

CODE OF CONDUCT

VERSION 1: September 2024

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1. AIMS, SCOPE AND PRINCIPLES

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

By creating this policy, we aim to ensure the Trust provides 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; teachers have a statutory obligation to adhere to the most recent 'Teachers' Standards' and in relation to this policy, Part 2 of the Teachers' Standards - Personal and Professional Conduct. Where serious cases of misconduct are referred to the Teaching Regulation Agency, the panel may refer to these conduct elements when judging cases.

In addition to this Code of Conduct, all staff are engaged to work under the Conditions of Service for Schools.

The Trust's staff have an influential position and will act as role models for pupils by consistently demonstrating high standards of behaviour.

We expect all support staff, Network Support Team staff, Trustees, local governors, contractors, agency staff and volunteers to also act with personal and professional integrity, respecting the safety and wellbeing of others. This includes adhering to Guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings produced by the Safer Recruitment Consortium. The most recent version of this document was published in February 2022 – this can be accessed from the link here: [Professional and Personnel Relationships \(saferrecruitmentconsortium.org\)](https://saferrecruitmentconsortium.org)

In Ventrus our values drive our behaviours which in turn create the culture of our organisation.

Our core values are:

- Hope
- Energy
- Accountability
- Responsibility
- Trust

Our culture statement is one that is centred around:

- Collaboration not competition
- Innovation not isolation
- Sustainable success through system leadership

Failure to follow the Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action being taken, as set out in our Disciplinary Policy and 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 Trust and its pupils.

Throughout this policy, for Network Support Team employees, please read "Line Manager" where the term "Headteacher" is used.

2. LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

Under general employment law, we must have procedures for addressing staff conduct, as explained in the [Academy trust governance guide - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/academy-trust-governance-guide)

In line with the statutory safeguarding guidance [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#), our staff Code of Conduct covers the acceptable use of technologies, staff/pupil relationships, and communications, including the use of social media.

Staff must not discriminate, harass or victimise someone because they have, or are perceived to have, a protected characteristic as defined by the Equality Act 2010 or are associated with someone who has a protected characteristic. Protected characteristics are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

Staff must set good examples of behaviour and demonstrate high standards of conduct in order to encourage our pupils to do the same.

3. GENERAL OBLIGATIONS

Staff will set an example to pupils. They will:

- Maintain high standards in their attendance and punctuality
- Never use inappropriate or offensive language
- 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, exploit their vulnerability or potentially lead them to break the law
- Understand the statutory frameworks they must act within

In addition, staff must:

- Familiarise themselves and comply with all Trust policies and procedures.
- Sign to confirm they have read, understood and agreed to comply with the Code of Conduct at least annually, as directed by their Headteacher.

4. SAFEGUARDING

Staff have a duty to:

- Safeguard pupils from harm, and to report any concerns they have to the Designated Safeguarding Officer. This includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse, or neglect.
- Familiarise themselves with our Safeguarding Policy and Procedures and the Prevent initiative, and ensure they are aware of the processes to follow if they have concerns about a child.
- Our Safeguarding Policy and Procedures are available in schools and on the Ventrus website <https://www.ventrus.org.uk/>. New staff will also be given copies on arrival.

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, or a place that others can access
- Others can see into the room
- A colleague or Headteacher knows this is taking place
- Staff should avoid contact with pupils outside of teaching hours if possible.

While we are aware many pupils and their parents may wish to give gifts to staff, for example at the end of the academic year, gifts from individual staff to individual pupils are not acceptable, however teachers may give class gifts with the permission of the Headteacher.

If a staff member is concerned at any point that an interaction between themselves and a pupil may be misinterpreted, they should report this to their Headteacher.

Staff must help create a positive working environment and behave in a manner which ensures and promotes acceptable behaviour. Examples of acceptable behaviour and unacceptable behaviour can be found in Appendix 1.

Staff must strive towards and promote harmonious and professional relationships with all colleagues. It is understood that, at times, differences of opinions can occur and at such times it is expected that staff will attempt to resolve matters informally in the first instance unless they feel unable to do so in which case they should refer the matter to their Headteacher.

Staff must declare any relationships that they may have with pupils outside of the Trust; this may include mutual membership of social groups, tutoring, or family connections. Staff should not assume that the Trust is aware of any such connections. A declaration form is available at Appendix 2 of this document for declaration of such relationships.

6. COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA

All forms of communication between staff and students/parents/outside agencies/colleagues, regardless of the means of communication, will be of a professional standard at all times.

Staff members' social media profiles must 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 will not attempt to contact pupils or their parents via social media, or any other means, outside of the Trust in order to develop any sort of relationship. They will not make any efforts to find pupils' or parents' social media profiles.

Staff should attempt to restrict work-based communications to the hours of 8am and 6pm; where this cannot be achieved, no response should be required.

Staff will ensure that they do not post any images online that identify children who are pupils at the Trust.

Staff should be aware of the Trust's Online Safety Policy.

7. ACCEPTABLE USE OF TECHNOLOGY

Staff will not use technology on site or belonging to the Trust 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 must not have contact with current or former pupils under 18 years of age online or through any form of social media. Communication with students should only be conducted through our usual channels and should be related to school matters only. Breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

Staff must exercise caution when using information technology and be aware of the risks to themselves and others. Regard should be given to the Trust's Online Safety Policy and this policy at all times, both inside and outside of work.

Staff must not use equipment belonging to the Trust to access pornography; neither should personal equipment containing pornographic images or links to them be brought into the workplace. Doing so will raise serious concerns about the suitability of the employee to continue to work in schools.

Staff must not engage in inappropriate use of social network sites which may bring themselves, the Trust, or Trust community into disrepute. Employees should ensure that they adopt suitably high security settings on any personal profiles they may have.

Staff must exercise caution in their use of all social media or any other web-based presence that they may have, including written content, videos or photographs, and views expressed either directly or by 'liking' certain pages or posts established by others. This may also include the use of dating websites where employees could encounter pupils either with their own profile or acting covertly.

Staff must not link themselves with the Trust, or any of its schools, on any social network site they use, unless with prior consent of the Headteacher or a member of the Executive Leadership Team.

Staff must not respond to negative comments posted online but bring this to the attention of the Headteacher or a member of the Executive Leadership Team.

Staff must only contact pupils via Trust-authorised mechanisms. At no time should personal telephone numbers, email addresses, or communication routes via personal email/social media platforms/other media be used to communicate with pupils.

Staff must report to the Headteacher or a member of the Executive Leadership Team any contact by a pupil via an inappropriate route, including, but not limited to, those cited above.

Photographs/still images or video footage of pupils should only be taken using Trust equipment, for purposes authorised by the Trust. Any such use should always be transparent and only occur where parental consent has been given [not required for photographs that are related to lessons/education]. The resultant files from such recording or taking of photographs must be stored in accordance with the Trust's procedures on Trust equipment.

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

The Trust has the right to monitor emails and internet use on the Trust's IT system.

Staff will not conduct Trust business via text on personal mobile devices, nor by personal email. Wherever possible formal (work) emails must be used unless otherwise advised. However, in emergencies or in situations of immediate need where text is quicker, this is acceptable.

Staff will not use Trust emails/social media accounts to undertake personal business/communication.

Staff will not link personal email/social media accounts to their Trust email account.

Staff will not forward Trust emails to personal email accounts.

8. CONFIDENTIALITY

In the course of their role, members of staff are often privy to sensitive and confidential information about the Trust, our schools, 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 they believe a child is at risk of harm.

9. HONESTY AND INTEGRITY

Staff will maintain high standards of honesty and integrity in their role. This includes when dealing with pupils, handling money, claiming expenses and using the Trust's property and facilities.

Staff must comply with the Bribery Act 2010. A person may be guilty of an offence of bribery under this Act if they offer, promise or give financial advantage or other advantage to someone; or if they request, agree or accept, or receive a bribe from another person. If you believe that a person has failed to comply with the Bribery Act, you should refer your concerns to the attention of your Headteacher or a member of the Executive Leadership Team.

Staff will ensure that all information given to the Trust about their qualifications and professional experience is correct.

Staff must make known to the Headteacher or a member of the Executive Leadership Team financial and non-financial interests that could bring them into conflict with the Trust's interests.

All personal relationships with contractors, or potential contractors should be made known by the employee to the Headteacher or a member of the Executive Leadership Team with responsibility for the contract.

Staff must not be involved in any recruitment process if they have a personal relationship with the applicant inside or outside of work.

Without fear of recrimination, staff can report any impropriety or breach of procedures using the process laid out within the Whistleblowing Policy.

10. DRESS CODE

Staff Presentation

Leadership will expect that staff will be consistently professional in appearance and will address any presentation issues with individuals should they occur. The information below refers in the main to employees who regularly work alongside children in a classroom setting, and/or who may meet with parents.

Staff should be able to sit with the students maintaining their dignity. No clothes to be worn that expose underwear (including bra straps) whilst the employee is standing or sitting.

No blue or black denim should be worn, however for roles such as kitchen, site and IT staff, jeans may be worn at times depending on the nature of their duties.

Shoes should be professionally appropriate and enable the wearer to move quickly.

Staff should wherever possible change into PE kit in line with the students.

11. CONDUCT AND EMPLOYMENT OUTSIDE OF WORK/THE TRUST

Staff will not act in a way that would bring the Trust or the teaching profession into disrepute. This covers relevant criminal offences, such as violence or sexual misconduct, as well as negative comments about the Trust on social media.

Criminal offences that involve violence or possession or use of illegal drugs or sexual misconduct will be regarded as unacceptable and dealt with under the Trust's Disciplinary Policy and Procedures. Staff are required to notify the Trust if they receive a criminal conviction/caution while in our employment.

Behaviour or activities that have the potential to make employees unsuitable for the role they are employed to perform will be dealt with under the Trust's Disciplinary Policy and Procedures.

Staff may undertake work outside of the Trust, either paid or voluntary, provided that it does not conflict with the interests of the Trust, nor be to a level which may contravene the Working Time Regulations or affect an individual's work performance in the Trust. In line with the Statement of Particulars, support staff who are employed on or above Grade E must seek the consent of the Headteacher or a member of the Executive Leadership Team, should they wish to take up employment outside of the Trust.

12. MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

This policy will be reviewed annually but can be revised as needed.

This policy will be approved by Ventrus Trustees.

13. LINKS WITH OTHER POLICIES

This policy links with our policies on:

- Staff disciplinary procedures, 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
- Safeguarding

APPENDIX 1: EXAMPLES OF ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR

People behave acceptably when they:

- Afford dignity, trust and respect for everyone and themselves.
- Have awareness of the effects of their behaviour on others and only make reasonable and manageable demands.
- Communicate honestly and openly, clearly stating what they need and expect of others.
- Provide and are receptive to honest feedback based on evidence.
- Challenge discriminatory language and behaviour in an appropriate way.

Examples of Unacceptable Behaviour:

- Using aggressive language, threatening, ridiculing, ignoring people or repeatedly shouting.
- Telephoning people at home unnecessarily (for example, demanding work when the person is absent due to sickness or ill health).
- Focusing only on weaknesses.
- Bringing up details of someone's private life inappropriately.
- Leaving impossibly long lists of tasks and making unreasonable demands.
- Criticising people or maliciously gossiping about them in their absence.
- Ridiculing or demeaning someone – picking on them or setting them up to fail.
- Comments or jokes, about distinctive peoples and nationalities.
- Frequent comments about aspects of physical appearance or using forms of address that are demeaning.
- Threatening or implying, without reason, that, as a colleague, you will cause the person to lose his/her job or fail to get a promotion or suffer some other form of career difficulty or financial disadvantage.
- Coercing someone to join the harassment/bullying of another person.
- Excluding or marginalising someone or refusing to engage with them appropriately.

This list is not exhaustive. It is simply a guide to help individuals consider their own and others' behaviour and gain understanding of what behaviours are unacceptable in the workplace.

Standards Expected of Staff

The standards expected of all staff include but are not limited to:

- maintaining standards of behaviour in keeping with the interests and standing of the Trust. This includes behaviour outside of working hours and in any form that is visible to the public, including social networking or any other electronic medium
- devoting full attention while at work to the duties of their position and in doing so acting with responsibility, good judgement and in good faith
- carrying out any reasonable instructions given by those with authority to do so
- not divulging to any unauthorised person or making personal use of confidential information connected with the Trust, either intentionally or through negligent behaviour
- observing the rules, regulations and instructions adopted by the Trust
- following appropriate safeguarding procedures
- participating fully in any investigation into alleged incidents and/or allegations including attending meetings as directed

- using electronic communications appropriately
- ensuring that information brought to light as a result of any investigation is treated with discretion
- carrying out their role consistently with any standards set by their appropriate professional body
- taking steps to address any unacceptable behaviour
- treating colleagues and third parties with dignity and respect.

In addition to the above, the expectations of those employed in management roles are to:

- ensure the standards expected from all staff are role-modelled, monitored and managed effectively
- effectively manage all applicable statutory and non-statutory obligations
- appropriately manage all alleged incidents and/or allegations.

This list is not exhaustive.

APPENDIX 2: RELATIONSHIPS WITH PUPILS OUTSIDE OF WORK DECLARATION

It is recognised that there may be circumstances whereby staff are known to pupils outside of work. Examples include membership of sports clubs, family connections, or private tutoring.

Staff must declare any relationship outside of the Trust that they may have with pupils.

Employee's Name	Pupil Name	Relationship

I can confirm that I am fully aware of the Code of Conduct relating to contact out of work with pupils in line with this policy.

If I am tutoring a Ventrus pupil outside of the Trust I am aware that the following must be adhered to:

- I do not, at any point, teach the child in question as part of my daily timetable - this is a stipulation of such tutoring
- I emphasise to parents that this is done completely independently of the Trust
- No monies come through the Trust at any point, informally (e.g. via the child) or formally
- No private tutoring is to take place on Trust premises

I confirm that if these circumstances change at any time I will complete a new form to ensure the Trust is aware of any relationships.

Signed:

Date:

Once completed, signed and dated, please return this form to the Headteacher.

APPENDIX 3: POLICY HISTORY

[illegible]