

Code of Conduct for Schools

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SECTION 1: PURPOSE, SCOPE AND PRINCIPLES

PURPOSE

- To meet requirements specified by the National Conditions of Service for all employee groups.
- To specify and explain the standards the School has set, therefore protecting employees from misunderstanding or criticism.
- To help employees maintain fully acceptable standards of conduct set by the School.
- To ensure that the School maintains a deserved reputation for the high standards of its activities and the integrity of its employees at all levels.

WHO IS COVERED BY THE CODE OF CONDUCT?

- The Code of Conduct applies to all those working for the School, including those on permanent, temporary or part-time contracts, job sharers, and employees on non-standard terms of employment. Relevant parts of the Code should be included in the specifications for consultants and contractors and drawn to the attention of voluntary workers on School projects.
- Some employees may already have specific requirements relating to conduct included in their contracts or standard conditions of employment. Where contract conditions and requirements of individual contracts are more specific, due to the nature of the work, they will override the provisions of this Code.

In addition:

- a) The Code may be supplemented within the School's specific provisions or requirements, for example, the teaching standards.
- b) This Code has been agreed between the School and recognised trades unions.

PRINCIPLES

This Code is based on and consistent with the following seven principles which are set out in Section 28 of the Localism Act 2011, and which were originally set out by the Nolan Committee on Standards in Public Life:

- a) **Selflessness**
Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits.
- b) **Integrity**
Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.
- c) **Objectivity**
In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.
- d) **Accountability**
Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.
- e) **Openness**
Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.
- f) **Honesty**
Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.
- g) **Leadership**
Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

The various sections in section 2 of this document set out how the general principles are applied to different aspects of conduct. **The Code cannot describe every possible circumstance that may occur.**

Employees and managers need to exercise good sense and judgement in deciding whether specific situations fall within the Code or not. For employees, a key guideline is:

**WHEN IN DOUBT AS TO WHETHER THE CODE APPLIES –
ASK YOUR MANAGER**

SECTION 2: CODE OF CONDUCT FOR EMPLOYEES

1. Conduct during working hours

You have a responsibility to act in accordance with the School's equal opportunities policies, statutory guidance and best practice. Service decisions and activities must not favour one person or section of the community on any grounds which would be in contravention of equal opportunity principles.

All forms of unlawful discrimination, victimisation, bullying and harassment, in any form, is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Allegations will be investigated and dealt with under the School's Disciplinary Policy where necessary.

2. Political Neutrality

You must not allow your own personal or political opinions to interfere with your work or influence the advice you give the public, parents or other staff.

If your job involves you giving advice to political groups, you must do so in ways which do not compromise your political neutrality.

3. Personal Relationships

Personal relationships may develop with colleagues, Councillors, contractors, customers and clients. You should not allow a personal relationship to place you in a position where you are unable to carry out the duties of your job in a proper and impartial manner.

You should inform your manager if you have, or develop, a close personal relationship with another employee which could be considered, by colleagues or others, to have an impact on how you conduct yourself at work. The information will be treated with confidentiality.

You must maintain a professional working relationship with colleagues, Councillors, contractors' parents and the public.

4. Recruitment

If a relative or close personal friend is a candidate for a post that you are involved in the recruitment for, you must discuss this with your manager. It may be appropriate for you to withdraw from the process, if your manager considers this appropriate and it is practicable for you to do so.

You must follow the School's Recruitment and Selection Policy and ensure fairness is applied at all stages.

5. Use of Information

The law requires that certain types of information must be available to members, auditors, government departments, service users and the public. Your manager must identify, and make you aware of this information at induction, including outlining when additional information is relevant.

Information you gather while working for the School must not be used for personal or commercial gain or be otherwise misused.

You must not destroy, alter or falsify any document or record, whether for personal gain or to cover up, mislead or deceive other people.

You must comply with the School's Data Protection Policy.

You must not pass on information to anyone not entitled to receive it, nor post it on any public forum or any social media platform.

You must comply with the School's Social Media Policy.

You must not pass on to the public or press, information from any Committee or meeting, from which they have been excluded.

You must not deal directly with the press or media, or make any public statement, unless you have been authorised to act as an official spokesperson.

6. Confidentiality

You may be subject to "restrictive covenants", which are intended to protect the School's confidential information, which restrict you from disclosing or using such information during and after leaving employment.

7. Hospitality

In certain circumstances, receiving hospitality may be acceptable. Where that is the case, you must discuss it with your manager and the details – the type of hospitality offered and the person/organisation offering it - should be recorded in a register maintained by your directorate.

Examples of generally acceptable hospitality are:

- (i) Invitations to attend events where you represent the School
- (ii) Hospitality offered by other public sector organisations or recognised civic or government bodies that have links with the School
- (iii) A working lunch or other meal which allows the work or discussion to continue during the course of the day
- (iv) An event where the School should be seen to be represented.
- (v) Hospitality to mark the completion of a transaction or piece of work provided it has been successfully concluded and the nature of the hospitality is reasonable
- (vi) Where the School is a regular client of an organisation or firm and the hospitality is being offered to a number of clients in the ordinary course of the business.

Examples of hospitality which should be declined include:

- (i) Offers of hotel accommodation or other form of holiday
- (ii) Free use of other forms of leisure, sports or entertainment facilities or equipment

8. Gifts

If you are offered a gift you should consider whether it is one of “low” value (£25 as at 2020). You must use common sense and tell your manager, who should decide if the gift is acceptable or should be declined. It must be recorded in a register maintained the School.

Examples of generally acceptable gifts:

- (i) Small gifts that have been sent or given as an advertisement for a particular firm, for example, appropriate items for use in the office
- (ii) Small gifts such as a bottle of wine or a box of chocolates that have been given at the end of work on a project. These gifts should be made generally available to those who have worked on the project
- (iii) Christmas boxes – in a number of jobs, for example, refuse collection, it has been traditional for members of the public to give the team concerned gifts with varying financial values. As a normal and well-established practice, acceptance of the

Christmas gift, on behalf of the team concerned, is acceptable, provided:

- The gift is not solicited or requested either directly or indirectly
- There is no suggestion that decisions concerning the service, or the quality of the service provided will change in any way
- Any gift that is of such a value that falls outside a normal range is notified to your manager

Gifts should be declined if it is from anyone who is, or may be in the foreseeable future, tendering for any contract with the School, seeking planning permission, seeking employment or in dispute with the School.

9. Bribery & Corruption

The Bribery Act 2010 makes it an offence to seek, accept or agree to accept a financial or other advantage as an inducement or reward to perform a function improperly. In simple terms, for public employees, agency and contracted staff it is a crime to seek or accept a financial or other advantage in return for making a decision, granting an award or performing any other public function, regardless of what decision is made. The maximum sentence for a bribery offence is 10 years imprisonment.

The Bribery Act 2010 also makes it an offence for employees to offer or pay bribes and both the individual and the organisation may be prosecuted.

The Local Government Act 1972 makes it an offence for employees to accept any fee or reward (including gifts) for their employment other than their proper pay, and on conviction employees are liable to be fined.

10. Dressing Appropriately

- a) You are expected to dress appropriately for the role for which you are employed. You must be mindful of the impact your appearance will have on the pupil / teacher relationship.
- b) If you are required to wear a uniform you must conform to that requirement.
- c) You are required to comply with any Health & Safety clothing requirements.
- d) If you have personal, cultural or religious objections to these requirements, you should discuss them with your Headteacher who will consider each case on its merits and take appropriate action.

11. Use of School property, facilities and equipment

- a) Be mindful that you are using School assets, not your own personal property
- b) You may make phone calls within reason and within your own time
- c) You may access the School's internet connection for personal use, but only within your own time and as stated in the School's ICT rules
- d) School vehicles must be used for authorised purposes only
- e) You must return any School property if you stop working for the School

12. Using the services of people who deal with the School

You are not prohibited from personally obtaining goods and services from organisations that deal with the School. However, you must make sure that you are not being offered preferential rates in an attempt to influence the School to use that organisation. As far as possible, make sure that the price you are quoted is a competitive one.

If you are authorised to award or recommend the award of contracts to an individual or an organisation, you should try to avoid using that individual or organisation for the purchase of goods or services for yourself, unless it can be demonstrated that there was little or no alternative. This should be declared to your manager if this happens.

This does not affect the purchase of goods or services at discount rates negotiated through a scheme endorsed by the School or a Trades Union.

13. Conduct outside working hours

In general, what you do outside work is your own concern. However, you must avoid doing anything which may result in damaging the School's reputation. Some actions, including serious misconduct or criminal offences can lead to disciplinary action and may lead to dismissal.

Remember that if you are expected to wear a uniform as part of your job, and wear it outside working hours, you can be identified as a School employee and you must act appropriately while wearing the uniform.

If it is considered that you have brought the teaching profession into disrepute, you may be struck off the professional register and no longer able to practise.

14. Employment outside the Council

If you take on, or consider taking on, paid or unpaid work in addition to your work at the School, you must be certain that it does not have an adverse effect on your work for the School and does not conflict with the interests of the School.

You must declare any personal interest or activities that may be perceived by others as being potentially in conflict with the School's interests.

You should bring this to the attention of your manager to check that it is acceptable for you to do it. In particular, you must ensure that you comply with the following conditions:

- (i) You must not undertake private work or business (including private work for your line manager) during your School working hours, on School premises or using School equipment.
- (ii) You must not take on work that will adversely affect the way in which you perform your duties for the School. You must consider the Working Time Regulations.
- (iii) You should take care when undertaking paid or unpaid private work that involves official contact with the School (for example, work for relatives or friends that needs planning permission). You must discuss this with your manager.
- (iv) You must not undertake paid or unpaid private work for any person or organisation if you allocate business to them as part of your duties at the School, or if you are in a position to award contracts or commission work, or influence the awarding of contracts or commissioning of work, or grant approval or permission.
- (v) You must not be involved in awarding, monitoring or managing contracts in which partners, spouses, relative or friends are employed.
- (vi) If you are invited to speak at a conference, in your position as an officer of the Council, your fees for this would normally be paid to the School.

There may be situations where it may be appropriate to carry out some form of **unpaid** "outside work", academic research or other task in the workplace. Generally this would only be appropriate out of work time (e.g. during lunch breaks or outside normal work hours) and in no way for personal gain.

15. **Personal Interests**

It is accepted that you will have outside interests and will support, or belong to, different groups or organisations, whether this is paid or unpaid. You should declare to your manager your involvement or interest (financial and non-financial interests) **if and when** your outside activities, or the activities of the group you belong to, could conflict with the School's

interests or School policy, or with your duties and responsibilities as an employee.

You should declare to the Headteacher membership of any organisation not open to the public without formal membership and commitment of allegiance and which has secrecy about rules or membership or conduct (for example, Freemasons). The Monitoring Officer will keep a confidential record of such declarations.

16. Breach of the code

Failure to comply with the Code of Conduct could lead to criticism of the School or you. In such cases, the School's Disciplinary Procedure would apply.

If you have any concerns about the application of any part of this code to your own circumstances you should discuss it, as soon as possible, with your manager.

DECLARATION

I undertake to comply with any reasonable requirement which the Council may specify in order to avoid a conflict of interest.

I appreciate the School has a duty to protect its interest and therefore a failure to provide a full disclosure, or any action related to this declaration which results in unacceptable conduct, could result in disciplinary action against me by the School.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Noted

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Further action by employee required? YES
NO

Action required by & notified to employee: _____

Signed _____ Position _____ Date: _____

Declarations must be made on the proforma. It should be completed and returned to the employee's managers. The form will be handled in confidence. One copy must be sent to be held on the employee's Reading Borough Council HR file.

DECLARATION

In accordance with the requirements of the Code of Conduct, I undertake that should this request be approved:

- (i) the outside work involved will not conflict with the interests of the School nor adversely affect my ability to comply with my contractual duties as an employee of the School.
- (ii) I will not at any time disclose any confidential information or use documentation which is the property of the School or use any School equipment or material in the course of this outside work.
- (iii) the organisation or person for whom I would be working is aware that I would be taking up such work as a private individual and not as a representative, agent or secondee of the School, and that all professional indemnity and other relevant insurance or tax requirements are my own responsibility.
- (iv) I appreciate the School has a duty to protect its interest and therefore a failure to abide by this declaration could result in disciplinary action against me by the School.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

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Request approved? YES
NO

If refused, reason for refusal:

Signed _____ Position _____ Date: _____

Declarations must be made on the proforma. It should be completed and returned to the employee's managers. The form will be handled in confidence. One copy must be sent to be held on the employee's Reading Borough Council HR file.