



Employee Code of Conduct for Bridgwater and Taunton College Trust

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Signature on behalf of UNISON		
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A CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ALL EMPLOYEES WORKING WITHIN BRIDGWATER COLLEGE TRUST

Overarching expectation

It is a general expectation of all staff employed by the Bridgwater and Taunton College Trust that they will execute sound professional decision making at all times.

Introduction

All relationships across the trust, between staff and students, students and students and staff and staff, are based around the principle of mutual respect.

This Code of Conduct has been formulated and agreed to determine the minimum expectations of how colleagues will be expected to work. Across our Trust we aim to foster an working environment of high trust and this guidance is provided to all staff so that they know what is expected of them and to ensure that all colleagues are treated fairly. For most staff, this Code of Conduct will only serve to confirm what their daily working practice is already.

Many of the principles and expectations in this policy are based on the Teacher Standards. Should staff have any doubts about the advice contained in this documents that should speak to the HR team. Throughout this policy the term *staff* is used as a generic term which in practice means all colleagues employed by the trust, but also Trustees, Governors, Volunteers, agency staff, contractors or other adults working with children.

This Code of Conduct seeks to establish a core set of principles which underpin the concept of public service and which are applicable to anybody who works with children, regardless of the precise nature of their role. Respect is at the heart of how we work at the BTCT.

All staff have a duty placed upon them to keep themselves and others safe. To safeguard children from physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect. This duty is, in part, exercised through the development of respectful, caring and professional relationships between adults and children and also by adults consistently demonstrating integrity, maturity and good judgement. Adhering to this Code of Conduct will help to safeguard staff from being maliciously, falsely, or mistakenly suspected or accused of professional misconduct in relation to children.

Staff must raise issues of concern and everybody must fully recognise the duty to do so particularly in terms of child protection. Staff must make themselves aware of the DSL in their school. A member of staff who, in good faith 'whistleblows' or makes a public interest disclosure will have the relevant protection of the relevant legislation as set out in our whistleblowing policy.

This Code of Conduct cannot and does not set out to provide a complete checklist of what is, or is not, appropriate behaviour for staff. However, it does highlight behaviour that is illegal, unsafe, unprofessional and unwise behaviour in relation to

children. There will be occasions and circumstances in which staff have to make decisions or take action in the best interests of children where no specific guidance has been given.

Staff therefore are expected to execute sound professional decision making at all times and be seen to be working in an open and transparent way. They should make responsible and informed judgements about their own behaviour in order to secure the best interests and welfare of the children in their charge.

This Code of Conduct will be covered in all colleagues induction to the Trust and staff should be aware that breaches of this Code of Conduct, the law or other professional guidelines could result in formal disciplinary action being taken against them which may ultimately lead to their dismissal.

Principles of Professional Practice

Staff will:

- Place the well-being and learning of pupils at the heart of their professional practice.
- Have high expectations for all children, be committed to addressing underachievement and work to help children to progress regardless of their background or personal circumstances
- Treat all children fairly and with respect, take their knowledge, views, opinion and feelings seriously and value diversity and individually
- Believe that all safeguarding concerns they raise are true
- Model the characteristics they are trying to inspire in children, including good attendance, punctuality, enthusiasm for learning, a spirit of enquiry, honesty, tolerance, social responsibility, patience and a genuine concern for other people
- Demonstrate an unconditional positive regard for children
- Not undermine the fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and a tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs
- Seek to work in partnership with parents and careers, respecting their views and promoting understanding and cooperation to support the children's learning, development and wellbeing in and out of school
- Reflect on their own practice, develop their skills, knowledge and expertise and adapt appropriately to learn from colleagues

All staff MUST:

- Treat others with respect
- Not discriminate unlawfully against another person
- Adhere to the Equality and Diversity policy and treat others equally regardless of ability, gender, age, race, religion, sexual orientation or position
- Treat others professionally and courteously at all times

Honesty, Integrity, Impartiality and Objectivity

Staff are subject to national and local terms and conditions of employment, which are tailored to their particular role. All staff will be expected to comply with written or oral instructions, about the way in which they tackle their duties and conduct themselves.

All staff, governors, volunteers, agency staff and contractors will be made aware of our policy for accepting (or not) gifts including arrangements for the declaration of gifts received and given.

There are occasions when children or parents wish to pass small token of appreciation to staff as a thank you. This is acceptable. However, it is unacceptable to receive gifts on a regular basis or of any significant value (above a value of £20).

Cash should never be accepted as a gift under any circumstances. Decision makers with regards to procurement/purchasing are not allowed to accept gifts from interested parties and must act with complete openness and free from bias. All personal relationships with contractors or potential contractors should be made known to headteacher or person known with responsibility for the contract

Accountability

All staff are accountable for their actions and decision making. They must adhere to and respect the 'chain of command' for their local setting ensuring that management roles and decisions are not ignored or undermined. Leaders have a responsibility placed upon them to hold staff accountable for agreed actions and to themselves be accountable to the staff that they lead.

Personal Interests

Staff must not in their official or personal capacity allow personal interests to conflict with the Trust's requirements, bring the reputation of the Trust or profession into disrepute or use their position improperly to confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person.

Registration of Interests

All staff must comply with any requirements to register or declare interests and declare hospitality, gifts or benefits received as a consequence of their employment.

Staff Appointments

Staff must not be involved in the appointment of, or any other decision relating to the discipline, promotion, pay or conditions of another employee, or prospective employee, who is a relative, friend or partner.

In this paragraph relative means: spouse, partner, parent, parent in law, son, daughter, step son/daughter, child of partner, sibling, grandparent, grandchild, aunt, uncle, nephew, niece, or the spouse/partner of any of the preceding persons.

'Partner' means a member of a couple who live together or who have a close personal relationship.

Duty of Trust

All staff must, at all times, act in accordance with the trust that their employers is entitled to place them in. In like manner, the Trust is expected to act in accordance with the trust that the employee is entitled to place in their employer.

Trade Union Membership

The Trust encourages all colleagues to join a Trade Union.

Contact with Parents and the General Public

There is a general expectation of the Trust that staff will:

- Be polite and courteous to members of the public at all times
- Give/provide their name when speaking or writing to parents/carers or when speaking/writing on behalf of the School/Trust
- Ensure that any information provided is accurate
- Ensure that any information provided to third parties is in line with all data protection legislation
- Respect confidential information provided to them in the course of their work
- Avoid doing anything which could make the public doubt the motives or integrity of the member of staff or bring the Trust/school into disrepute
- Ensure that concerns or complaints given to them by parents/carers or the general public are passed to the appropriate person

Confidentiality

Member of staff may have access to confidential information about pupils in order to undertake their responsibilities. In some circumstances the information may be highly sensitive. Confidential or personal information about a pupil or their family must never be disclosed to anyone other than on a need to know basis or to safeguard the well-being of children and individuals at risk.

Information must never be used to intimidate, humiliate or embarrass a student.

There are some circumstances in which a member of staff may be expected to share information about a pupil, for example when safeguarding a young person. In such cases, individuals have a duty to pass information on without any delay to those with designated student protection responsibilities. Failure to pass on this type of information will always result in disciplinary action being taken by the Trust.

Confidential information about pupils must be held securely. It must not be removed from the place of work other than on security protected Trust equipment. Information will be stored in accordance with our Data protection policy. If in doubt, seek assistance from the Trust wide Data Protection Officer.

Any actual or suspected/potential breach of data protection must be reported immediately to the Trusts Data Protection Officer.

Preserving anonymity

The Education Act 2011 contains reporting restrictions preventing the publication of any material which could lead to the identification of a teacher in the event of an allegation against them made by a pupil at the same school. Any individual who publishes material which could lead to the identification of the employee who is the subject of an allegation of this kind may be subject to criminal and disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

“Publication” includes any speech, writing, relevant programme or other communication in whatever form, which is addressed to the public at large or any section of the public. For the avoidance of doubt, this includes publishing details of an allegation or other information on a social media site which could lead to the identification of the teacher.

Propriety, Behaviour, Reputation and appearance

All staff have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of children. They should adopt high standards of personal conduct in and outside of the workplace to maintain the confidence and respect of their peers, students and public in general. The Trust recognises and respects individuals’ right to a private life without interference. However, an individual’s behaviour should not compromise their position of trust within the work setting, bring their employer into disrepute or call into question their suitability to work with children.

All staff are expected to dress decently, safely, modestly and appropriately for the tasks that they undertake, including when engaging in online learning. Some post holders will be provided with a staff uniform. This is to be worn without exception or modification unless agreed upon by CEO.

All staff are expected to dress modestly and appropriately for the tasks that they undertake. Outfits will not be revealing. Clothing will not display any offensive or political slogans.

Footwear should be smart and comfortable and not create any health and safety implications. Open-toed shoes, sandals, flip-flops are not permitted as they are potentially hazardous.

PPE will be provided and must be worn appropriately to the role/task being undertaken.

Personal property of a sexually explicit nature such as books, magazines, DVDs or other such material on any electronic media must not be brought onto or stored on trust property.

Where staff live in a Trust property that is a private living space such as caretaking/boarding staff. The Trust recognises the rights afforded to these colleagues under their tenancy agreement and their entitlement to a private life. Notwithstanding, these rights, staff will potentially be subject to disciplinary action should this impact on young people in our care.

Staff must not post material on social media which damages the reputation of the Trust, school, professional, colleagues or themselves. They should not post any material which is a cause for concern about their suitability to work with children.

Any member of staff that posts material which could be considered as inappropriate renders themselves vulnerable to criticism or allegation of misconduct.

Sexual Contact with Children and Young People and Abuse of Trust

Any sexualised behaviour by a member of staff, with or towards a child or young person, is illegal. Children and young people are protected by the same laws as adults in relation to non-consensual sexual behaviour. They are additionally protected by specific legal provisions regardless of whether there is consent or not. Any sexual behaviour aimed at

children regardless in any circumstances will always be referred to the Police and will result in disciplinary action likely to result in dismissal and disbarring from the profession.

Communication (including using technology) and relationships

Staff in the Trust must not establish social contact with pupils personally or via any social networking/media platform. This is the case even if a pupil seeks to establish social contact or if this occurs coincidentally the member of staff must not respond and must report this to their headteacher, or in the case of a headteacher, to the CEO.

Staff should ensure that the privacy protection facility is used and that they should not use their work email address or account to access these sites. If staff have a personal profile their place of work should not be named.

Staff must not give their personal details such as home address mobile phone number email address to parents or students and this includes social media profiles.

Some staff may have family relations or have longstanding friendships with the parents of children that attend their school. The rules above regarding social media contact with the children of these relationships apply in this circumstance and these children should not have access to colleagues through social media, ever.

However, it is not appropriate for the employer to insist that there is no social media contact between the adults. In this circumstance, staff should advise the HR department that they have contact with the parents of children in the school and the basis of this relationship – i.e. they are a sibling, close family friend etc. and a note will be added to the employment file of the colleague dated and signed by the CEO. Staff are expected to be proactive about this and advise the Trust as early as possible.

Mobile Phones

Personal mobile phones – staff (including volunteers, contractors and anyone else otherwise engaged by the school) are not permitted to make or receive calls, or send texts, or use their personal mobile phone whilst children are present. Use of a personal mobile phone is restricted to non-contact time, and to areas of work where pupils are not permitted to access – i.e. staffroom.

Using a personal mobile phone for work purposes

As a general rule, if you need to use a mobile phone for work purposes, you will be provided with one. You should not use a personal mobile phone for work purposes. However, some staff may prefer, for ease of access, to connect a personal device – phone/tablet to work email. Under such circumstances, and to comply with our Data Protection expectations, not information should be downloaded and stored onto private devices.

Work provided mobile phone

Some staff are provided with a mobile phone to assist them in their duties. Staff must ensure that the phone is only ever used for work based functions and that all communication and conduct linked to the device is appropriate and professional at all times.

Staff should not incur additional costs to their phone contract beyond the scope of why it has been provided. For example, it should not be used abroad unless specifically for work

purposes – like a school trip. Where costs are incurred, either intentionally or accidentally – for example with data roaming charges, staff will be expected to meet these costs.

Physical Contact and Personal Privacy

There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for staff to have physical contact with children, however it is crucial that they only do so in ways appropriate to their professional role and in relation to the pupil's individual needs and any agreed care plan. Any physical contact should be in response to the child's needs at the time, of limited duration and appropriate to their age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity and background. Adults should therefore, use their professional judgement at all times.

Not all children feel comfortable about certain types of physical contact; this should be recognised and, wherever possible, adults should seek the pupil's permission before initiating contact and be sensitive to any signs that they may be uncomfortable or embarrassed. Staff should acknowledge that some pupils are more comfortable with touch than others and/or may be more comfortable with touch from some adults than others. Staff must not make gratuitous physical contact with pupils and should avoid attributing 'touching' to their style as a way of relating to pupils.

Pupils with special educational needs or disabilities may require more physical contact to assist their everyday learning. The arrangements should be understood and agreed by all concerned, justified in terms of the pupil's needs, consistently applied and open to scrutiny.

Unavoidable contact

In certain curriculum areas, such as PE, drama or music, staff may need to initiate some physical contact with children, for example, to demonstrate technique in the use of a piece of equipment, adjust posture, or support a child so they can perform an activity safely or prevent injury. Physical contact should take place only when it is necessary in relation to a particular activity. It should take place in a safe and open environment i.e. one easily observed by others and last for the minimum time necessary. The extent of the contact should be made clear and undertaken with the permission of the pupil. Contact should be relevant to their age / understanding and adults should remain sensitive to any discomfort expressed verbally or non-verbally by the pupil.

It is good practice that all parties clearly understand at the outset, what physical contact is necessary and appropriate in undertaking specific activities. Keeping parents/carers and pupils informed of the extent and nature of any physical contact may also prevent allegations of misconduct or abuse arising.

Intimate personal care

Our schools (where appropriate) should have clear nappy or pad changing and intimate / personal care policy which ensure that the health, safety, independence and welfare of children is promoted and their dignity and privacy are respected. Arrangements for intimate and personal care should be open and transparent and accompanied by recording systems. Pupils should be encouraged to act as independently as possible and to undertake as much of their own personal care as is possible and practicable. When assistance is required, this should normally be undertaken by one member of staff, however, they should try to ensure that another appropriate adult is in the vicinity who is aware of the task to be undertaken and that, wherever possible, they are visible and/or audible.

Intimate or personal care procedures should not involve more than one member of staff unless the pupil's care plan specifies the reason for this. A signed record should be kept of all intimate and personal care tasks undertaken and, where these have been carried out in another room, should include times left and returned. Any vulnerability, including those that may arise from a physical or learning difficulty should be considered when formulating the individual pupil's care plan.

The views of parents, carers and the pupil, regardless of their age and understanding, should be actively sought in formulating the plan and in the necessary regular reviews of these arrangements. Any changes to the care plan should be made in writing and without delay, even if the change in arrangements is temporary; e.g. staff shortages, changes to staff rotas, etc.

Intimate and personal care should not be carried out by an adult that the child does not know. Volunteers and visiting staff from other schools should not undertake care procedures.

Pupils are entitled to respect and privacy at all times and especially when in a state of undress, including, for example, when changing, toileting and showering. However, there needs to be an appropriate level of supervision in order to safeguard pupils, satisfy health and safety considerations and ensure that bullying or teasing does not occur. This supervision should be appropriate to the needs and age of the children concerned and sensitive to the potential for embarrassment.

Behaviour management and physical intervention

Our schools should provide a positive learning environment, where children and staff build relationships of trust and understanding, where the rights of the child are respected and consideration is given to the children's liberty.

All members of staff must avoid any form of degrading or humiliating treatment to punish a child or use force as a means of punishment. Staff are expected to act as role models and should avoid shouting at children other than as a warning in an emergency situation. Adults may reasonably intervene to prevent a child from committing a criminal offence, injuring themselves or others, causing damage to property or engaging in behaviour prejudicial to good order and to maintain good order and discipline.

The use of physical intervention should, however, be avoided wherever possible and, where necessary, should only use minimum force and for the shortest time needed. All members of staff are expected to understand and to follow the School's Behaviour Policy.

The policy should encourage staff to find alternative solutions and avoid physical intervention with a child including: understanding triggers, defusing the situation and/or distracting the child e.g. blowing a whistle, etc.

Guidance should include guidance on ways you can physically intervene to prevent least risk to adults, children and others including shepherding/guiding, blocking and holding/leading, etc.

All incidents where staff feel that they have used force to modify behaviour or conduct should be recorded. It is not necessary to record every incident of contact with a child, but where a member of staff perceives that contact has been received at all negatively, they are advised to record the circumstances.

One to One situations with Pupils

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 that are not doing so.

Staff working in one to one situations with pupils are more vulnerable to allegations. Staff must recognise this possibility and plan and conduct accordingly.

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 where possible that others can access
- Others can see into the room

- A colleague or line manager knows this is taking place
- Monitoring records/logs are kept for quiet areas (i.e. Sensory Rooms)

Staff should avoid contact alone with pupils, if possible.

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 the Headteacher.

Normally the only exception to this would be one-to-one with a qualified counsellor to ensure client confidentiality and privacy whilst working within ethical guidelines. In these cases, the BACP Ethics Framework for the Counselling Professionals regarding protecting client confidentiality and privacy will apply.

Staff must follow the Trusts Safeguarding policy at all times. Individuals should familiarise themselves with these documents and other relevant schools policies and procedures.

Transporting Pupils

Staff should not regularly transport pupils in their own vehicles. In some exceptional cases, where an alternative form of transport is not available, authorisation must be obtained from their parent/guardian AND the Headteacher or other senior colleague with delegated authority to do so.

Where possible, staff should not transport a pupil alone and pupils must travel in the rear passenger seats. Staff should ensure that their behaviour is safe and that the transport arrangements and vehicle meet all legal requirements. They must ensure that the vehicle is roadworthy and appropriately insured and that the maximum capacity is not exceeded.

Educational Visits and After-School Activities

Staff should take particular care when supervising pupils in the less formal atmosphere of an educational visit, particularly in a residential setting, or after-school activity. Staff remain in a position of Trust and the same standards and expectations of conduct apply.

Photography, Videos and other Creative Arts

Many school activities involves recording images. These may be undertaken as part of the curriculum, extra-school activities, for publicity or to celebrate achievement. The Data Protection Act of 2018 affects the use of photography. An image of a child is personal data and it is, therefore, a requirement of the Act that consent is obtained from the parent of a child for any images made such as those used by school websites, productions or other purposes.

Using images of pupils for publicity purposes will require the age-appropriate consent of the individual concerned and their legal guardians. Images must not be displayed on websites or in publications or in a public place with such consent being obtained. The definition of public place includes areas where visitors to the school have access. Consent should be recorded and it is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to provide this information.

When using a photograph/videos the following guidance must be followed:

- If the photograph is used, avoid naming the pupil
- If the pupil is named, avoid using the photograph
- Images must be stored securely and used only by those authorised to do so
- Be clear about the purpose of the activity and what will happen to the photographs when the lesson/activity is concluded
- Ensure that a senior member of staff is aware that the photograph/image/equipment is being used and for what purpose

- Ensure that all images are available for scrutiny in or to screen for acceptability
- Be able to justify the images made
- Do not make images in one to one situations
- Do not take, display or distribute images of pupils unless there is consent to do so
- Video material shown in class must be age and content appropriate

Acceptable Use of Technology and Electric Communication

The Schools have a separate policy on internet use, electronic communication and security which forms part of this Code of Conduct.

Under no circumstances should adults in the school access inappropriate images, view material that is illegal, inappropriate or likely to be deemed as offensive. This includes, but is not limited to, sending obscene emails, gambling, and viewing inappropriate content – this could lead to disciplinary sanctions and may also be a criminal offence. Accessing indecent images of children on the internet, and making, storing or disseminating such material, is illegal and is likely to lead to criminal prosecution and may result in barring from working with children.

The Trust retains the right to monitor all electronic communication in/out of the Trust including emails and all traffic over the School's internet.

Smoking and other substances policy

All Bridgwater and Taunton College Trust Academies are smoke and 'vape' free. It is unacceptable for any member of staff to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs whilst discharging their duties or representing the Trust. Staff taking medication which may affect their ability to care for children and young people should seek medical advice regarding their suitability to do.

Boarding, Residential Trips

For full details, please also see the Trips and Visits Policy. Employees should take particular care when supervising students in the less formal atmosphere of a residential setting or after Academy activity. The more relaxed relationships that may promote successful activities can be misinterpreted by children and young people. It is important to emphasise that the standards of professional conduct and behaviour expected of employees should be no different to that which applies within the Academy. Employees should be aware of the particular care, which should be taken with older, more mature students in these circumstances.

Where boarding takes place, there is a risk that relationship boundaries between staff and students can become blurred. Boarding staff should take extra care to maintain professional relationships and should ensure all students are treated fairly and equitably. Boundaries with parents/carers in these settings need to also be observed. Any small gifts, rewards or treats must be fair, transparent and open to all students to avoid claims of favouritism.

Where Boarding or Residential activities take place, special consideration should be given to students' sleeping arrangements. In cases where a member of staff needs to enter a dormitory or bedroom, students' rights to privacy must be maintained.

In cases where students attend staff residence whilst boarding or on a residential trip, the student may knock on the staff member's door in an emergency, however must not enter the member of staff's residence or room.

Under no circumstances should a child be asked to assist adults with children or task, either for or without reward, at or in their private accommodation. This guidance also applies to all other persons living in or visiting private accommodation.

Sharing Concerns and Recording Incidents

All staff must be vigilant and share concerns and report incidents. Whistle blowing is the mechanism by which staff can voice their concerns, made in good faith, without fear of repercussion. The following 'red flag' behaviours give indications of the kind of situations which should be shared with the Headteacher or CEO. An adult who:

- Allows pupils to be treated badly; pretends not to know it is happening.
- Gossips/shares information inappropriately
- Demonstrates inappropriate or discriminatory behaviour and/or uses inappropriate language
- Dresses in a way that is inappropriate for their role
- Does not treat pupils fairly – demonstrates favouritism
- Demonstrates a lack of understanding about personal and professional boundaries
- Uses their position of trust to intimidate, threaten, coerce or undermine
- Appears to have an inappropriate, special or different relationship with a pupil or pupils
- Seems to seek out unnecessary opportunities to be alone with a pupil

Child Safeguarding Competencies are necessary for staff and volunteers who work with Children and Young People

Emotional Awareness

- Aware of the range of emotions in themselves and others
- Demonstrates empathy for the concerns of others
- Listens to and understands directly and indirectly expressed feelings
- Encourages others to express themselves openly
- Manages strong emotions and responds constructively to the source of the problems
- Listens to personal comments without becoming defensive
- In highly stressful situations, keeps own feelings in check, takes constructive action and calms others down
- Has a range of mechanisms for dealing with stress, can recognise when to use them and does so
- Shows respect for others' feelings, views and circumstances

Working within Professional Boundaries

- Demonstrates professional curiosity
- Accepts responsibility and accountability for own work and can define the responsibilities of others
- Recognises the limits of own authority within the role
- Seeks and uses professional support appropriately
- Understands the principle of confidentiality

Ability to Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of Children and Young People

- Appreciates the significance of safeguarding and interprets this accurately for all individual pupils whatever their life circumstances
- Has a good understanding of the safeguarding agenda
- Can demonstrate an ability to contribute towards a safe environment
- Is up to date with legislation and current events
- Can demonstrate how 'best practice' is promoted
- Shows a personal commitment to safeguarding children