



Staff Code of Conduct and Acceptable IT Use Policy

Adopted By: Board of Trustees

Date: September 2026

Review Date: August 2027

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Date of Issue:	September 2026
Policy applies to:	All staff employed by the Wessex Multi-School Trust.
Policy Version Number:	07
Purpose of the document:	To provide clear guidance and expectations in relation to staff conduct when working within the Trust.
Summary of the main points:	The document provides: 1. Detailed core principles of the staff code of conduct 2. Expectations of conduct and behaviour of all adults working in the Trust. 3. Updated information from Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE). 4. Guidance on the acceptable use of IT for staff.
Approved by:	Board of Trustees
Reviewer:	Debbie Shutts, COO
Summary of amendments:	1. Adoption of Browne Jacobson policy
Next review due:	Aug 2027

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1 Purpose

- 1.1 The aim of this code of conduct for employees is to set out the standards of conduct expected of all staff and to provide further information for employees. This should be read in conjunction with our disciplinary procedure, Teachers' Standards and the statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education.
- 1.2 This code should make it clear to employees the expectations the trust has of them. Employees should note that this code is not exhaustive in defining acceptable and unacceptable standards of conduct, and employees must use common sense in adhering to the underpinning principles. If any employee is ever unsure what the expectations are in any given circumstance they should speak to their line manager/the headteacher.
- 1.3 This code does not form part of any employee's contract of employment, and it may be amended at any time.

2 Scope

- 2.1 The code applies to all employees regardless of length of service [including those in their probationary period]. It also applies to consultants, contractors, casual and agency staff [and volunteers] (collectively referred to as staff in this policy although, unlike employees, breaches of the code will not be managed through the disciplinary procedure).
- 2.2 As recognisable figures in the local community, the behaviour and conduct of staff of the trust outside of work can impact on their employment. Therefore, conduct outside work may be treated as a disciplinary matter if it is considered that it is relevant to the employee's employment.

3 Safeguarding and 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, from the foundation years through to the teenage years.
- 3.3 All employees must be aware of the signs of abuse and neglect and know what action to take if these are identified.

3.4 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 or college may have acted in a way that:

3.4.1 Is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work; and

3.4.2 Does not meet the allegations threshold or is otherwise not considered serious enough to consider a referral to the local authority designated officer (LADO).

Examples of such behaviour could include, but is not limited to:

(a) Being over friendly with children.

(b) Having favourites.

(c) Taking photographs of children on their mobile phone.

(d) Engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door; or,

(e) Humiliating children.

3.5 To do this, employees must have fully read and understood our child protection/safeguarding policies, be aware of our systems for keeping children safe, and must follow the guidance in these policies 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, staff 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, in accordance with our child protection/safeguarding policy. Staff 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

Staff 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 Familiarise themselves with the health and safety statements produced by the trust as published in the Health and Safety Policy
- 5.2 Read and understand the trust's health and safety policy.
- 5.3 Comply with health and safety regulations or instructions and use any safety equipment and protective clothing which is supplied to you by the trust.
- 5.4 Comply with any hygiene requirements.
- 5.5 Comply with any accident reporting requirements.
- 5.6 Never act in a way which might cause risk or damage to any other members of the trust, community, or visitors; and
- 5.7 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 maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school, by:
 - 6.3.1 Treating students with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to their professional position.

- 6.3.2 Having regard for the need to safeguard students' wellbeing, in accordance with statutory provisions.
 - 6.3.3 Showing tolerance of, and respect for, the rights of others.
 - 6.3.4 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
 - 6.3.5 Ensuring that personal beliefs are not expressed in ways which exploit students' vulnerability or might lead them to break the law.
- 6.4 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 Staff must maintain high standards of honesty and integrity in their work. This includes the handling and claiming of money and the use of trust property and facilities.

7 Tackling 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 equities/fairness and dignity and preventing sexual harassment at work policies.
- 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 Wessex Multi Academy Trust has a duty to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of its staff at work.

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.

Report any incident of sexual harassment or raise any concern to your line manager/Headteacher and please refer to the preventing sexual harassment at work policy for details of how Wessex Multi Academy Trust responds to a report of sexual harassment.

- 7.3 Employees must not ignore any form of discrimination or harassment. Employees must positively promote equality, 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 (e.g., teacher, youth worker) 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.
- 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 a member of staff 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 a member of staff or to develop an infatuation. If any member of staff becomes aware of an infatuation, they should discuss it with their line manager/Headteacher/DSL 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/CEO] 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 Members of staff 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 Headteacher/DSL.
- 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 retention 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 iAM compliant.

10 Physical contact with students

- 10.1 There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for staff 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.
- 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 to Headteacher/DSL.
- 10.3 Staff 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 trust'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 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 [the Headteacher/DSL].
- 12.2 The trust's advice to staff 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 [trust]. We expect staff to use their professional judgement in such situations and to report to [Headteacher/DSL] any contact that they have had with a student outside of school, that they are concerned about or that could be misinterpreted by others.

Social media

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

If you see content in social media that disparages or reflects poorly on our trust or our stakeholders, you should print out the content and contact the headteacher OR CEO (for central team staff. All staff are responsible for protecting our trust's reputation.

13 Photography, videos, and other images/media

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 trust.

14 Acceptable use of technology

Staff should only use ICT systems and resources (email and phone) for all [trust] business or only in line with what is allowed.

Employees should read and understand our ICT policy.

15 Personal phones and tablets

- 15.1 Staff must not use personal electronic communication devices such as mobile phones or iPads as cameras in school. Any photographs/video footage must be taken using school equipment. Staff must only save images on school IT hardware/computers.
- 15.2 Staff should not use personal mobile phones or other smart technology with similar functionality to mobile phones (such as smart watches) 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/principal], 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 and similar devices should be stored securely and kept out of sight. Staff should refer to the provisions on personal belongings at paragraph 16 of this code.
- 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.
- 15.5 Where staff 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 [state who] in advance]. This may include maintaining appropriate professional contact during school trips, activities and events.

16 Personal belongings

- 16.1 Staff are expected to maintain responsibility for their personal belongings at all times while on trust premises or taking part in any school activities, such as trips. The trust is not liable for any loss, theft, or damage to personal property. Staff 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. Staff are strongly advised against bringing items of significant or sentimental value into the trust.
- 16.2 Any electrical items brought into the trust should meet all health and safety requirements and it is the staff member's responsibility to ensure this.

- 16.3 Should staff bring any items into the trust, 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. Staff should ensure they have approval from their line manager, 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 Alcohol and substance misuse

- 17.1 Staff are expected to arrive at work fit to carry out their job and to be able to perform their duties safely without any limitations due to the use or aftereffects of alcohol or drugs. In this policy drug use includes the use of controlled drugs, psychoactive (or mind-altering) substances formerly known as 'legal highs', and the misuse of prescribed or over-the-counter medication.
- 17.2 Alcohol and drug-related problems may develop for a variety of reasons and over a considerable period of time. Therefore, 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.

[Employees should read and understand our substance and misuse policy.]

18 Working one-to-one with students

- 18.1 There will be times where an employee is working one-to-one with a student and this is acceptable. 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:
 - 18.1.1 Avoid meeting on a one-to-one basis in secluded areas of the [school].
 - 18.1.2 Ensure that the door to the room is open or that there is visual access into the room.
 - 18.1.3 Inform a colleague or line manager of the meeting, preferably beforehand; and
 - 18.1.4 Report to their line manager if the student becomes distressed or angry.

19 Curriculum

- 19.1 Many areas of the curriculum can include or raise subject matter which is sexually explicit or of a political or sensitive nature. Care should be taken to ensure that resource materials cannot be misinterpreted and clearly relate to the learning outcomes identified by the lesson plan. This can be supported by developing ground rules with students to ensure sensitive

topics can be discussed in a safe learning environment. This plan should highlight particular areas of risk and sensitivity, and care should especially be taken in those areas of the curriculum where usual boundaries or rules are less rigorously applied e.g., health and social care, PSHE, drama.

- 19.2 The curriculum can sometimes include or lead to unplanned discussion about subject matter of a sexually explicit, political, or otherwise sensitive nature. Responding to children's questions requires careful judgement and employees should take guidance in these circumstances from the designated safeguarding lead.

20 Dress and appearance

Working in our trust employees are role models to our students and how they present themselves is important. Our expectation is that staff are decently, appropriately, and professionally dressed in work at all times. We do not permit the wearing of clothes that are revealing, allow underwear to be seen, have offensive logos or writing, or are ripped or torn at any times. If an employee is unsure whether any item of clothing is inappropriate, then they should not wear it to work. Employees can always speak to their line manager if they are unsure. Where we identify that an employee is wearing clothing that we do not find acceptable, they will be informed.

21 Gifts and hospitality

The trust has an anti-bribery/gifts and hospitality policy and employees should read and adhere to this.

AND

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

22 Keeping within the law

- 22.1 Staff 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.

- 22.2 Employees must ensure that they:

22.2.1 Uphold the law at work.

22.2.2 Never commit a crime away from work which could damage public confidence in them or the trust, or which makes them unsuitable for the work they do. This includes, for example:

- (a) Submitting false or fraudulent claims to public bodies (for example, income support, housing, or other benefit claims).
- (b) Breaching copyright on computer software or published documents.
- (c) Sexual offences which will render them unfit to work with children or vulnerable adults; and
- (d) Crimes of dishonesty which render them unfit to hold a position of trust.

22.2.3 Write and tell the headteacher (chair of governors 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 (this includes outside of their working hours). The headteacher and/or governors will then need to consider whether this charge or conviction damages public confidence in the trust or makes the employee unsuitable to carry out their duties.

23 Conduct outside of work and at work related functions

- 23.1 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.
- 23.2 Staff must not engage in conduct outside work which could seriously damage the reputation and standing of the 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 trust or affect the trust's reputation will be addressed under our disciplinary procedure.
- 23.3 We therefore expect employees to make us aware immediately of any such situations that have happened outside of the workplace and specifically if this may affect their suitability to work with children.
- 23.4 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.
- 23.5 Staff 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).

24 Agency workers

- 24.1 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.
- 24.2 We will discuss with the agency whether it may be appropriate for them to consider suspending an agency worker, or whether we are prepared to redeploy an agency worker during an investigation.

25 Review

This code of conduct is reviewed and amended annually by the trust. We will monitor the application and outcomes of this code of conduct to ensure it is working effectively.