



Code of Conduct Policy

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Revisions

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1.0 Introduction

The Trust, and all Meridian Trust employees will foster and maintain a culture of the highest professional standards. This Code of Conduct sets out the standards expected and the duty upon employees, workers, volunteers, governors, and trustees to abide by it. The main principles of the code are consistent across all Meridian Trust and are expected to be fully complied with. It provides guidance on how to ensure that your actions and behaviour are consistent with the Trust's values and the high standards of conduct.

This Code of Conduct cannot provide a complete checklist of what is, or is not, appropriate behaviour for staff. However, it does highlight behaviour that is illegal, inappropriate, or inadvisable. There will be occasions and circumstances in which staff must make decisions or act where no specific guidance has been given.

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the latest publications from the Department of Education - Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) and Safer Working Practices, and Trust policies as listed on the related policy list.

You must familiarise yourself with the contents of this policy and act in accordance with its principles and provisions at all times. This policy will support employers and employees to recognise, and support and display expected behaviour when we are in work and as part of our employment. Where employees do not adhere to the Code of Conduct support will be in place to support where necessary. Serious or regular breaches of the policy may result in disciplinary action.

Whilst every attempt has been made to cover a wide range of situations, it is recognised that any policy cannot cover all eventualities. There may be times when professional judgements are made in situations not covered by this document, or which directly contravene the guidance given by the employer. It is expected that in these circumstances staff will always advise their senior colleagues of the justification for any such action already taken or proposed.

2.0 The main principles of the code

The main principles of the Code of Conduct are as follows, in addition, this list is supported by the expectations of all related policies listed above:

- General Responsibilities
- Conflicts of Interest
- Bribery, gifts, and hospitality
- Funds and resources
- Confidentiality
- Respect for others
- Relationship between employees
- Health and Safety
- Conduct in meetings
- Representing the Trust externally
- Appearance and Dress
- Smoking, drugs, and Alcohol
- Safeguarding
- Learning and Development
- Reporting concerns

3.0 General responsibilities: You must fulfill your duties and obligations responsibly, always acting in good faith and in the best interests of the Trust.

- 3.1** You must comply with your terms of appointment and the Trust's policies and procedures relating to your role. This includes adhering to the Professional Standards of Teachers' and any further statutory guidance relating to your role.
- 3.2** You must not conduct yourself in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing the Trust into disrepute. This includes membership of, or participation in, activities organised by groups or organisations whose values are inconsistent with the Trust's (for instance, discriminatory organisations or groups which holds and promotes extremist views) which could create reasonable doubt in your ability to comply with the Trust's values and the Trust Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy and our PREVENT duty.
- 3.3** You must not bring the Trust's name into disrepute or affect its integrity by your actions or words, either within the Trust or outside. This includes the use of, or entries on, social networking sites (such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and others) in line with the Trust e-Safety and IT use Policy.

This includes making derogatory comments, or sharing inappropriate images, about the Trust, its employees, workers, pupils or other partners or services, either in person or in writing or via any web-based media such as a personal blog or other site. This also applies if you do not name the Trust but where its identity can reasonably be inferred, or where you use a pseudonym, but your identity can reasonably be inferred.

If you have a genuine concern about possible wrongdoing, you must report it either through the Trust Grievance Policy or the Trust Whistleblowing Policy in addition you may refer to the Trust Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy.

- 3.4** You must not act in a way that unjustifiably favours or discriminates against individuals, groups, or interests.
- 3.5** You must respect the appropriate channels for safeguarding and the protection of children. You must not act outside the Trust's established procedures such as the Trust Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Keeping Child Safe in Education (KCSIE) and Safer Working Practices.
- 3.6** You must not misuse your position, for example, by using information acquired in the course of your duties for your private interests or those of others.
- 3.7** You must respect the principle of collective decision-making and corporate responsibility. This means that once the Executive board has decided you must support that.
- 3.8** You must consult your manager before taking on any outside work or any position, paid or unpaid. Any such work or position must not interfere with your existing job or conflict with the interests of your job or the Trust.
- 3.9** Self-disclosure - employees are expected to maintain high standards to retain public confidence as set out in the employee Code of Conduct. Staff must therefore notify their manager if they are the subject of an investigation or allegation which may have

an impact on their employment and / or the confidence that they must uphold (or which may bring the Trust into disrepute). Where an employee makes such a disclosure, the circumstances should be explored and may include seeking a further disclosure from the DBS.

4.0 Conflicts of interests: You must take all reasonable steps to ensure that no undeclared conflict arises or could reasonably be perceived to arise between your duties and your personal interests financial or otherwise.

4.1 You must declare and record conflicts of interest. Amongst other things, these require you to declare any private interests which may, or may be perceived to, conflict with the duties of your role.

4.2 You must not be involved in the decision on the appointment of staff where you are related, or are closely connected, to an applicant. You must declare any such relationship to the appropriate person. You must not be involved in decisions relating to discipline, promotion, pay or benefits for any member of staff to whom you are related or closely connected.

4.3 You must not be involved in the appointment of a contractor or supplier where you are related, or closely connected, to an organisation or individual applying or tendering for a contract. You must declare any such relationship to the appropriate person. You must not be involved in establishing the terms of a contract, or its ongoing monitoring and management, where you are related, or closely connected, to the contractor or supplier as stated in the Trust's Financial Handbook.

4.4 Except where specifically permitted, you must normally avoid using the Trust's contractors and suppliers for private purposes. Where this is unavoidable, you must not receive a favorable service because of your connection with the Trust. Prior approval must be sought before using the supplier or contractor and a written declaration made confirming that NO financial or other advantage has been secured as a result of the relationship with the Trust.

4.5 You must not use, or attempt to use, your position to promote your personal interests or those of any connected person, business, or other organisation as per the Trust's Financial Handbook.

5.0 Bribery, gifts, and hospitality: You must not offer, seek, or accept bribes or inducements to act improperly or corruptly. You must not seek or accept gifts, hospitality or other benefits that might reasonably be seen to compromise your judgement or integrity or place you under an obligation.

5.1 You must comply with legislation and the Trust's Financial Handbook in relation to:

- (1) bribery and corruption; and
- (2) the giving, receipt, approval and recording of gifts and hospitality.

5.2 You must not canvass or seek gifts or hospitality or other benefits.

5.3 The receipt of a gift, while performing duties, raises an issue of ethical conduct if the acceptance of the gift places the employee in a real or apparent conflict of interest. This does not include the end of year gifts that students bring in for teachers / staff. Any gifts received of a value that causes concern, should be reported to the Principal. The Trust

Financial handbook sets out the conditions as to when gifts need to be reported for tax purposes.

6.0 Funds and resources: You must not misuse the Trust's funds or resources.

- 6.1** You must comply with the Trust's Financial Handbook regarding the use of its funds and resources. 'Resources' includes staff, information, telephone, computer and other IT facilities, equipment, stationery, and transport.
- 6.2** You must ensure that the organisational funds and resources entrusted to you are used efficiently, economically, and effectively.
- 6.3** You must comply with the Trust's Financial Handbook regarding procurement, ensuring value for money and fairness in decision-making.
- 6.4** You must take reasonable measures to protect the Trust's funds, resources, property and assets from theft, damage, and misuse.
- 6.5** You must comply with the Trust's e-Safety and IT Use Policy relating to the acceptable or unacceptable use of email, intranet, and internet services. Amongst other things, these policies and procedures prohibit access to pornographic or illicit material, and the use of unauthorised or unlicensed software.
- 6.6** You must claim reimbursement only for expenditure that was properly and reasonably incurred in carrying out the Trust's business. You must ensure that any expenses claim you make is accurate and complies with the Trust's Financial Handbook.

7.0 Confidentiality: You must handle information in accordance with data protection legislation and the Trust's Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy.

- 7.1** You must comply with the provisions General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 1998 which governs the protection of personal data. All personal data, whether on paper or electronically is subject to the provisions of the Act. (The Trust's Data Protection and Confidentiality policy and procedures give further guidance).
- 7.2** You must not disclose without authority any confidential Trust information. This duty continues to apply after you have left the Trust or relinquished your position.
- 7.3** You must not, without permission, pass or distribute to the press or media or any other external recipient's information or materials relating to the Trust.
- 7.4** In your capacity as a staff member, you must not, without prior authority:
 - (1) appear to represent the views or position of the Trust.
 - (2) write letters to the press or other recipients.
 - (3) write media articles, blog posts or tweets etc., about the Trust and its activities.
 - (4) make comments or statements to the media - if approached you must pass the enquiry to the appropriate person.

This does not include where information is divulged under the Trust's Whistleblowing Policy to an external authority.

- 7.5** You must not prevent another person from gaining access to information to which they are entitled by law.

8.0 Respect for others: You must always treat others with respect.

- 8.1** You must comply with the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy. Equality laws prohibit discrimination on grounds including age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation and impose positive duties to eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote equality. The Trust's policy gives further guidance, it is useful to refer to Trust SENDV Policy when working with young people and the Trust Transgender Guidance document.
- 8.2** You must not harass, bully, or attempt to intimidate any person. The Trust Dignity at Work Policy gives further guidance.
- 8.3** You must not display materials in the workplace (or on any social media sites) which other people might reasonably find offensive or use language which might reasonably find offensive.

9.0 Relationship between employees: Employees must maintain a constructive, professional relationship based on a sound understanding of their respective roles.

- 9.1** You must avoid inappropriate personal familiarity with colleagues, for instance via social media networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc. in line with Trust e-Safety and IT Use Policy.
- 9.2** You must not use informal channels to lobby or influence colleagues on matters of the Trust's business.
- 9.3** You must not knowingly mislead the board or any or the Trust's committees or panels. In presenting information, you must set out the facts and relevant issues truthfully.

10.0 Health and Safety: Your conduct must not endanger the health, safety or security of yourself or others.

- 10.1** You must comply with the Trust Health, Safety & Environmental Policy and bring to the attention of the appropriate person any risks to yourself or others.
- 10.2** You must comply with current legislation and the Trust's policy on no smoking and on the use of alcohol, illegal drugs, and other substances in line with the KCSiE Guidelines. Some Academies have local agreements regarding smoking and e-cigarette smoking on site.

11.0 Conduct at meetings: Your conduct at meetings must meet a high standard of integrity, commitment, and courtesy.

- 11.1** You must be courteous to all other attendees and respect the position of the meeting chair in line with the Trust Dignity at Work Policy.

11.2 You must not use threatening or aggressive behaviour, or act in a disruptive way in line with the Trust Dignity at Work Policy.

11.3 You must not attend meetings while intoxicated or under the influence of drugs in line with the KCSiE guidelines.

12.0 Representing the Trust: In representing the Trust at external events and in dealings with outside bodies, you must uphold and promote the Trust's values, objectives, and policies.

12.1 You must not become involved in, or be seen to endorse, any activity that may bring the Trust into disrepute. This includes but is not limited to illegal, immoral, racist, or other discriminatory activity in line with the Trust Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy.

12.2 In engaging in activities which promote the work of the Trust to the outside world, you must demonstrate commitment to the Trust and support for its values, policies, and goals always.

13.0 Appearance and Dress: You must select a manner of dress and appearance appropriate to their professional role.

13.1 A person's dress and appearance are matters of personal choice and self-expression and some individuals will wish to exercise their own cultural customs. However, you should select a manner of dress and appearance appropriate to your professional role and which may be necessarily different to that adopted in your personal life in line with the Safer Working Practices.

13.2 In certain areas, an agreed uniform, protective clothing, or other exceptions are in place (such as for PE staff, catering, and premises staff). You may wear sportswear or casual clothing and footwear for practical or physical activities.

13.3 Visible tattoos that display images that could cause offence to others. must be appropriately covered. Principals should be aware that certain tattoos that depict religious iconography may be acceptable. Discussions should take place with the individual before any action is taken.

14.0 Smoking, drugs, and Alcohol: You must never arrive at work incapable of carrying out your duties through the effects of alcohol or drugs.

14.1 You must never arrive at work incapable through the effects of alcohol or drugs. Drinking alcohol or taking drugs (apart from appropriately prescribed medication or over-the-counter remedies) at work or during breaks is also strictly prohibited in line with Safer Working Practices and KCSiE.
The consumption of alcohol at staff events or meetings is subject to the authorisation of the Headteacher.

14.2 The schools are non-smoking sites. You must not smoke or use e –cigarettes on the premises or outside the school gates. Any member of staff wishing to smoke or use an e-cigarette must leave the school grounds. You must not smoke or use an e-cigarette whilst working with or supervising pupils offsite. Be aware of Academies localized arrangements.

15.0 Safeguarding: You must always adhere to both Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) and Safer Working Practices guidance's within the Trust's schools/academies/places of work.

15.1 You must play an active part in the Trust's safeguarding measures to ensure the overall safety of the children within the Trust's schools/academies/place of work.

15.2 You must carry out annual training on:

- ✓ Safeguarding and Child Protection
- ✓ Prevent
- ✓ E Safety and Data Protection

This should be offered through Core provision or your local academy.

15.3 You must read the following policies on an annual basis:

- ✓ E-Safety and IT Policy
- ✓ Safeguarding and Child Protection
- ✓ Safer Working Practices
- ✓ Code of Conduct Policy
- ✓ Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)
- ✓ Whistleblowing Policy

16.0 Learning and development: In partnership with the Trust, you must take responsibility for your own learning and development, regularly updating and refreshing your skills and knowledge.

16.1 You must play an active part in the Trust's supervision and performance appraisal processes and welcome constructive feedback.

16.2 At the appropriate induction, appraisal, or supervision meeting, you must make clear your personal training and development needs, so that they can be considered in the Trust's forward budgeting and planning.

16.3 Unless there are exceptional reasons, you must attend all learning and development events that have been arranged, either for you alone or as part of a group. Staff who work part time hours can decide if they wish to attend training. If they do, Toil or appropriate payment will be made for the training time.

17.0 Reporting concerns: You must report any reasonable and honest suspicions you may have about possible wrongdoing.

17.1 If you are aware of potentially dishonest or fraudulent activity, or material breaches of this code you must report it to the appropriate senior person in the Trust or by following the Trust's Whistleblowing Policy.

17.2 If you believe that you are being required to act in a way which conflicts with this code, you must report it to the appropriate senior person within the Trust or by following the Trust Grievance Policy.

17.3 You must not victimize any person who has used -or intends to use or is suspected of having used the Trust's confidential reporting procedures to report the misconduct, or alleged misconduct, of others.

17.4 In reference to KCSiE 2021, allegations made against or concerns which are raised in relation to staff could be considered under two levels of safeguarding concern. Level 1 is where allegations may meet the harms threshold. Level 2 is where allegations or concerns do not meet the harms threshold but may be considered as 'low-level' concerns. Further detail is found in part 4 KCSiE 2021, Trust Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy and Trust Managing Allegations Policy.

18.0 Monitoring and review of policy

The policy will be reviewed every three years but will be reported on annually to the Personnel Committee to reflect changes in the law, demographics and internal business requirements and a full report will be presented to review the effectiveness of the policy to ensure it is achieving its objectives.

Effective publication of the Code of Conduct policy is essential in ensuring that the workforce is aware of the Trust's standards.

19.0 Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)

The Trust recognises that there may be a variety of problems or changes in an individual's life that could have a dramatic effect on them and, on occasions, impact decisions they make about their employment. To help Workers, manage personal and work-related issues the Trust offers an independent, confidential, and free Employee Assistance Programme.

This service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. This service is available to all Workers. Independent advice or support may be sought from the confidential employee support line on 0800 856 148. Alternatively, information is available online at www.educationsupportpartnership.org.uk/online-support using the log in details: Username: worklifesupport Password: support1

20.0 General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

Unless stated elsewhere in this policy, the data gathered within this process is processed in line with our Data Protection policy. This policy can be found on our [website](#).

Any data gathered within this process will be retained in line with our records retention policy which can be found on our website.

If you have any questions about the way your data has been gathered and contained, please contact the Trust Data Protection Officer (DPO) at DPO@cmatrust.net

21.0 Further Information

Employees requiring further information or clarification of this policy should contact the HR Person in the school or the core trust HR team.