



# Employee Code of Conduct Policy



Written by	The Principals' Review Committee
Date for Review	March 2024
Approving Body	The Strategic Development Committee
Signed Chair of Trustees	

***Our Ambition: To be the highest performing MAT in the country  
Our Mission: To improve the communities we serve for the better***

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# The Forge Trust Staff Code of Conduct Policy

## ***Vision:***

*All children make at least good progress;  
no underperforming cohorts, groups or academies;  
all teachers enabling good or better learning; all academies aim to be outstanding.*

## **Aims**

Across the Forge Trust, we aim to maintain a caring, supportive and disciplined learning environment where children benefit from the best possible education. All staff are committed to this aim. We would like to know if you think we are not meeting your expectations, so that we have an opportunity to respond. We would also like to know your opinion on the things we do well.

## **Racial Equality & Equal Opportunities**

All children have equal access and inclusive rights to the curriculum regardless of their age, gender, race, religion, belief, disability or ability. We plan work that is differentiated for the performance of all groups and individuals. The Forge Trust is committed to creating a positive climate that will enable everyone to work free from racial intimidation and harassment, and to achieve their full potential. Our Equality Policy is available and expands upon this further.

All staff have equal access and inclusive rights to their work regardless of their age, gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, belief, disability or ability. The Forge Trust is committed to creating a positive climate that will enable everyone to work free from racial intimidation and harassment and to achieve their full potential. Our Equality Policy is available and expands on this further.

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1** The Board of Trustees will review and monitor the impact of the code annually with the CEO.
- 1.2** The Board of Trustees has adopted the policy set out in this document to provide a clear framework for the exercise of its powers and discretions in relation to all staff employed in the academy and paid from within the academy budget.
- 1.3** This code of conduct should be read in conjunction with the Academy Staff Induction Policy, the Staff Handbook, the Whistle Blowing Policy and the Safeguarding Policy.

- 1.4** In accordance with the latest DFE 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' statutory guidance, this code has been adopted by the trust in order for staff in each academy to be fully aware of the standards of personal and professional conduct in relation to safeguarding children. This policy supports existing academy systems to ensure that all children are safe. The code gives a clear framework for staff to understand their responsibilities, and will be discussed during the course of their employment. For example, at induction and at team meetings to ensure the code is understood by all staff and applied appropriately. It will also be monitored and positively promoted in each academy.
- 1.5** Every member of the academy staff will be required to read this code of conduct and date and sign to confirm that they have read and understood the document. For new staff it will form part of their induction. Where staff have any questions or concerns about the requirements of this code then advice should be sought from their line manager or the Principal of the academy.
- 1.6** There is an expectation that all employees within The Forge Trust will conduct themselves in a manner commensurate with the highest standard, in order to maintain public trust and confidence in themselves as employees and the school generally. As a result, they are beyond reproach in the performance of their duties.
- 1.7** Each member of academy staff has a duty to ensure that the appropriate standards of conduct are upheld both by themselves and by colleagues.
- 1.8** Part of the responsibilities of Ofsted Inspection is to assure safe and secure provision for children, young people and learners across all remits through effective inspection and regulation. Safeguarding the welfare of children is part of Ofsted's core business for all staff, who are expected to be aware of their responsibilities in this regard. A code of conduct is essential to ensure school staff understand the required expectations of them.

## **2. Underlying Principles**

- 2.1** All school staff must act within the law whilst undertaking their official duties. Staff must not undermine fundamental values, including democracy, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
- 2.2** Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks (for example KCSIE) which set out their professional duties and responsibilities. Where staff are members of professional bodies, they must also comply with any standards of conduct which are set by that body. The conduct of all teachers must always be in line with the Teacher's Standards and for Headteachers, the National Standards of Excellence for Headteachers January 2015.

- 2.3** Staff must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the academy, and maintain high standards in their own conduct, performance, attendance and punctuality. In relation to punctuality, teaching staff are expected to arrive in time to ensure they are adequately prepared for sessions and at an absolute minimum would need to be in class by 8.30am in the morning. Staff should ensure that personal beliefs are not expressed in ways which exploit pupils' vulnerability or might lead them to act inappropriately or to break the law or the policies and procedures of the academy. Staff should always show respect for the rights of others. Teachers and leaders also need to ensure that work related communications are carried out through appropriate channels e.g. work email addresses rather than personal emails or texting.
- 2.4** Staff are expected to provide the highest possible standard of conduct and service. Where staff are aware of any contraventions of this Code, illegality, misconduct or breach of procedure they should notify their Principal.
- 2.5** The Code does not seek to address every possible circumstance, and simply because a particular action is not addressed within the Code, this does not condone that action by omission. Staff at times will be required to exercise their professional judgement and act reasonably at all times. Where a member of staff is unsure about how to respond to a particular situation, guidance and support should be sought from the Principal, Hub Leader or CEO as appropriate from an escalation point of view. Where an employee feels unable to report a concern in this way they should refer to the Whistleblowing Policy.
- 2.6** A failure to follow this Code could lead to the initiation of the safeguarding/disciplinary procedures.

### **3. Safeguarding**

- 3.1** Staff must safeguard children's well-being, in accordance with statutory provisions, the local Safeguarding Children Board procedures and their academy's child protection policy. Staff must report any safeguarding concerns immediately to the designated safeguarding lead person in the academy and ensure the Principal is informed. All staff have a responsibility to take appropriate action and work professionally with other services accessed by the academy as required.
- 3.2** Section 5B of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 places a statutory duty upon teachers, to report to the police cases where they discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under the age of 18. The teacher should consider and discuss any such case with the academy's designated safeguarding lead and involve children's social care/ police as appropriate in line with the duty.
- 3.3** Radicalisation refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of extremism. All staff must work to protect children from the risk of radicalisation, and be aware that this is part of the wider safeguarding duties in the academy in line with the Prevent Strategy. Staff must intervene to prevent vulnerable people being radicalised and report any such instances or concerns to the Principal.

- 3.4** All staff must be fully aware of all of the academy policies and procedures relating to safeguarding and how to access them. In this academy the relevant documents are located or may be accessed through the school office or on the school website. Given their position of trust, all staff must ensure that they do not put themselves in any situation where their conduct or behaviour with any pupil could be misconstrued. Any allegations of inappropriate contact with pupils will be investigated according to the academy's Disciplinary Procedure.
- 3.5** If a child reports **any** safeguarding concerns to any member of staff, this must be reported **immediately** to the designated safeguarding lead. Staff must not promise confidentiality to a child and always ensure that any actions taken are in the best interests of a child.
- 3.6** All academies should promote a culture of openness, trust and transparency. Where a member of staff has any safeguarding or other concern about the conduct or behaviour of another member of staff, the concerns must be reported immediately to the Principal, and where appropriate to the designated safeguarding lead. Concerns about the Principal should be reported to the CEO; concerns about the CEO should be reported to the Chair of Trustees. Serious case reviews publicised recently in the media have highlighted missed opportunities to deal with concerns at an early stage because staff have not shared information with the leadership of the school. It is also important that all staff and volunteers should know how to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practices and potential failures in the academy's safeguarding regime through the Whistle Blowing Policy or by directly contacting the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).
- 3.7** All staff must be aware that it is a criminal offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (as amended) for anyone to engage in a sexual relationship or grooming for such a relationship with a child aged under 18 with whom they are in a position of trust. It is therefore vital that staff work within appropriate professional boundaries at all times with children and young people with whom they are in a position of trust. If staff are unsure about what action to take or how they should respond to a particular situation, they must immediately contact the designated safeguarding lead/Principal. Any concerns about an inappropriate relationship between a member of staff and a student/pupil (irrespective of their age) will be fully investigated under the Disciplinary Procedure for school staff as a potential issue of gross misconduct.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In the Sexual Offences Act 2003 in terms of grooming the person committing the offence has to be over 18 and the victim under 16. The wording regarding grooming is:

- (1) A person aged 18 or over (A) commits an offence if—
- (a) having met or communicated with another person (B) on at least two earlier occasions, he—
    - (i) intentionally meets B, or
    - (ii) travels with the intention of meeting B in any part of the world,
  - (b) at the time, he intends to do anything to or in respect of B, during or after the meeting and in any part of the world, which if done will involve the commission by A of a relevant offence,
  - (c) B is under 16, and
  - (d) A does not reasonably believe that B is 16 or over.
- This is from Part 1 Section 15 Meeting a child following sexual grooming etc. of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (page 7).

In terms of abuse of position of trust: sexual activity with a child then the person committing the offence has to be over 18 and the victim under 18, the wording regarding this is:

- (1) A person aged 18 or over (A) commits an offence if—
- (a) he intentionally touches another person (B),
  - (b) the touching is sexual,
  - (c) A is in a position of trust in relation to B,

## **4. Equality issues**

**4.1** Staff must ensure that equality policies in relation to employment and their duties and responsibilities are adhered to. This Trust believes in equality and will not tolerate any behaviour which could be construed as harassment, intimidation, unfair discrimination or victimisation, by academy or Trust staff against pupils, colleagues, parents, governors and other visitors. Staff should not by their actions, manner or speech be discriminatory with regards to a person's age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation or trade union membership. All policies will include a Racial Equality and Diversity statement.

## **5. Health and Safety**

**5.1** It is the responsibility of all staff, trustees, parents and visitors to the school to take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and others and to assist in the creation of a safe work environment.

**5.2** All visitors to the academy will be managed in accordance with the Guidance on Visitors including VIPs to schools.

**5.3** Staff have a responsibility to inform the Principal of any medical condition/illness they have during the course of their employment which may impact on their fitness to undertake their duties or on the health and safety of themselves, pupils, other staff, trustees of the academy or visitors.

## **6. Relationships and contact between academy staff - the public, parents and pupils**

**6.1** All employees should always act in a courteous, efficient and impartial manner towards all individual pupils, groups of pupils, staff, parents, trustees, colleagues and other individuals. Staff must always treat pupils with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, observing proper boundaries appropriate to their position.

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(d) where subsection (2) applies, A knows or could reasonably be expected to know of the circumstances by virtue of which he is in a position of trust in relation to B, and

(e) either—

(i) B is under 18 and A does not reasonably believe that B is 18 or over, or

(ii) B is under 13.

This is from Part 1 Section 16 abuse of position of trust: sexual activity with a child (page 7-8).

- 6.2** Guidance on Safer Working Practice is explicit that staff should not establish or seek to establish social contact with pupils for the purpose of securing friendship or to pursue or strengthen a relationship. This is important because:
- Such contact can blur the professional boundaries between the staff member and pupil;
  - Such contact can compromise confidentiality;
  - Such contact can place both pupil and the staff member in a position of vulnerability;
  - Pupils at the academy may struggle to differentiate between the role of staff member and friend and therefore have expectations which the staff member cannot fulfil.
- 6.3** It is the policy of the school that there will be no personal contact other than in certain exempted circumstances between staff and current/former pupils of school age outside the normal school work environment. This includes non-direct contact such as telephone, text messaging, email or social networking sites. Any proposed work related contact, outside of the normal working environment, must be agreed in advance by the principal, be recorded and monitored. Unexpected contact with pupils should be kept to a minimum, e.g. brief greeting. Any transport of pupils must be agreed in line with the school policy and always agreed with the Principal.
- 6.4** Academy staff should use their professional judgement and correspondence received by a member of staff from former pupils, the public or parents or other significant contact should be discussed with their line manager/Principal as appropriate and filed with any response in the appropriate academy records system.
- 6.5** Staff should be extremely cautious when using social networking sites outside of work and avoid publishing, or allowing to be published, any material, including comments or images which could damage their professional reputation, the reputation of the academy/trust, and/or bring the academy/trust into disrepute. Where staff do choose to use social networking sites it is strongly recommended that profiles should be set as 'private' and under no circumstances should staff allow access to pupils, their families and/or carers.
- 6.6** Staff should not give their personal details such as home/mobile phone number; home or email address to pupils and be professional at all times in accordance with the ethos of this code.
- 6.7** Where former pupils who are under the age of 18 and still in receipt of education in whatever educational setting make contact with a member of staff, staff must discuss their response to any such significant contact with their current line manager/Principal.



**6.8** If a former pupil requires assistance or some form of help that lies outside of the academy, they should be signposted to the relevant services. However, if the Principal agrees that further contact with the staff member is relevant and appropriate, a clear plan of involvement, including outcomes and timescales must be drawn up and agreed by the Principal. The Principal must ensure adequate support/supervision is available to the staff member and all contact be recorded.

**6.9** Where a close relationship develops between a member of academy staff and an ex-pupil which may raise concerns about the member of staff's suitability to work with children, the principal should immediately contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for guidance.

## **7. Confidentiality**

**7.1** All academy data and information should be managed in line with legislative requirements, good practice and the agreed academy procedures. Staff and trustees should be aware that the requirement to maintain confidentiality of information about pupils, their families, colleagues and any matters relating to the academy itself apply to all forms of communication, including social networking sites, academy and personal email accounts.

## **8. Use of personal mobile phones, laptops and tablets**

**8.1** Personal equipment, such as mobile phones, or other photographic equipment must not be used at any time in lessons or during other contact with pupils and should be kept securely with other personal belongings.

**8.2** If there is a requirement for staff to take photographs of children for academy purposes, this must be carried out using equipment provided by the academy and with the agreement of the Principal in line with the agreed trust procedures. Information and images should only be retained for as long as required in line with data protection legislation.

**8.4** Staff may use mobile telephones for use on academy trips and on a residential but they should not be used at any time in contact with pupils unless in an emergency situation.

**8.5** WhatsApp must NOT be used for any school-based communication; all content of such conversations will be disclosed as part of a subject access request response.

**8.6** Smartphones may be issued to employees for the purpose of conducting school business. Staff must complete a smartphone agreement form upon receipt and follow all guidance.

## **9. Use of academy premises or facilities for work not connected with the trust**

**9.1** Academy staff must not use the academy's premises or facilities for activities which are not connected with their employment at the academy, without agreement from the Principal or trustees. This includes the personal use of the academy email, telephones, computers, photocopiers, or other equipment.

**9.2** Internal email systems and academy computer equipment should always be used in accordance with the appropriate trust policies.

## **10. Disclosure of information**

**10.1** Staff must not disclose information given to them in confidence without consent except for that relating to safeguarding of a child which must be passed onto the LADO. Advice should always be sought from their line manager or Principal on the appropriate use of academy data and disclosure of academy information, if there is any uncertainty.

**10.2** Any actions taken by the academy must always be in line with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1984 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Academy staff should not use confidential information obtained in the course of their employment with the trust for personal use, nor should they pass it on to others who might use it for unauthorised purposes.

## **11. Academy staff facing criminal charges**

**11.1** Any member of staff, volunteer or trustee who during the course of their employment or duties with the trust faces criminal charges or who receives a new caution or conviction must inform their line manager, or in the case of the CEO the Chair of Trustees.

## **12. Childcare (Disqualification) Regulations 2009**

**12.1** In accordance with the above Regulations, the academy has an agreed policy setting out the legal responsibility to ensure that it does not knowingly recruit or continue to employ, a person in relevant employment, who is disqualified under the Regulations as this would constitute a criminal offence. The relevant checks will be undertaken on recruitment and disclosure by an existing employee is an ongoing process. Where a member of staff or volunteer becomes aware of relevant information that may lead to disqualification during the course of their employment they must report this information to the Principal/Chair of Trustees immediately. Please refer to The Forge Trust Recruitment and Selection Policy.

## **13. Conflict of interest**

**13.1** Staff should declare any personal interest that could bring about a potential conflict with the academy's interests. Trust/ academy staff must immediately declare to their Principal/CEO any financial interests or non-financial interests which could or could be perceived to conflict with their role within the academy.

**13.2** Staff are required not to take up employment outside of the academy which conflicts or potentially conflicts with the academy's interests. Any staff considering

employment with an outside organisation should always seek permission from their Principal/Chair of Trustees as appropriate.

#### **14. Acceptance of gifts**

**14.1** It is reasonable for a member of staff to accept modest gifts from pupils, especially at the end of a school year or at Christmas. Staff should be mindful that by accepting a gift that it could be perceived that they may potentially be influenced, or seen to be influenced in their actions or decisions. The giving or receiving of gifts to or from pupils should be in line with the trust Finance Policy.

**15.** As stated in paragraph 2.4 this code of conduct does not seek to address every possible circumstance and staff are responsible for exercising professional judgement in referring matters to or seeking advice from the Principal or governing body as appropriate.

#### **16. Probationary Periods**

**N.B** New employees of the Forge Trust are always subject to a six-month probationary period.

## **Appendix One**

### **The Forge Trust Approach to Drug, Alcohol and Substance Misuse**

#### SECTION 16 DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

1. While you are at work, you must be in a condition to do your job safely.
2. The effects of drinking alcohol cause you to perform your work less well. It may also be a health and safety risk. Because of this, you must not drink alcohol:
  - On the same day prior to commencing employment duties;
  - During your working hours;
  - During a lunch break from work;
  - On any other break during your working day;
  - At functions such as conferences within working hours.
3. If you drink alcoholic drinks at these times, this may be regarded as misconduct or gross misconduct, which could lead to dismissal.
4. Where it is clearly evident that your performance is impaired whilst undertaking your employment duties during working time, due to the influence alcohol or drugs, this may be regarded as gross misconduct. If you have previously declared a substance related problem this will be dealt with under the appropriate policy.
5. Trustees believe that consuming alcohol during working hours or on school premises is inappropriate and could put at risk the health, education, safety or welfare of yourself, pupils and staff. This may be regarded as an act of misconduct. Exceptions to this will be agreed in advance and notified to staff by the Principal/Trustees for events such as staff end of term gatherings and PTA functions. When on school trips prior approval must be gained from the Principal before any social consumption of alcohol is undertaken.
6. If you use illegal drugs, or prescription drugs that have not been prescribed for you, this will not be acceptable. This may result in the school contacting the police to report it. Use of illegal drugs or prescription drugs that have not been prescribed for you before or during work, on breaks or at functions may be considered misconduct or gross misconduct, which could lead to dismissal.
7. The Trust recognises its responsibility to staff and in the event of a member of staff disclosing a health issue relating to drug, alcohol or substance misuse. Appropriate support would be made sought in the form of counselling, occupational health or referral to appropriate services.