



Code of Conduct

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Approved By	FARR Committee	Status	Statutory
Last Review	May 2023	Next Review	May 2024

Details of Policy Updates

Date	Details
May 2022	Insert 'The job title of Headteacher is interchangeable with Head of School and Principal in all North Star Academy Trust policies.'
	'Academies Financial Handbook' changed to 'Academy Trust Handbook' throughout
May 2023	Introduction: reference to KCSIE and funding agreement.
	4. Safeguarding Take out reference to Safeguarding, Attendance and Wellbeing Lead. Insert Paragraphs 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 in line with KCSIE updates.

1. INTRODUCTION

All employees have personal and legal responsibilities, including; treating others with dignity and respect; acting honestly, using public funds and school equipment appropriately, adhering to health and safety guidelines and practising equal opportunities at all times.

In line with the statutory safeguarding guidance [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#), we should have a staff code of conduct, which should cover low-level concerns, allegations against staff and whistle-blowing, as well as acceptable use of technologies (including the use of mobile devices), staff/pupil relationships and communications, including the use of social media.

This policy also complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

The code of Conduct for Employees sets out the standards of conduct expected from you and applies to all the trust's employees.

The school's employees are looked to for example by children so their behaviour must uphold the standards expected in a school at all times.

These expectations are set out below and should be fully observed by all staff, including the Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team.

This document is not a prescriptive guide to what employees should and should not do. It highlights the principal areas where employees need to be aware of their responsibilities when working in the school and is a framework for behaviour. Employees should ensure they are familiar with the specific policies that underpin these behaviours through reference to the documents highlighted in the "Required Reading" throughout the code. If these documents are not supplied at induction, the employee should ask the school for copies.

The job title of Headteacher is interchangeable with Head of School and Principal in all North Star Academy Trust policies.

2. COMPLIANCE WITH THE CODE OF CONDUCT

The Code of Conduct forms part of an employee's contract. Failure to comply with it and with the associated trust policies ("Required Reading") may result in disciplinary action being taken. The trust reserves the right to take legal action against employees where breaches of the Code warrant such action. The seven principles of public life defined by the Committee on Standards in Public Life applies to all public sector employees (Appendix D) and therefore applies to you.

3. PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL BEHAVIOUR AND CONDUCT

All trust staff are expected to demonstrate consistently high standards of personal and professional conduct and maintain high personal standards of ethics and behaviour both in and outside school, including (but not limited to) timekeeping, appropriate clothing, demeanour and language.

3a. Treating other people with dignity and respect

All staff are expected to treat all colleagues, pupils, members of the school and trust community and all other contacts, with dignity, courtesy and respect and must not abuse them verbally or physically. You must not harass or bully or be insubordinate to colleagues

Staff are required to comply with the trust's equality policies in respect of colleagues, students and anyone else they may come into contact with. This duty includes promoting equality for persons with “protected characteristics” i.e. age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, and have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation;
- advance equality of opportunity; and
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it;
- show tolerance of and respect the rights of others;
- ensure that personal beliefs are not expressed in ways that could exploit pupils’ vulnerability or might lead them to break the law;

Unacceptable behaviour such as discrimination, bullying, harassment or intimidation will not be tolerated in our schools. This includes physical and verbal abuse and use of inappropriate language or unprofessional behaviour with colleagues, pupils and parents.

3b. Appropriate relationships with children

Trust employees are expected to act in an open and transparent way that would not lead any reasonable person to suspect their actions or intent. Employees in schools are in a position of trust and have a duty to protect children and young people from discrimination and harm and to maintain appropriate professional boundaries. It is equally important for staff to avoid behaviour that might be misinterpreted by others in order to protect both children/ young people and themselves. Staff are required to read and understand school policies on safeguarding, child protection and Keeping Children Safe in Education.

3c. Professional behaviour

Employees must not misuse or misrepresent their position, qualifications or experience or bring the reputation of the trust into disrepute.

Staff must have proper regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the trust and maintain high standards in their own attendance and punctuality.

Unprofessional behaviour may lead to disciplinary action and where relevant, referral to the Department for Education and/or Disclosure and Barring Service.

3d. Criminal actions

Trust employees must inform the CEO (board of trustees if the employee is the CEO) immediately if they are arrested or subject to a police enquiry, investigation, pending prosecution, a summons to appear before a court of law, criminal conviction, caution or ban. The CEO or board of trustees will discuss this with the employee in the context of their role and responsibilities in order to help safeguard children and other employees at the trust.

Serious misconduct or criminal offences committed during or outside working hours/work, which could potentially bring you or the trust into disrepute, will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Failure to disclose relevant information or deliberately withholding such information can amount to a breach of trust and confidence and may lead to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

3e. Required reading:

- NSAT Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (current version)
- NSAT Equality and Diversity Policy
- (Teachers only) Teachers' Standards – available on the DfE website
- Appendix D

4. SAFEGUARDING

Safeguarding of the school's children in the trust is a statutory requirement. Any safeguarding related concerns should be referred immediately to the School's Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Staff have a duty to safeguard pupils from harm, and to report any concerns they have. This includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse, and neglect.

Staff will familiarise themselves with our child protection and 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.

4a. Allegations that may meet the harm threshold

This section is based on 'Section 1: Allegations that may meet the harm threshold' in part 4 of Keeping Children Safe in Education.

This section applies to all cases in which it is alleged that anyone working in the school, including a supply teacher, volunteer or contractor, has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child, and/or
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, and/or
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children, and/or

- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children – this includes behaviour taking place inside or outside of school

We will deal with any such allegation quickly and in a fair and consistent way that provides effective child protection while also supporting the individual who is the subject of the allegation.

4b. 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 child protection and 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 child protection and safeguarding policy.

4c. Whistle-blowing

Whistle-blowing reports wrongdoing that it is “in the public interest” to report.

Examples linked to safeguarding include:

- Pupils’ or staff’s health and safety being put in danger
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation or statutory requirement
- Attempts to cover up the above, or any other wrongdoing in the public interest

- Staff are encouraged to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible. Their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated, and their confidentiality will be respected.

Staff should consider the examples above when deciding whether their concern is of a whistle-blowing nature. Consider whether the incident(s) was illegal, breached statutory or school procedures, put people in danger or was an attempt to cover any such activity up.

For our school's detailed whistle-blowing process, please refer to our whistle-blowing policy.

5. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

An employee is required to declare their interest where they are part of a group or organisation which could be considered to be in conflict with the ethos of the trust. Membership of a trade union or staff representative group need not be declared.

Employees should raise suggestions or concerns about service delivery with their line manager/Headteacher. Suggestions about service delivery in areas of the trust which the employee does not work in can be raised with the CEO.

Employees must declare to the trust any relationship with any individual(s) where this might cause a conflict with trust activities, for example, a relationship with a governor, trustee, another staff member or a contractor who provides services to the trust.

Failure to make a relevant declaration of interests is a very serious breach of trust and therefore if employees are in doubt about a declaration, they are advised to take advice from the Director of Finance and Operations (DFO).

All declarations, including nil returns, should be submitted in writing to the DFO on the trust's Register of Business Interests proforma (Appendix B).

6. PROBITY OF RECORDS AND OTHER DOCUMENTS

The deliberate falsification of documents is not acceptable. Where an employee falsifies records or other documents, including those held electronically, this will be regarded as a serious disciplinary matter and potentially a criminal offence.

Failure to disclose full earnings by an employee who has, or is, claiming any benefit (either directly or indirectly) will be regarded as gross misconduct and could lead to dismissal and a referral to the police.

7. FINANCIAL INDUCEMENTS

All trust employees must comply with the regulations contained in the Academy Trust Handbook and the trust Gifts & Hospitality Policy.

Any gifts that are received should be declared, in writing, on the Register of Gifts and Hospitality pro forma (Appendix C).

7a. Required reading:

- Academy Trust Handbook.
- NSAT Gifts & Hospitality Policy

8. USE OF SCHOOL CONTACTS

Apart from participating in concessionary schemes arranged by trade unions or other such groups for their members, employees shall not use school business contacts for acquiring materials or services at trade / discount prices for non-school activities.

9. OTHER EMPLOYMENT

Employees are permitted to take up secondary employment outside the trust, as long as the activity does not constitute a conflict of interest, adversely affect their primary employment at the school or exceed the legal maximum working week of 48 hours as defined by the Working Time Regulations.

Any secondary employment must be undertaken outside the working hours of the employee's normal post and employees are required to keep the CEO (trustees if the employee is the CEO) informed of their employment at other organisations.

10. HEALTH AND SAFETY

Employees must adhere to the trust's Health and Safety policy, procedure and guidance and must ensure that they take every action to keep themselves and everyone in the school environment safe and well.

This includes taking immediate safety action in a potentially harmful situation (either at school or off-site) by complying with statutory and trust guidelines and collaborating with colleagues and other agencies.

10a. Required reading:

- NSAT Health and Safety Policy.

11. USE OF ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE MISUSE

All trust staff, workers and volunteers must set an example to the children and the community through their behaviour and put safeguarding of children first. Supplying and/or possessing and /or taking illegal drugs is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. All employees are expected to attend work without being under the influence of alcohol or other substances and without their performance being adversely impacted by the consumption of alcohol or substance misuse.

If alcohol or substance misuse impacts on an employee's working life, the trust has the right to discuss the matter with the employee and take appropriate action, having considered factors such as the trust's reputation and public confidence.

12. USE OF SCHOOL PREMISES, EQUIPMENT & COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS

Trust equipment and systems, including portable equipment (phone, email and computers) are available only for school-related activities. They must not be used for any activity that is illegal, unacceptable or inappropriate to the good conduct of trust's business or for the fulfilment of another job or for personal use unless authorised by the CEO (for the CEO authorisation is from the Chair of Trustees). This includes photocopy facilities, stationery and premises. It also applies to access provided for remote use (e.g. handheld portable devices etc.) and to staff working outside of school premises and using their own IT equipment.

Examples of misuse include;

- creating, sending or forwarding any message that could constitute bullying or harassment (on the grounds of a 'protected characteristic') or whose content or intent would be considered inappropriate or unacceptable;
- participating in forwarding chain letters, pictures or graphics etc.;
- accessing pornography;
- committing or implying commitment to any contractual arrangements;
- accessing, publication or circulation of illegal, offensive, unacceptable, inappropriate or non-work-related material;
- any illegal activities;
- posting confidential information about the school/trust and/or other employees, children or parents;
- gambling or gaming;
- unauthorised use of school facilities (or employee's personal IT equipment), for personal use during employee's working time;
- accessing any non-work related or otherwise inappropriate or unacceptable material;
- mass-mailing/mail shots ("spamming") for specific personal views, gain or other personal use which is not relevant to an employee's job.

Employees receiving inappropriate communication or material or who are unsure about whether something they propose to do might breach this policy should seek advice from the Headteacher.

The trust has the right to monitor e-mails, phone-calls, internet activity or document production, to ensure their proper use.

Communication systems may be accessed when the trust suspects that the employee has been misusing systems or facilities, or for the investigation of suspected fraud or other irregularity.

Exceptionally, and where service delivery reasons exist, the CEO (Chair of Trustees) may approve access to emails when an employee is absent.

Access to facilities may be temporarily suspended whilst an investigation is on-going and may be permanently withdrawn where misuse is detected.

Misuse may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Accredited Trade Union representatives can use school communication systems for the purposes of undertaking trade union duties and these will be treated as confidential.

Passwords must not be shared and access to computer systems must be kept confidential. Breach of this confidentiality may be subject to disciplinary action. Where appropriate the trust will consider a system of proxy access.

Employees are responsible for taking reasonable steps to ensure the safety and security of any trust equipment provided to them and must return it to the trust when they leave employment, or on the request of the DFO.

13. SOCIAL NETWORKING WEBSITES AND PERSONAL WEBSITES AND BLOGS

Trust employees must not access social networking websites for personal use (i.e. non-job-related use) on work equipment.

Access to journals, blogs and social networking sites is only permitted during work time for the purposes of undertaking job related duties. Trust employees must act in the best interests of the trust and comply with your obligations of confidentiality at all times and not disclose personal data or information about any individual including staff, young people, children or other members of the school community. This includes images. Access may be withdrawn and disciplinary action taken if there is a breach of confidentiality or defamatory remarks are made about the trust, school, staff, young people or children.

The trust respects an employee's private life. However, it must also ensure that confidentiality and its reputation are protected and you are encouraged to exercise discretion and use social media responsibly at all times. The trust must also ensure relevant protection for its operations, confidential information and reputation. If using social networking websites at work or in your private life, including closed groups (e.g. but not limited to What's App or similar) you must not;

- identify yourselves as working for the trust, in a way which has, or may have, the effect of bringing the trust into disrepute.
- identify other school employees, children or young people or other members of the trust community without their consent.
- defame or disparage the trust.
- harass, bully or unlawfully discriminate against its employees, children, young people, or any other members of the trust community or third parties.
- conduct yourselves in a way that is detrimental to the trust.
- disclose personal data or information about the trust, school, employees, children, or young people, or any other member of the trust community that could breach the Data Protection legislation, for example, posting photographs or images of children or young people.
- allow pupils to access their personal social networking accounts. Where a pupil contacts them they should bring it to the Headteacher's attention.
- make false or misleading statements.
- impersonate colleagues or third parties.
- express opinions on the trust's behalf using social media, unless expressly

authorised to do so by your Headteacher: you may be required to undergo training in order to obtain such authorisation.

- post comments about sensitive business-related topics, such as draft proposals or information belonging to any organisation (or person) with which the trust works in partnership.
- do anything to jeopardise our confidential information and intellectual property.
- include our logos or other trademarks connected to the trust's work in any social media posting or in your profile on any social media.

You must avoid making any social media communications that could damage the trust's business, operations or reputation, even indirectly. Communications for these purposes includes the use of words and images.

Employees who wish to set up personal web-forums, weblogs or 'blogs' must do so outside of work, not using school equipment and adhere to the points detailed above.

Breach of any of the above, in or out of work, could lead to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Note- Explicit Images or Sexting. Sending naked images can be a crime. Sharing explicit images without the person's consent is illegal. Should it be brought to the trust's attention that such images have been shared or should such images become public it could lead to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal for all parties employed at the trust. Be aware that even images which self-destruct after a few seconds can be saved by the recipient. Problems normally arise after a relationship ends but could also arise if the sender or recipient's phone is accessed by a third party e.g. child.

14. PERSONAL CONTACT DETAILS

Employees should not share their personal phone numbers, email addresses or other contact details with any pupils. Any breach could lead to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Exceptionally employees may know (or be related to) members of the school community and share their contact details. This must be declared on the Employee Declaration pro forma (Appendix A).

15. GENERAL COMPUTER USAGE

Employees are only permitted access to parts of the computer system, which are necessary for them to do their work or for authorised personal use.

The following examples constitute computer misuse:

- Fraud and theft
- Introduction of viruses
- Loading and/or using unauthorised software
- Obtaining unauthorised access

- Using the system for non-work-related activities, including games during work time (Use of the system outside work time is permitted, providing the employee has received authorisation from their manager)
- Breach of the NSAT Information Security and E Safety policies.

This list is not exhaustive.

16. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

'Intellectual Property' is a generic legal term, which refers to the rights and obligations in relation to inventions, patents, creative writings and drawings (including policy, training and technical documents and materials). If you create these during the course of your employment, the copyright belongs to the employer.

17. CONFIDENTIALITY AND INFORMATION SECURITY

The trust supports and promotes the principles of openness and transparency and welcomes opportunities to share information with the community. There is some information that is too sensitive or confidential to release.

Employees should be aware of the type of information which must be made available, and to whom; and the type of information which must not be disclosed at all or without specific permission. Information can be stored, or communicated in many ways:

- image (e.g. photos, CCTV, microfiche)
- verbal conversation (e.g. face to face or by telephone, Skype, etc.)
- paper documents and manual filing systems (including personal work-related notes)
- computerised and other electronic systems (e.g. email, voicemail, instant messaging, computer disk, USB, social media, case management systems or other departmental computer systems, etc.)

The trust must ensure that:

- information is protected against unauthorised access
- the confidentiality of information is assured,
- the integrity of information will be maintained
- regulatory and legislative requirements will be met.

Any breach of information security may result in disciplinary and/or criminal proceedings. Disciplinary action may include dismissal.

18. DATA PROTECTION

Data Protection legislation must be complied with. The General Data Protection Regulations protect information in which any living person can be identified. This is personal information and it may not necessarily include a person's name. All trust staff, workers and volunteers are under an obligation to comply with the General Data Protection Regulations.

A breach of the General Data Protection Regulations may result in criminal proceedings and may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

19. USE OF SCHOOL INFORMATION

Employees must not use any information obtained in the course of their employment for personal gain or benefit or pass it on to others who might use it in such a way. Employees must not disclose to any third-party confidential information, which could be prejudicial to the trust's interests.

20. CONFIDENTIALITY

All employees at the trust, the local governing body and the trustees come into contact with a significant volume of data and information in relation to pupils, staff, school activities and many other matters. There is an obligation to read and to observe the requirements of Data Protection legislation.

20a. Disclosing data

Employees should not disclose sensitive information about the school, its employees' children/young people or other members of the trust's community to other parties, for example, parents or colleagues. There are particular exceptions to this; for example, to follow safeguarding procedures, or accompanying /representing an employee in a formal meeting, or disclosure under the Whistleblowing Procedure. All communication with the media must be directed through the CEO or their nominee.

There are circumstances in which staff are obliged to release pupil data, for example, parents or other colleagues in the school seeking information about pupil progress.

20b. Access to data

Everyone has the right to request access to data that is held about them and such requests should be made to the CEO to address the request.

21. STANDARDS OF DRESS AND APPEARANCE

Employees must ensure standards of dress and personal ornamentation are appropriate in relation to their duties. Inappropriate dress can create offence or be interpreted as disrespectful

In all cases employees are expected to wear any uniform issued for health and safety reasons.

21a. Required reading:

- Dress Code

22. RECORDING

Recording of a meeting or conversation during the course of employment will only take place with the consent of all those present. Where a request is made to make a recording, it will be considered on a case-by-case basis taking into account relevant considerations, for example as a reasonable adjustment related to an employee's disability. The trust will reserve the right to request a copy of the recording. Covert recording is not allowed under any circumstances and will be considered to be a disciplinary matter.

23. CONTRACTORS

- If you engage or supervise contractors or have an official relationship with existing or potential contractors or have had or have a relationship in a private or domestic capacity, you must declare that relationship to the CEO/Chair of Trustees (this means relationship with a director or employee of the contractor). You must ensure no special favour is shown to current or former partners, close relatives or associates in awarding contracts to businesses run by them or employing them in a senior capacity.
- If you are contemplating any arrangement to provide a service similar or identical to that provided by the trust must, as soon as they have formed a definite intent, notify the CEO/Chair of Trustees if you have not already done so.
- If you are setting up competing businesses to the trust you should not use confidential information obtained during the course of your duties.
- No materials, information (including contacts, property or other resources) is to be accessed or used by you in the course of your competing business during or after your employment at the trust otherwise your employer could take legal action against you.
- If you carry out competitive tendering services - directly or indirectly - you must declare to the CEO/trustees your membership of, or affiliation to, any organisation, which may have an interest in tendering for the service.

24. APPOINTMENTS AND OTHER EMPLOYMENT DECISIONS

- Appointments will be made on merit in accordance with the trust's Recruitment and Selection policy.
- To avoid any accusation of bias, you should not be involved in an appointment, either on an Appointment Panel or as a referee, if you are related to an applicant, or have a close personal relationship with them outside work.
- You should not be involved in decisions relating to discipline or other sanction, or in decisions relating to pay, of any employee that you are related to, or have a close personal relationship with.

25. COPYRIGHT

Copyright legislation should be adhered to.

25a Required reading:

Copyright in Education and Teaching

APPENDIX A

Employee Declaration Form

I declare that I have read and understood the Code of Conduct for North Star Academy Trust Employees and the associated "Required Reading".

Name _____ Date _____

Signature _____

I have shared some personal information (e.g. phone number, on social networking or media group) with the following people who I know outside of work

(List details below)

Name	Relation to school	Relationship with person	Contact details shared
Fred Bloggs (example)	Child	Aunt	Facebook, SnapChat, What's App, Phone number

Continue on a new page if necessary.

Signed _____

Date _____

APPENDIX B

Register of Business Interests

I wish to declare the following information in accordance with the trusts' requirements that a Register of Business Interests should be maintained.

Name:

Post:

Signature:

Date:

You should provide full details of your declaration below, including a nil return:

Declaration of relationships or contracting arrangements	
Relationships or links with businesses, contracts or proposed contracts (or any activity which would cause potential conflict) in which you are involved / interested.	State whether the interest is direct or indirect, and the nature of the interest.

APPENDIX C

Register of Gifts and Hospitality

I wish to declare the following information in accordance with the trust's requirements that a Register of Gifts and Hospitality should be maintained.

Name:

Post:

Signature:

Date:

You should provide full details of your declaration below, including a nil return:

Declaration of gifts and hospitality		
Date gift received	From whom	Gift or hospitality

APPENDIX D

1. Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

2. Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

3. Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

4. Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

5. Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

6. Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

7. Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

For further information on the 7 principles and the work of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, visit the Committee's [website](#) and [blogsite](#)