues will not act in a way that would bring the school, or the teaching profession, into disrepute. This covers conduct including but not limited to relevant criminal offences, such as violence or sexual misconduct,

as well as negative comments about the school on social media, any conduct of this nature could lead to disciplinary action.

Colleagues must immediately inform the Headteacher if, during the course of their employment, they are subject to any allegations of a criminal nature, any arrests or criminal proceedings, convictions or cautions in order that a risk assessment can be undertaken.

Colleagues may undertake work outside school, either paid or voluntary, provided that it does not conflict with the interests of the school. It should not contravene the working time regulations or affect an individual's work performance in the school. Staff should seek advice from the Headteacher when considering work outside the school

13. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed every two years but can be revised as needed. It will be approved by the Academy Council

Our Academy Council will ensure this code of conduct is implemented effectively, and will ensure appropriate action is taken in a timely manner to safeguard children and deal with any concerns.

14. Links with other policies

This policy links with our policies on:

- Disciplinary procedures, which will be used if colleagues breach this code of conduct. It also sets out examples of what we will deem as misconduct and gross misconduct
- Grievance procedures
- Child protection and safeguarding
- Relationships and regulation policy
- Online safety
- Whistle-blowing
- Trust Code of Conduct
- Disciplinary Policy