


Victoria Academies Trust

Code of Conduct Policy

Date of last review	February 2025	Review period	(non-statutory)
Date of next review	February 2027	AC or Board approved	Board
Type of policy	TRUST	Signed (chair)	

Rationale

This policy aims to set and maintain the standards of conduct that we expect all staff to follow.

Many of the principles in this code of conduct are based on the Teacher's Standards.

All staff employed by Victoria Academies Trust are role models for our children and will consistently demonstrate high standards of behaviour.

We expect that all teachers will act in accordance with the personal and professional behaviours set out in the Teacher's Standards.

We expect all support staff, governors, and volunteers to act with personal and professional integrity, respecting the safety and wellbeing of others.

Failure to follow the code of conduct may result in disciplinary action being taken, as set out in our staff disciplinary procedures and in certain circumstances could result in an employee's contract being terminated.

Please note that this code of conduct is not exhaustive. If situations arise that are not covered by this code, staff will use their professional judgement and act in the best interests of the Trust/school and its children.

Aims

- To enable all staff to know and understand what is deemed acceptable.
- To help staff to work with children, families/carers and other staff to create an environment where everyone is safe, happy and treated with respect.
- To ensure that all children and staff have the opportunity to achieve their potential.
- To ensure that every child and member of staff is helped to develop a sense of personal and cultural identity that is confident and open to change, and that is receptive and respectful towards other identities

Legislation and Guidance

In line with the statutory safeguarding guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education', we should have a staff code of conduct, which references low-level concerns, allegations against staff and our whistleblowing policy, as well as acceptable use of technologies (including mobile devices), staff/child relationships and communications, including the use of social media.

General Obligations

Staff set an example to children. They will:

- Maintain high standards in their attendance and punctuality.
- Never use inappropriate or offensive language in school, or whilst supervising children offsite e.g. school trip
- Staff must avoid putting themselves at risk of allegations of abusive or unprofessional conduct.
- Treat children and others with dignity and respect.
- Show tolerance and respect for the rights of others.
- Not undermine fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
- Express personal beliefs in a way that will not overly influence children and will not exploit children's vulnerability or might lead them to break the law.
- Understand the statutory frameworks they must act within.
- Adhere to the Teachers' Standards and 7 principles of public life where appropriate.

Safeguarding

Staff have a duty to safeguard children from harm, and to report any concerns they have. This includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse, and neglect. Staff will familiarise themselves with their school 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. School's safeguarding policy and procedures are available on each school's website and from the school office. New staff will be directed to this as part of their induction.

All staff are required to read Part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education and are required to sign to confirm this.

Allegations that meet the harm threshold

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 Code of Conduct
- 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.

For further information please see the Trust Allegations and Concerns policy which can be found on the Trust website.

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 harms 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 one-to-one activities where they can't easily be seen
- Humiliating children

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 Allegations and Concerns and Low-Level Concerns 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 Allegations and Concerns and our Low Level Concerns policy. This is available on the Trust website

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

Whistle-blowing

Whistle-blowing reports wrongdoing that it is "in the public interest" to report. Examples linked to safeguarding include:

- Children' or staff members' 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 Trust's detailed whistle-blowing process, please refer to our whistle-blowing policy.

For further information please see the Trust Whistle-blowing policy which can be found on the Trust website.

Relationships with Children

Staff will observe proper boundaries with children that are appropriate to their professional position. They will act in a fair and transparent way that would not lead anyone to reasonably assume they are not doing so.

With regard to safety and welfare, staff must take the upmost care of children under their supervision. Staff must familiarise themselves with the Health and Safety Policy and guidelines for their particular work and must follow these, including reporting any accidents, incidents or near misses at work

If staff members and children must spend time 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.

Staff should avoid contact with children outside of school hours if possible. Personal contact details should not be exchanged between staff and children. This includes social media profiles.

While we are aware many children and their parents may wish to give gifts to staff, for example, at the end of the school year, gifts from staff to children are not acceptable.

If a staff member is concerned at any point that an interaction between themselves and a child may be misinterpreted, or if a staff member is concerned at any point about a fellow staff member and a child, this should be reported in line with the procedures set out in the school child protection and safeguarding policy.

All staff have a responsibility to develop the emotional wellbeing of children as well as nurturing their academic potential – in particular this relates to:

- Treating all children with respect at all times. The use, by staff, of derogatory, demeaning or abusive statements or subjecting a child to ridicule or put downs is not acceptable within the Trust.
- Staff are expected to set an example to children and therefore the use of appropriate language is important at all times. This does not include swearing or the use of vulgarities at any time.
- Staff are expected to work with all children irrespective of their demeanour or ability. It is important that every opportunity is treated as a new beginning and staff should always try to emphasise the positive.

Staff who work in close proximity with other employees or pupils to whom they are related must maintain a strictly professional relationship at work. Any direct involvement in the appointment, promotion, discipline, line management or other employment decision relating to another employee to whom you are related or with whom you have a close personal relationship should be avoided.

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 Allegations and Concerns Raised Against Staff policy/ Low Level Concerns policy.

Dress

A person's dress and appearance are matters of personal choice and self-expression. However, colleagues and volunteers must ensure cleanliness and neatness and that they are dressed decently, safely and appropriately for the tasks they undertake. Those who dress or appear in a manner which could be considered as inappropriate could render themselves vulnerable to criticism or allegations of misconduct.

Equipment

IT Equipment

Staff are responsible for the use of Victoria Academy Trust IT equipment while in their possession and should therefore be vigilant about who has access to their password and personal machine. Children are not allowed to use staff log on details or IT equipment if a member of staff is logged on. In the event that IT equipment (or any other equipment) is stolen, it must be reported immediately to the head teacher /line manager.

Staff will not use technology in school or belonging to the school to view material that is illegal, inappropriate or likely to be deemed offensive. This includes, but is not limited to, gambling and viewing pornography or other inappropriate content.

Staff will not use personal mobile phones and laptops, or 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.

The Trust have the right to monitor emails and internet used on the school IT systems.

Mobile Phones

The use of mobile phones by staff is allowed only in the following designated staff areas: the staff room, staff workroom & offices. Staff should not use their mobile phones during lessons and should not make or receive calls at any time that they are supervising children unless in an emergency situation as sanctioned by the head teacher.

For further information please read the Trust Social Media policy.

Time Keeping and Attendance

With respect to attendance please see the Management of Sickness Absence Policy and Leave of Absence policy.

Punctuality is the key to running a successful educational establishment and children and staff are expected to attend all lessons, and arrive for work on time. Staff should be ready to receive children at the scheduled start time for lessons as well as making sure children are not dismissed before the appropriate end of the school day. All duties must be attended on time.

Honesty and Integrity

Staff should maintain high standards of honesty and integrity in their role. This includes when dealing with children, handling money, claiming expenses and using school property and facilities.

Staff will ensure that all information given to the school is correct. This should include:

- Background information (including any past or current investigations/cautions related to conduct outside of school)
- Qualifications
- Professional experience

Where there are any updates to the information provided to the school, the member of staff will advise the school as such as soon as reasonably practicable. Consideration will then be given to the nature and circumstances of the matter and whether this may have an impact on the member of staff's employment.

Conflict of Interest

Staff should declare any personal interest that could bring about conflict with the Trust or its academies interests. Staff must declare to the COO any financial interests or non-financial interests which could or could be perceived to conflict with their role within the Trust.

Staff are required not to take outside employment which conflicts with Trust interests. Any staff intending to work for outside organisations should seek permission from the CEO/Head teacher. In the case of the CEO, permission should be sought from the Chair of the Trust

Conduct Outside Work

Staff must not engage in conduct outside work which could damage the reputation and standing of Trust or the employee's own reputation, or the reputation of other members of the Trust community. In particular, criminal offences that involve violence or possession or use of illegal drugs or sexual misconduct are likely to be regarded as unacceptable and could lead to dismissal. Staff must immediately inform the Headteacher if, during the course of their employment, they are subject to any allegations of a criminal nature, any arrests or criminal proceedings, convictions or cautions in order that a risk assessment can be undertaken.

Staff should be careful to ensure that nothing they say or do brings Trusts name into disrepute. Gossip in our communities can damage a reputation that has taken a considerable amount of time to establish.

Staff will not act in a way that would bring the school, or the teaching profession into disrepute. This covers relevant criminal offences, such as violence or sexual misconduct, as well as negative comments about the school/Trust on social media.

Domestic Abuse

Staff who perpetrate domestic violence and abuse should be aware that such behaviour goes against this policy. Some forms of domestic violence and abuse are a crime.

Staff charged or convicted in court because of domestic violence and abuse should declare this formally to the head teacher/ELT, where the Trust believes the charges/ conviction to have implications in terms of the employee's work role.

Confidentiality

In the course of their role, members of staff are often privy to sensitive and confidential information about the school, staff, children and their parents.

This information should never be:

- Disclosed to anyone unless required by law or with consent from the relevant party or parties
- Used to humiliate, embarrass or blackmail others
- Used for a purpose other than what it was collected and intended for

This does not overrule staff's duty to report child protection concerns to the appropriate channel where staff believe a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm, as detailed further in the school child protection and safeguarding policy.

Smoking/Alcohol /Drugs

Alcohol may not be consumed during the working hours. Staff must not take drugs, alcohol or any other substance before work, during a break or at lunch time.

No facilities will be provided for smokers either inside or outside the premises. Victoria Academies Trust does not condone employees taking time off work to smoke or vape.

Staff are not permitted to smoke or vape on Victoria Academies Trust premises or grounds or take drugs (or be in possession of illegal substances).

It is expected that staff will attend for work in a fit state to carry out their duties – staff found under the influence of drugs or alcohol will be deemed to be unfit and disciplinary action may follow.

Use of Cars

For their own protection, staff should never give lifts to children without clearing it with a member of the ELT.

All staff who are attending courses or meetings on behalf of the Academy Trust or as part of their professional development must ensure that they have the appropriate insurance in place.

Relationships with Other Staff

All staff are entitled to feel safe and secure at work and be free from intimidation or bullying behaviour. Staff are therefore expected to show professional courtesy and respect at all times to others working within Victoria Academies Academy Trust.

Should a member of staff feel that the above guideline has not been followed they should raise the matter with their line manager or in the case where this involves the line manager, with HR.

If you are related to, in a relationship or close friendship with another employee of the school, in

order to avoid any possible accusation of bias you will not be directly involved in their appointment, promotion, discipline, appraisal or other employment decision including approval of expenses. Furthermore, staff should demonstrate the highest standards of conduct if in a relationship with another employee at the school.

Links with other Policies

This policy links with our policies on:

- Staff disciplinary procedures, which will be used if staff breach this code of conduct. It also sets out examples of what we will deem as misconduct and gross misconduct.
- Allegations and Concerns Raised Against Staff Policy
- Low Level Concerns Policy
- Staff Grievance procedures.
- Safeguarding.
- Gifts and Hospitality.
- Social Media Policy
- Whistleblowing.