

Veritas Multi Academy Trust

Staff Code of Conduct

Date Prepared:	Term 1 2019
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Date ratified (where relevant)	N/A
Review date:	Term 1 2021
Date Published on Trust website:	

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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 staff have an influential position in the school, and will act as role models for pupils by consistently demonstrating high standards of behaviour.

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, trustees and volunteers to also act with personal and professional integrity, respecting the safety and wellbeing of others.

We expect all staff to uphold the values of the trust and the school within which they work.

Failure to follow the code of conduct may result in disciplinary action being taken, as set out in our staff disciplinary procedures (See the Discipline and Conduct Policy).

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.

2. Legislation and guidance

In line with the statutory safeguarding guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (2019), we should have a staff code of conduct, which should cover acceptable use of technologies, staff/pupil relationships and communications, including the use of social media. This policy also complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

3. General obligations

Staff 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
- Express personal beliefs in a way that will not overly influence pupils, and will not exploit pupils' vulnerability or might lead them to break the law
- Understand the statutory frameworks they must act within
- Where a teacher, adhere to the Teachers' Standards

4. Safeguarding

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

Staff will familiarise themselves with our Safeguarding Policy, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019 Part 1 and procedures and the Prevent initiative, and ensure they are aware of the processes to follow if they have concerns about a child. The school will provide annual Safeguarding update training to all staff.

Our safeguarding policy and procedures are available in the staff room, from the school office, and on each school's website. New staff will also be given copies on arrival as part of their induction procedures.

5. Staff/pupil relationships

Staff 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 staff members and pupils must spend time on a one-to-one basis, staff will ensure that:

- This takes place in a public place that others can access
- Others can see in to the room
- A colleague or line manager knows this is taking place

Staff should avoid contact with pupils outside of school hours if possible.

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

While we are aware many pupils and their parents may wish to give gifts to staff, for example, at the end of the school year, gifts from staff to pupils are not acceptable.

If a staff member is concerned at any point that an interaction between themselves and a pupil may be misinterpreted, this should be reported to their line manager or the headteacher.

6. Communication and social media

School staff's 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. Staff should consider using a first and middle name instead, and set public profiles to private.

Staff should not attempt to contact pupils or their parents 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' social media profiles.

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

Staff should be aware of the school's Online Safety policy and will receive regular, ongoing training providing updates in this matter.

7. Acceptable use of technology

Staff will not use technology in 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.

Staff will not use personal mobile phones and laptops, or school equipment for personal use, in school hours or in front of pupils. They will also not use personal mobile phones or cameras to take pictures of pupils.

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

8. Confidentiality

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

This information will never be:

- Disclosed to anyone without the relevant authority
- Used to humiliate, embarrass or blackmail others
- Used for a purpose other than what it was collected and intended for

This does not overrule staff's duty to report child protection concerns to the appropriate channel where staff believe a child is at risk of harm.

9. Honesty and integrity

Staff should maintain high standards of honesty and integrity in their role. This includes when dealing with pupils, handling money, claiming expenses, claiming overtime payments and using school property and facilities. Staff will not accept bribes. Staff will ensure that all information given to the school about their qualifications and professional experience is correct.

10. Dress code

Staff will dress in a professional manner appropriate to their job role. Staff are seen as role models and, as such, should always give careful consideration to how they dress and act. To ensure consistency across the school it is important that the message given to pupils about expectations for clothing is reflected in the professional clothing choices of all staff. Staff should dress appropriately at all times – no denim, leggings, strappy or low cut tops. Underwear should not be visible through clothing. Outfits will not be overly revealing, and we ask that tattoos, where possible, are covered up. Clothes will not display any offensive or political slogans.

11. Physical Contact

It is not possible to be specific about the appropriateness of each physical contact, since an action that is appropriate with one child in one set of circumstances may be inappropriate in another, or with a different child. You should therefore, use your professional judgement at all times.

Physical contact should never be secretive, or for your gratification, or represent a misuse of authority.

This means that you should:

- be aware that even well-intentioned physical contact may be misconstrued by the child, an observer or anyone to whom this action is described.
- never touch a child in a way which may be considered indecent. (Staff who are required to provide personal care of an intimate nature are fully trained and follow clear protocols.)
- always be prepared to explain actions and accept that all physical contact be open to scrutiny.

Considerations should be made to children for whom touching is particularly unwelcome. For example:

- Some children may be particularly sensitive to physical contact because of their cultural background, or because they have been abused. Touching children, including well-intentioned gestures such as putting a hand on a shoulder, can, if repeated regularly, lead to serious questions being raised. As a general principle, staff must not make gratuitous physical contact with their pupils. It is particularly unwise to attribute touching to their teaching style or as a way of relating to pupils. Teachers and other staff do, however, have the right to use reasonable physical force to restrain pupils in certain circumstances. See the Positive Handling Policy for further details.

Any form of physical punishment of pupils is unlawful as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour unless it is by way of restraint. It is particularly important that staff understand this both to protect their own position and the overall reputation of the school. Our Positive Handling Policy provides further information about this.

Some staff are likely to come into physical contact with children from time to time in the course of their duties. Staff should be aware of the limits within which such contact should properly take place and the possibility of such contact being misinterpreted.

Children in Distress:

There may be occasions when a distressed child needs comfort and reassurance. This may include age-appropriate physical contact. You should use your discretion in such cases to ensure that what is normal and natural does not become unnecessary and unjustified contact, particularly with the same child over a period of time. You should remain self-aware at all times in order that their contact is not threatening, intrusive or subject to misinterpretation. If you have a particular concern about the need to provide this type of care and reassurance you should seek further advice from a senior manager.

Staff should:

- Consider the way in which you offer comfort to a distressed child.
- Make sure that the physical contact is what the child wants. It might be appropriate to hold a child's hand if he/she is distressed – ask them first.
- Always tell a colleague when and how you offered comfort to a distressed child.
- Record situations which may give rise to concern and report to a senior manager.
- Don't give someone a hug because it would make you feel better if you did.

12. Conduct outside of work

Staff will not act in a way that would bring the school, or the teaching profession into disrepute. This covers relevant criminal offences, such as violence or sexual misconduct, as well as negative comments about the school on social media. School staff should avoid making statements or comments to the press regarding any situation involving the school, its staff or its pupils. Any requests as such should be referred to the headteacher without further comment.

13. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed every two years, but can be revised as needed. It will be ratified by the board of Trustees.

14. Links with other policies

This policy links with our policies on:

- Staff disciplinary procedures (Discipline and Conduct Policy, which will be used if staff breach this code of conduct. It also sets out examples of what we will deem as misconduct and gross misconduct
- Staff grievance procedures
- Staff Handbook
- Safeguarding
- Gifts and hospitality
- Online-Safety