

POLICY: Professional Conduct & Dress Code	REF: ESD001 Employment & Staff Development	VERSION: 1
APPROVAL BODY:	DATE: March 2017	REVIEW DATE: March 2020
LEAD PERSON:		
VERSION	REVIEWER/APPROVAL	REVIEW NOTES
1. 22/03/2017	Multi Academy Trust Board	New Policy
2.		

Professional Conduct Policy

Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear framework for all employees within the Activate Learning Education Trust, whether directly employed or otherwise on the expected standards of personal behaviour and conduct at work.

All employees are ambassadors for the Trust and are responsible for upholding its reputation and brand identity. When staff members come into contact with people during the course of their duties, their conduct and personal behaviour significantly influences the impression they have of the trust and so shapes its reputation.

The Trust strives to maintain a professional, supportive and harmonious work environment for its staff and a learning environment for its students in which honesty, integrity and respect for all members of the Trust community is demonstrated and reflected in the personal behaviour and standards of conduct by all.

Workplace Health and Safety

The Trust will ensure so far as is reasonably practicable you are kept safe and well whilst you are at work and expects all members of staff to work and go about their daily business in a safe and professional manner. The Trust will provide all relevant training, information and equipment for your role and make available any relevant health and safety procedures.

We expect you to work responsibly and safely, use the right equipment and follow any health and safety procedures that relate to your role. If you are unsure about how to work safely or the procedures for your area of work, your line manager will provide you with guidance. If you feel that there are

unsafe working practices that could be dangerous to you or your colleagues or practices which we could improve, please let your manager or the Health and Safety Adviser know immediately.

Safeguarding

The Trust takes its safeguarding responsibilities very seriously. Safeguarding is the responsibility of all members of our community and you should take time to read our Safeguarding Policy and be clear on your responsibilities therein. All employees are required to complete Safeguarding training and to attend regular updates.

Commencement of employment is, along with other criteria, subject to the completion of Safeguarding training and failure to do so could result in a withdrawal of an employment offer or potential disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal. Every member of the Trust community has a responsibility and duty to report any Safeguarding concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Confidentiality, Copyright, Inventions and Patents

Your contract of employment details your responsibilities in respect of these areas. Please ensure you fully understand your responsibilities.

Conflicts of Interest

You must not put yourself in a position, either inside or outside work, where your personal interests conflict or may be perceived to conflict with the Trust's interests. Do not do anything that might mean you stop being independent or objective, or that could lead to our students, customers, suppliers or fellow colleagues losing confidence in our integrity.

It is the policy of the Trust that spouses/ partners will not be employed where there will be a line management relationship between them. If a relationship develops this must be reported to your manager and the Group Director of Human Resources & Organisational Development, so that any potential conflict of interest can be identified and managed.

All appointment decisions must be based upon merit. Employees must not be involved in an appointment where they are related to an applicant, or have a close personal relationship with him/ her.

If you are involved in any activity or relationship that could lead to a conflict of interest, you must enter this on the Register of Interests and tell your manager. This register is held in the Clerk to the Corporation's Office.

Customers, Gifts and Hospitality

The Trust promotes the highest professional standards and expects all members of the Trust community to act in the same manner. Always be professional, honest and fair with customers, students, suppliers and other colleagues. Never take advantage of another person or organisation by manipulating or hiding information, abusive privileged information or misrepresenting the facts.

You must not allow yourself to be put in a position where a gift or hospitality could be seen to influence a business decision:

- Make sure you get the right approval before you either offer or accept gifts or hospitality.

- Register any gifts or hospitality that are offered to you on the Gifts and Hospitality Register. This register is held in the Clerk to the Corporation's Office.
- Whether or not you actually accept them, the only exception is for very low-cost items, such as t-shirts, pens, business diaries and calendars, or a very occasional business lunch.

There are occasions when a student and/ or parent wish to pass a token of appreciation to staff. This is acceptable. However, it is unacceptable to receive gifts on a regular basis or of any significant value. Similarly it is inadvisable to give personal gifts to students. This could be misinterpreted as a gesture either to bribe or to single out a student. Rewards should only be given as part of any recognised academy reward schemes that are in place at the time. Prizes for quizzes, etc. in a classroom context are acceptable.

Discrimination and Harassment

The Trust has a firm commitment to equality and diversity and will not tolerate harassment or bullying of one member of its community by another. The purpose of this policy is to assist in developing a working environment in which harassment and bullying are known to be unacceptable and where individuals have the confidence to complain about harassment and bullying, should it arise, in the knowledge that their concerns will be dealt with appropriately and fairly. The policy outlines procedures to be followed if a member of staff feels they are being harassed or bullied in the course of their work or as a result of their employment by the Trust.

The Trust welcomes diversity and respects the right of all individuals to work and study in an environment which is free from harassment. All employees, students and visitors are entitled to pursue their legitimate business at a Trust site without exposure to unsolicited contact, comment or gesture which may cause offence or distress.

Managers have an obligation to tackle issues of poor performance and therefore harassment and bullying is to be distinguished from a manager legitimately and appropriately invoking approved performance management or disciplinary procedures in accordance with Trust policies.

Improper Payments and Bribes

In order that both the Trust and you comply with the anti-bribery laws you must not offer, promise or give financial or other advantage or bribe linked to any improper performance of your role, function or activity. You must not offer, promise or give a financial or other advantage or bribe to any third party with the intention to influence a business decision, obtain an advantage in the conduct of business, to keep business or win new business. If you are not sure whether a payment is allowed, please give full details to your manager.

False Statements

Employees must not make any false statement, e.g. on expenses claims, timesheets/ schedules and overtime forms. Making false statements may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal and/ or prosecution.

Misuse of Drugs and Alcohol

You must not be under the influence of alcohol, non-medically prescribed drugs or substances during your working time, or carry any of these items. If any employee is suspected of dealing drugs or substances during working hours the police will be informed immediately. Misuse of drugs, alcohol and substances may lead to disciplinary action.

Abuses of Email/ Internet and Social Media Usage

Whilst we encourage the use of technology to improve our business and administrative systems and to aid communications, unauthorised and/ or inappropriate use of any Trust site's email and intranet system or inappropriate postings on social media networks during the course of employment may lead to disciplinary action.

Do not connect with students on Social media unless using a academy approved account.

Personal Behaviour

The Trust expects the highest standards of personal and professional conduct from its workforce and in return will treat all employees with professionalism, respect and integrity. We expect employees to act with self-control and tolerance, treating students, suppliers and colleagues with dignity, respect and courtesy. Employees are expected to behave in a manner which does not discredit the organisation or undermine student confidence and promotes our values. The use of inappropriate language or behaviour in any dealings with students and colleagues will not be tolerated.

As a professional community, the Trust recognises that employees will, from time to time, wish to meet and engage socially as a group or team outside of the workplace. The same models of behaviour are expected wherever individuals and groups are clearly identifiable as employees of the Trust. Behaviour outside of the workplace which vicariously brings the organisation into disrepute will be considered as a disciplinary matter.

Dress and Appearance

The Trust expects all employees to present a 'professional' image at all times. This can be affected by a number of factors, including standards of dress and personal appearance. Being well presented is part of being professional, inappropriate dress or an unkempt appearance gives an impression of inefficiency, can cause offence and may be interpreted as disrespectful by members of the public, visitors and students.

Our dress code means that men and women do not necessarily have to wear formal business suits. However, whilst this code acknowledges that some staff may prefer to dress less formally they are reminded that as representatives of an educational service they need to present a smart image at all times. Whilst many items of 'fashion' clothing may be perfectly acceptable in a social or informal setting, they are not considered to promote a professional image or to be appropriate for a place of business. Similarly, body piercings and body art are forms of self-expression and matters of personal choice. In the professional work environment excessive facial or other visible piercings are not acceptable; body art, tattoos, etc. should be kept covered as far as possible and certainly where this contains statements or depicts images likely to cause offence.

All employees, contractors and visitors are required to wear and display their lanyard during working hours. If work or corporate clothing or uniform is provided, e.g. overalls or branded clothing, this must be worn as confirmed by the line manager. Failure to wear uniform or other provided clothing may result in disciplinary action.

Religious and Other Considerations

The Trust values and welcomes diversity in its workforce and will take account of ethnic and religious dress requirements with sensitivity by ensuring that employees are free to observe them where this does not compromise health and safety or security requirements.

Professional Boundaries and Accountability

Governors, parents and other stakeholders have legitimate expectations about the nature of staff professional involvement in the lives of students. When individuals accept a role that involves working with young people, students and vulnerable adults, they need to understand and acknowledge the responsibilities and trust inherent in that role.

All employees of the Trust must be aware and recognise the importance of maintaining appropriate professional boundaries when dealing with students. All employees whatever their position, roles or responsibilities have a crucial role to play in shaping the lives of young people, students and vulnerable adults and must take responsibility for recognising when they are at risk of crossing professional boundaries and addressing the issue immediately.

You should always act, and be seen to act, in the student's best interests and ensure that your actions would not lead any reasonable person to question your motivation and intentions.

Our values and learning philosophy mean that all employees are expected to provide supportive pastoral care to students whilst being sensitive to issues surrounding professional boundaries. Failure to understand or adhere to professional boundaries can lead to career threatening allegations. Even an unfounded allegation of professional misconduct could be permanently damaging to any member of staff, to their family and to the reputation of the Trust.

Student/ Staff Relationships

Occasionally, a young person/ student may develop an infatuation with a member of staff who works with them. All employees should deal with these situations sensitively and appropriately to maintain the dignity and safety of all concerned. They should remain aware, however, that such infatuations carry a high risk of words or actions being misinterpreted and should therefore make every effort to ensure that their own behaviour is above reproach.

The Trust does not permit any employee or student to initiate any form of intimate relationship with each other. This includes any form of affection, intimacy or sexual action, which could be interpreted by students or another member of staff, as inappropriate.

For this reason Trust employees should not establish or seek to establish social contact with students for the purpose of securing a friendship or to pursue or strengthen a relationship. Even if a young person seeks to establish social contact, or if this occurs coincidentally, you should exercise your professional judgement in making a response and be aware that such social contact could be

misconstrued. You should not issue your personal details to students such as home or mobile phone number and personal email addresses, or allow acceptance onto student's personal networking sites.

You should report and record any situation which you feel might compromise the Trust or your own professional standing.

Criminal Convictions

If an employee is convicted of a criminal offence whilst employed by the Trust they must inform the Head/Principal. Full details relating to the conviction must be sent in a sealed envelope marked private and confidential. The definition of 'conviction' is any conviction, caution and/ or bind-over including those regarded as 'spent'.

The relevance of the conviction will be considered using the same criteria as outlined in the Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy. The Group Director of HR & Organisational Development will decide if the conviction has any relevance to the member of staff's post and where the conviction bears no relevance to their role at the Trust no further action will be taken.

The employee's line manager will only be informed if there is a specific reason for doing so, and the conviction is considered directly connected with their job. In these circumstances the employee will be invited to discuss the reasons behind this decision with the Head/Principal.

Speaking Up

The Trust promotes a culture of high ethical standards and it is responsibility of every member of the Trust community to promote and uphold our code of conduct. If you have real concerns that another employee might be acting fraudulently or dishonestly, tell your manager, an HR team member or a senior manager straight away. Alternatively you can use the Trust's Whistleblowing Policy.

We have tried to cover everything we can. But if you find yourself in a situation that does not seem to be covered and you are not sure what to do, speak to your line manager for advice. If for some reason you cannot speak to your manager, please contact Group HR Services.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Trust and Head/Principal will monitor the operation and effectiveness of the Professional Conduct Policy.

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