



# Staff Code of Conduct

EKC Schools Trust

Approval Date: January 2025

Next Approval: September 2025

## Introduction

EKC Schools Trust is committed to developing a culture in which staff and pupils thrive and has a set of core values that are the guiding principles in support of this aim. The manner in which members of staff conduct themselves is of key importance in supporting this ethos and of ensuring that the Trust's good reputation and high standards are maintained, continually improved and reflect its commitment to its pupils and the community.

This Code of Conduct has been drawn up in order to facilitate this and to ensure fairness for staff and pupils. It provides clear expectations about staff conduct and aims to ensure that fairness, professionalism and legislative compliance prevail at all times. Please note that this code of conduct is not exhaustive. If situations arise that are not covered by this code, staff should use their professional judgement and act in the best interests of the school and its pupils.

The Trust and Academies have in place a range of policies and procedures, which apply to staff. All staff should read all the Trust and Academy policies and comply with their terms. The failure of any employee to do so may result in disciplinary action being taken against them under the Trust's Disciplinary Procedure. Policies can be found on the Academies and Trust websites.

## Background

The conduct at work of all members of staff is governed by Keeping Children Safe in Education, their Contracts of Employment, by EKC Schools Trust and Academy Policies, by the Teachers' Standards, by the Trust's Financial Regulations and by legislation on such matters as Health and Safety and Employment.

The Trust expects all staff to conduct themselves in a reasonable and responsible manner when undertaking their duties and fulfilling their responsibilities, and to comply with lawful and reasonable instructions from leaders. It is expected that staff will display integrity, honesty and impartiality in all dealings and work at all times within the spirit of the Trust's mission statement and the Academy's values and ethos.

### 1. Behavioural Expectations

All staff are representing the Trust and Academy's standards and professional status at all times, whether this is in the office, in the classroom, at external training and meetings, with stakeholders and families and at presentations.

There is an expectation that all staff will behave in a responsible and professional manner and to comply with lawful and reasonable instructions, demonstrating honesty, integrity, propriety and respect for others in their behaviours.

Staff and employees must:

- (a) Comply with all Trust policies, including the Equality and Diversity Policy and refrain from any form of harassment (including sexual harassment) and discrimination against any member of the Trust or school community.
- (b) Be polite and courteous in their dealing with colleagues, pupils and clients.
- (c) Refrain from rude, coarse, profane or abusive language.
- (d) Refrain from any conduct, whether inside or outside the schools, which could bring the Trust into disrepute, at all times.
- (e) Exercise care and sensitivity in dealing with pupils, to be approachable,

understanding and discreet

- (f) Safeguard pupils from harm, and to report any concerns they have. This includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse, and neglect. Staff must familiarise themselves with the Trust Safeguarding Policy and the Policy and procedures of their Academy, alongside the Prevent initiative, and ensure they are aware of the processes to follow if they have concerns about a child.
- (g) Progress any disclosures of safeguarding concerns or suspected safeguarding concerns in accordance with Trust policy and procedures.
- (h) Not engage in gossip about other members of staff which may be hurtful and harmful, either in work or outside of work. Such activities could be slanderous and render the individual liable to prosecution.
- (i) Not report for work under the influence of illegal drugs, alcohol or other substances. It is a contravention of the Staff Disciplinary Procedure to be under the adverse influence of alcohol or any other intoxicating substances whilst partaking in school or Trust activities.
- (j) Not misuse prescription drugs. An employee may take prescribed medications but should notify Human Resources if the prescribed medication is likely to affect his/her ability to perform the job. The prescribing doctor or pharmacist will give advice on this.
- (k) Attend work dressed appropriately for the work they are undertaking and the area in which they work and that their dress and general appearance is as smart and as tidy as is practical in the circumstances. Dress that reflects different cultural backgrounds is welcomed.
- (l) Comply with the Acceptable Use Agreement within their Academy or the Trust and ensure that their online activities do not call the Trust or Academy into disrepute.

## **2. Attendance**

**2.1** Unauthorised absence is defined as any absence from work without informing the Headteacher or delegate Line Manager. This is regarded as serious misconduct and may result in disciplinary action being taken against the member of staff – this includes sickness absence which is not reported correctly. A salary deduction may be made for unauthorised absence.

**2.2** All employees will be expected to present themselves for work unless they have prior permission to be absent. In cases of sickness all employees are expected to comply with the Academy's Attendance Policy.

**2.3** In cases of sudden domestic emergency, the responsibility lies with the employee concerned to inform the line manager as soon as possible.

**2.4** Sickness absence, especially frequent or prolonged periods, may be investigated.

**2.5** Teachers need to ensure they are in School and ready to teach before the school day begins.

### 3. Pupils

**3.1** Pupils should always be treated courteously and with respect and members of staff must not swear in the presence of pupils.

**3.2** Information relating to pupils is confidential to the pupil (and to his/her parent or carer). Staff should refer to data protection policies for further information.

**3.3** Members of staff should maintain a professional relationship with pupils. If required to work on a one-to-one basis, staff will ensure that:

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

**3.4** Staff should avoid contact with pupils outside of school hours if possible, this includes exchanging personal contact details, including social media profiles.

**3.5** 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, or if a staff member is concerned at any point about a fellow staff member and a pupil, this should be reported in line with the procedures set out in our child protection and safeguarding policy.

#### **Low-level concerns about members of staff**

A low-level concern is a behaviour towards a child by a member of staff that does not meet the harm threshold, is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, and may be as simple as causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt'. For example, this may include:

- Being over-friendly with children
- Having favourites
- Taking photographs of children on a personal device
- Engaging in 1-to-1 activities where they can't easily be seen
- Humiliating pupils

Low-level concerns can include inappropriate conduct inside and outside of work.

All staff should share any low-level concerns they have using the reporting procedures set out in our Safeguarding Policy. We also encourage staff to self-refer if they find themselves in a situation that could be misinterpreted. If staff are not sure whether behaviour would be deemed a low-level concern, we encourage staff to report it.

All reports will be handled in a responsive, sensitive and proportionate way.

Unprofessional behaviour will be addressed, and the staff member supported to correct it, at an early stage.

This creates and embeds a culture of openness, trust and transparency in which our values and expected behaviour are constantly lived, monitored and reinforced by all staff, while minimising the risk of abuse.

Reporting and responding to low-level concerns is covered in more detail in our Safeguarding Policy.

Our procedures for dealing with allegations will be applied with common sense and judgement.

#### **4. Probity**

Probity may be defined as honesty or uprightness. EKC Schools Trust is publicly funded and, as such, demands the same standards as are required in other areas of public service. Theft is illegal as well as being gross misconduct and may result in prosecution as well as dismissal. Examples can include:

- (a) No item (furniture, computers, stationery etc.) may be removed from any Trust premises or Academy without express permission of relevant line management. (Small items of stationery taken home for purposes of work are excepted from this)
- (b) Private work, or work connected with an outside interest, must not be done in Trust or Academy time, nor with the use of the Trust or Academy materials or other facilities.

#### **5. Off Duty Offences**

In the event of an employee being arrested, or charged with an offence committed off duty, the Headteacher will consider whether or not the alleged offence has any implications for the person's employment. In the case of a Headteacher this will fall to the Academy Chair of Governors and CEO.

An employee convicted of a criminal offence may be dismissed in accordance with the Staff Disciplinary Procedure if in the considered opinion of the Trust the conviction renders the person unsuitable for further employment. In appropriate circumstances, alternative employment may be offered rather than dismissal.

#### **6. Communication and Social Media**

Staff's social media profiles should not be available to pupils, and staff should consider setting 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 their Academy's online safety policy and practices.

#### **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 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.

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

Effective Leadership is at the heart of the Trust's success and leaders at all levels are expected to model these behaviours in their day-to-day duties.

**Links with other policies**

This policy links with our policies on:

- Disciplinary Procedure
- Grievance Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Academy Online safety/Acceptable Use Policies
- Whistle Blowing