

Staff Code of Conduct 2026

EKC Schools Trust

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1. 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.

The code applies to all staff and casual workers, whether they are working onsite, virtually or representing EKC Schools Trust at an alternative location i.e., visiting a stakeholder, or attending a training event.

2. Background

The Trust expects all staff to conduct themselves in a diligent and responsible manner when undertaking all their duties and fulfilling all their responsibilities, and to comply with all lawful and reasonable instructions from leaders. It is expected that staff will act with integrity, honesty, fairness and impartiality without any prejudice or bias, in all dealings and work at all times within the spirit of the Trust's mission statement and the Academy's values and ethos.

Our Values

At EKC Schools Trust our Code of Conduct is rooted in our SAIL values:

- Safeguarding – Creating safe, nurturing environments where every child feels protected and valued.
- Attendance – Championing regular attendance as a foundation for learning and success.
- Inclusion – Embracing diversity and ensuring every learner feels seen, heard, and supported.
- Learning – Delivering high-quality education that inspires curiosity, ambition, and achievement.

These values guide our decisions, our relationships, and our daily practice across all roles and settings, and underpin the professional and personal conduct expectations set out below.

3. 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 and all out-of-hours school activities.

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

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.

Additionally, in Church Schools, all staff are expected to actively support and not undermine the Christian ethos, vision and values of the school in both professional conduct and relationships in and out of work.

All staff must respect the place of RE as a core subject.

Staff and employees must:

3.1 Professional and Personal Conduct

- A. Promote the values of the school, uphold the Trust's ethos and act as an ambassador within the wider community.
- B. Be reliable and committed to your duties, upholding the highest standards of integrity, honesty, and professionalism.
- C. Follow school and Trust policies and procedures consistently, including safeguarding, all education and staff policies and procedures
- D. Comply with Trust and School expectations and follow lawful and reasonable instructions as required
- E. Be punctual, fit for work, and professionally presented (dress that reflects different cultural backgrounds is welcomed), and set a positive example. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - i. Teachers need to ensure they are in School and ready to teach before the school day begins.
 - ii. 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.
 - iii. 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.
 - iv. 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.

- v. 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.
 - vi. In cases of sudden domestic emergency, the responsibility lies with the employee concerned to inform the line manager as soon as possible.
- F. Treat all members of the community with dignity and respect. Model respectful behaviour, demonstrate awareness of others' perspectives and support positive relationships. This includes, but is not limited to:
- i. Be polite and courteous in dealings with colleagues, pupils, families, the wider community and stakeholders.
 - ii. Refrain from any offensive, rude, coarse, profane, inappropriate or abusive language.
 - iii. Maintain confidentiality and respect the privacy of pupils, families, and colleagues, in line with data protection laws, and always in line with Safeguarding and safety.
 - iv. 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.
- G. Act with integrity by declaring any actual or potential conflicts of interest and by ensuring that gifts or hospitality do not compromise, or appear to compromise, professional judgement.
- H. Act as positive role models by refraining from the use of personal mobile phones in pupil or student areas during the school day, except where authorised, in line with Department for Education guidance.
- I. Comply with the Acceptable Use Agreement within their Academy and the Trust and ensure that their online activities (including AI tools and emerging technologies) do not call the Trust or Academy into disrepute. This includes, but is not limited to:
- i. 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.

3.2 Safeguarding and Safety

- A. Maintain a safe, professional relationship with pupils and families
- B. Prioritise the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people, in line with *Keeping Children Safe in Education (as well as Prevent, Working Together and other statutory guidance as amended from time to time)* and Trust/Academy Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. This includes, but is not limited to:

- i. Staff should avoid contact with pupils outside of school hours if possible, this includes exchanging personal contact details, including social media profiles.
 - ii. 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.
- C. Report any safeguarding concerns immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), following the school's safeguarding procedures. This includes, but is not limited to:
- i. 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.
- D. Champion regular attendance as a foundation for success.
- E. Ensure compliance with data protection in and outside of work, including information of a personal nature relating to staff and/or students, and all forms of communication, particularly when taking work off-site.
- F. Use technology (including AI tools and emerging technologies) responsibly and maintain professional boundaries, following the Acceptable Use Agreement and online safety policies.
- G. Take reasonable care for their own Health and Safety and that of other people. This includes, but is not limited to:
- i. It is the responsibility of every staff member who sees any dangerous situation or believes that a child or member of staff is at risk to report the matter to their line manager. Every member of staff has a duty to report the wrongdoing or suspected wrongdoing of another member of staff or student.
 - ii. It is also the responsibility of every staff member to not do anything either intentionally, recklessly, carelessly, or wilfully which might interfere with provisions made in the interest of health, safety and welfare. Nor should they work in any way which might be dangerous or a risk either to themselves, students, their colleagues or to members of the public.

3.2.1 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 be easily seen.

- Humiliating pupils.
- Bullying 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.

3.3 Collaboration and Communication

- Engage in open, respectful, and professional dialogue with all in our community, at all times, to support and foster a positive school culture, and promote trust and confidence within the school community.
- Value and act upon the contributions of parents/carers to support the welfare and learning of our children and young people.
- Be a trustworthy contributor, willing to work with others to achieve our shared goals of delivering exceptional outcomes for our children and young people.

3.4 Equality, Inclusion and Respect

- Promote equality of opportunity and challenge discrimination, bullying, harassment, including sexual harassment and victimisation.
- Understand and support the needs of vulnerable groups, including those with SEND, those working with external agencies or are Looked After, and those facing disadvantage.
- Maintain a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment, challenging discriminatory comments or actions sensitively and appropriately, in line with school policy.
- Model a sense of belonging and promote the strength in diversity.

3.5 Learning and Growth

- Support the delivery of high-quality education that inspires curiosity, ambition, and achievement.

- B. Reflect on your practice and seek opportunities for professional development.
- C. Support a culture of high expectations and continuous improvement and maintaining standards of excellence in all that staff do.
- D. Be a learner, open to feedback and committed to growth.

4. Probity

Probity may be defined as adhering to the highest principles of decency and honesty or uprightness. The 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. The Trust's resources cannot be used for personal gain
- C. 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. Staff may carry out additional work (paid or unpaid) during off-duty hours, provided it does not conflict with their official duties or adversely affect their performance. Any private work undertaken must be declared in advance to their Line Manager and permission given which will not be unreasonably withheld

If a member of staff has any doubt about the propriety of any aspect of their behaviour, they should always consult their Line Manager, Headteacher or Trust Executive Team.

5. Criminal Offences

If a staff member is charged with, or convicted of, a criminal offence (outside of employment) this must be declared, however this will not normally in itself be considered a reason for disciplinary action unless certain circumstances warrant disciplinary action. Consideration will be given to the relevance and effect the charge or conviction has to or on the member of staff's suitability to do their job and their relationship with the Trust, work colleagues and students including the impact it may have or has had on the reputation of the Trust or any of its staff.

A staff member convicted of a criminal offence even if this is not related to your work 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 or their relationship with the Trust, colleagues students or external third parties with whom we work. Only in appropriate circumstances alternative employment may be offered rather than dismissal.

6. Compliance and Accountability

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 Code works in conjunction with other policies, including the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy, Grievance Policy, and Health and Safety Policy, Whistleblowing, Online Safety and Acceptable Use, Health and Safety Policy and Disciplinary Procedure.

This Code of conduct also aligns with our shared promise:

- We believe that everyone belongs and that diversity makes our schools stronger.
- We are collaborators, willing to work with others to achieve our shared goals of delivering exceptional outcomes for our children and young people.
- We are our community's champion, supportive of all in our community, and ensuring we thrive as a Trust.
- We are listeners, learners, and proud and trustworthy contributors, always looking for ways to improve our practice and the school community.

7. Unacceptable Behaviour

Examples of unacceptable behaviour include, but are not limited to:

- harassment, bullying or victimisation;
- discriminatory behaviour;
- misuse of Trust property, systems or data;
- dishonesty, fraud or deliberate falsification of records;
- aggressive, threatening or unsafe behaviour.

This list is not exhaustive.

Breaches of this Code may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, in line with the Trust's policies. In some cases, matters may be referred to external agencies or regulators. Behaviour that constitutes gross misconduct is misconduct of such seriousness that it goes to the root of the contract and it may result in summary dismissal, in line with the Trust's Disciplinary Policy.

Staff are encouraged to raise concerns in good faith and without fear of retaliation, in line with the Trust's Whistleblowing Policy.