



OWLS Academy Trust

Staff Code of Conduct Policy

Adopted by The OWLS Academy Trust on	
Next Review Due	

All schools within the OWLS Academy Trust expect their pupils to receive the highest possible quality of teaching and learning within a positive and respectful environment. Employees of the Trust should understand that their own behaviour, and the manner in which they conduct themselves with their colleagues, pupils, parents/carers and other stakeholders, sets a good example.

The Trust recognises that employees based at all schools within the Trust understand the need to act appropriately and treat each other with dignity and respect; however we consider it important to clarify the expected standards.

Failure to comply with the requirements of this document, and with the associated school and Trust policies, may result in disciplinary action or, if warranted, legal action being taken against the employee.

This document applies to all staff employed by the OWLS Academy Trust. It does not apply to:

- Peripatetic staff who are centrally employed by the LA;
- School catering staff employed by the School Food Support Service;
- Employees of external contractors;
- Any Leicestershire County Council employees

These workers are governed by their employment contracts and any relevant laws pertaining to their activities within the school, for example, the Data Protection Act (1998).



Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to statutory legislation including, but not limited to:

- The Data Protection Act (1998);
- The Education Act (2002);
- The Children Act (1989); and
- The Working Time Regulations (1998) (as amended)

This policy also has due regard to statutory guidance including, but not limited to:

- DfE “Keeping Children Safe in Education” (2016)
- DfE “ Working Together to Safeguard Children” (2015)



Related School/Trust Policies

This Code of Conduct has due regard to the following school / trust policies and procedures:

- Child Protection / Safeguarding policies;
- Health and Safety Policy;
- Data Protection Policy;
- Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy;
- Equal Opportunities Policy;
- Intimate Care Policy;
- Leave of Absence Policy;
- Whistleblowing Policy;

- Use of Reasonable Force Policy;
- E-safety Policy
- Acceptable Use Agreement;
- Photography at School Events Policy.

Safeguarding Pupils

All staff members have a responsibility to safeguard pupils and protect their welfare. They also have a responsibility to ensure that they provide a learning environment in which pupils feel safe, secure and respected.

In order to effectively safeguard pupils, staff members are required to follow the procedures outlined in this Code of Conduct and in the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, ensuring that they do not act in a way that may put pupils at risk of harm or lead others to question their actions.

All staff members must be prepared to identify pupils who may be subject to, or at risk of, abuse and neglect, following the necessary reporting and referral procedures.

Any staff member who has concerns about a colleague's actions or intent that may lead to a pupil being put at risk of harm must report this to the head teacher in accordance with reporting and referral procedures.

Appearance and Dress

All staff members are expected to:

- Ensure that their appearance is clean and neat when at work or representing their school or the Trust;
- 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 could cause embarrassment to pupils, parents/carers, colleagues or other stakeholders;
- Cover any tattoos or body art whilst in school. Small earrings are acceptable, but all other body piercings must be removed.

Attendance

Staff members are expected to:

- Attend work in accordance with their contract of employment and associated terms and conditions in relation to hours, days of work and holidays;
- Make routine medical and dental appointments outside of their working hours or during holidays, where possible;
- Refer to the Leave of Absence Policy if they need time off for any reason other than personal illness;
- Follow their school's absence reporting procedure when they are absent from work due to illness or injury.

Professional Behaviour and Conduct

All staff members are expected to treat colleagues, pupils, parents/carers and external contacts with dignity and respect.

The Academy Trust and all constituent schools will not tolerate:

- The use of foul and abusive language;
- Discrimination, bullying, harassment or intimidation, including physical, sexual and verbal abuse.

Staff members must not misuse or misrepresent their position, qualifications or experience or bring the school into disrepute. They must inform the head teacher (or in the case of the head teacher, the Chair of Governors) if they are subject to a criminal conviction, caution, ban, police enquiry, investigation or pending prosecution.



Conduct Outside of Work

Staff may undertake work outside school, either paid or voluntary, provided that it does not conflict with the interests of the school. The nature of the work cannot be seen to bring the school or the Trust into disrepute, nor be at a level which may contravene the working time regulations or affect an individual's work performance.

Staff will not engage in outside work or activity which could seriously damage the reputation and standing of the school, or their own reputation, or the reputation of other members of the school community. In particular, criminal offences that involve violence, possession or use of illegal drugs or sexual misconduct are unacceptable.

Staff should not engage in inappropriate use of social network sites which may bring themselves, the school, school community or employer into disrepute.



Smoking, Alcohol and Other Substances

Staff are not permitted to smoke or "Vape" on school premises or otherwise within sight of any pupils. This includes whilst working with or supervising pupils off-site, such as when on educational visits and trips.

The taking of illegal drugs or alcohol during working hours is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Staff members must never attend work under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.

If alcohol or drug usage impacts on an employee's performance, the school has the right to discuss the matter with the employee and take appropriate action in accordance with the Disciplinary Policy, including referral to the police.



Health and Safety

All members of staff must:

- Be familiar with and adhere to their school's Health and Safety Policy, and ensure that they take every action to keep themselves and everyone in the school environment safe and well;
- Comply with health and safety regulations and use any safety equipment and protective clothing which is supplied to them;
- Comply with hygiene requirements;
- Comply with accident reporting requirements;
- Inform the head teacher of any paid work which is undertaken elsewhere, for compliance with the Working Time Regulations (1998) (as amended).



Declaration of Interests

All employees are required to declare their interests, both personal and financial, where a group or organisation they are affiliated with could be considered to be in conflict with the ethos of the school / Trust.

Financial Conflict of Interests

A financial conflict of interest is one where there is, or appears to be, opportunity for personal financial gain, financial gain for close relatives or friends, or where it may be reasonable for a third party to take the view that financial benefits may affect an individual's actions.

The term "financial interest" means anything of monetary value, including:

- Payments for services
- Equity interests
- Intellectual property rights
- Hospitality or gifts

Examples of financial interests that must be declared include, but are not limited to, equity interests in services considered for use by the school.

Non-Financial Conflict of Interests

Non-financial interests can also come into conflict, or be perceived to come into conflict, with an individual's obligations or commitments to the school. These interests may include any benefit or advantage, including but not limited to, direct or indirect enhancement of an individual's career, or gain for immediate family or someone with whom the individual has a close relationship.

Examples of situations that could give rise to non-financial conflicts of interest include:

- Pressure or temptation to accept gifts, inducements or hospitality;
- Participating in the appointment, hiring, promotion, supervision or evaluation of a person with whom the individual has a close personal relationship;
- Where a member of staff has or develops a close personal relationship with a colleague.

Members of staff must carefully consider whether they need to declare their relationship with any individual where this might cause a conflict with school activities.

General

All declarations, including nil returns, should be submitted in writing to the head teacher for inclusion on the register of Business Interests.

Failure to make a relevant declaration of interests is a very serious breach of trust and therefore, if employees are in doubt about a declaration, they are advised to contact the school or their trade unions.

Membership of a trade union or staff representative group does not need to be declared.



Relationships with Pupils

The school expects all staff to:

- Maintain professional boundaries and relationships with pupils at all times, and consider whether their actions are warranted, proportionate, safe and necessary;
- Act in an open and transparent way that would not lead to others questioning their actions;
- Ensure that they do not establish social contact with pupils for the purpose of securing a friendship or to pursue or strengthen a relationship;
- Ensure that they do not develop personal or sexual relationships with pupils; this includes sexual remarks and discussing their own sexual relationships with, or in the presence of, pupils;
- Only contact pupils via the school's established mechanisms – personal phone numbers, email addresses or social media platforms must not be used to contact pupils.



Physical Contact with Pupils

The Trust understands that there are circumstances in which it is entirely necessary for staff to have physical contact with pupils, e.g. when applying first aid and assisting with intimate care, but staff should only do so in a professional and appropriate manner in line with relevant school / Trust policies.

When physical contact is made with pupils, it is imperative that it is conducted in a way which is responsive to the pupil's needs, is of limited duration and is appropriate to the child's age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity and background. Staff must seek the pupil's permission, where possible, before initiating contact.

Staff should always use their professional judgement when determining what physical contact is appropriate, as this may differ between pupils. As such, the pupil's feelings and wishes will always be taken into account. Extra caution should be taken where it is known that a pupil has previously suffered from abuse or neglect.

Staff will never touch a pupil in a way which is indecent, and will always be prepared to explain their actions.

Even well-intentioned physical contact may be misconstrued by a pupil, an observer or by anyone to whom this action is described and therefore staff must be prepared to justify their actions.

Staff must not engage in rough play, tickling or fun fights with pupils.

Physical contact will never be secretive: if a member of staff believes an action could be misinterpreted, this should be reported to the head teacher and appropriate procedures will be followed.

If a child is in distress and in need of comfort as reassurance, staff may use age-appropriate physical contact such as placing their hand on the pupil's shoulder. Staff will remain self-aware of their actions at all times and ensure that their contact is not threatening, intrusive or subject to misinterpretation.

Staff may also use reasonable force as a means of physical contact with pupils for restraint purposes; such instances will always be in accordance with the Use of Reasonable Force Policy.



Showering and Changing

Pupils are entitled to respect and privacy whilst they are changing before/after PE; however, a level of supervision is required to ensure that pupils are safe and that they are not subjected to bullying. The supervision must be appropriate to the needs and ages of the pupils and sensitive to the potential for embarrassment.

Staff must never change or shower in the same area as pupils.



Transporting Pupils

When it is necessary to transport pupils off site, staff must ensure that the transport arrangements of the vehicle meet all legal requirements, they have an appropriate license, and the vehicle is roadworthy, has a valid MOT certificate and is insured.

Parental consent will be obtained from parents/carers before pupils are transported.

Two or more staff will be present in the vehicle to avoid any discrepancy regarding safeguarding concerns, and staff will be aware that the welfare of all pupils in the vehicle is their responsibility.



Financial Inducements

All members of staff are required to:

- Familiarise themselves and comply with the school's financial regulations;
- Declare, in writing to the Local Governing Body, any gifts received with the exception of:
 - Low cost, functional items suitable for business rather than personal use and displaying the supplier's logo (these items may be accepted);
 - Gifts offered by parents/carers or pupils to school staff to express their gratitude, though monetary gifts must always be refused;
 - Hospitality in the form of meals and drinks where it is part of a normal business meeting;
 - Authorised visits to exhibitions, demonstrations, conferences, business meals and social functions in connection with school / Trust business, which shall be at the school's / Trust's expense.
- Not accept a personal gift, payment or other incentive from a business contact – any such gifts should be returned;
- Declare any gift that cannot be returned to the Local Governing Body / Trust, who will decide how it will be used;
- Only accept offers to specific events after authorisation from the Local Governing Body / Trust.



E-Safety

Staff must adhere to the procedures outlined in the school's E-safety Policy and Acceptable Use Agreement at all times.

Staff are required to employ the highest security settings on any personal profiles they may have, and must not engage in inappropriate use of social networking sites. This includes:

- Contacting pupils or their family members;
- Accepting or inviting friend requests from pupils or their family members; and
- Following pupils or their family members on social media.

The School and Trust understand that some staff members are also parents/carers of pupils at the school and, therefore, may wish to make contact with other parents/carers. When doing so, staff will exercise their professional judgement and will not contact family members on social media if this would lead to a conflict of interest.

Staff must remain mindful of their use of social media and their web-based presence. This includes:

- Written content;
- Videos or photographs; and
- Views expressed directly or indirectly which may bring themselves, the school or the school community into disrepute.



Premises, Equipment and Communication

School equipment and systems are available only for school-related activities, and should not be used for the fulfilment of another job or for personal use unless specifically authorised by the Head Teacher.

Illegal, inappropriate or unacceptable use of school equipment or communication systems may result in disciplinary action and in serious cases could lead to an employee's dismissal. Employees receiving inappropriate communication or material, or who are unsure about whether something they propose to do might breach this policy should seek advice from the Head Teacher.

The school reserves the right to monitor e-mails, phone calls, internet activity or document production, principally in order to avoid offensive or nuisance material and to protect systems from viruses, but also to ensure proper and effective use of systems.

Communication systems may be accessed when the school suspects that the employee has been misusing systems or facilities, or for the investigation of suspected fraud or other irregularity. Access will be secured by the systems manager only with the permission of the governing body.

Passwords should not be shared and access to computer systems must be kept confidential except on the express request of the head teacher or systems manager. Breach of this confidentiality may be subject to disciplinary action.

School equipment that is used outside the premises (e.g. laptops) must be returned to the school when the employee leaves employment, or if requested to do so by the head teacher.



Photography and Videos

Photographs and videos will only be taken using school equipment – using personal mobile phones for this purpose is prohibited, in accordance with the school's Photography at School Events Policy.

Consent will be obtained from parents/carers and pupils in the event of any images or videos of pupils which the school wishes to use (e.g. to publish on the website). The wishes of pupils will also be taken into account when taking images or videos, ensuring that those who do not wish to have their photograph taken or be filmed are respected.

All photographs and videos will be available for scrutiny, and staff must be prepared to justify the images or footage taken. Careful consideration should always be given to the activities which are being filmed or photographed, in order to ensure that images or videos are not indecent and cannot be misused.



Data Protection and Confidentiality

Employees are required, under the Data Protection Act (1998), to collect, maintain and dispose of sensitive or personal data in a responsible manner.

Staff members must not disclose sensitive information about the school, its employees or the Trust to other parties. The only exception whereby it is acceptable for a staff member to disclose information which would otherwise be considered confidential is when the confidential information gives rise to concerns about the safety or welfare of a pupil.

Employees have the right to request access to data that is held about them; such requests should be made to the head teacher in writing, in accordance with the Data Protection Policy.



Probity of Records

The deliberate falsification of documents, such as references, academic qualifications or legal documents is unacceptable. Where a staff member falsifies records or other documents, including those held electronically, this will be regarded as a serious disciplinary matter and potentially a criminal offence.



Contacts

Staff members shall not use school business contacts for acquiring materials or services at trade/discount prices for non-school activities, unless participating in a concessionary scheme arranged by trade unions or other such groups.



Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Head Teacher / CEO and any changes made will be communicated to all members of staff.

All new employees are required to familiarise themselves with this policy as part of their induction programme.