

Torfield and Saxon Mount Academy Trust

**Federation Code of
Conduct for Staff**

July 2022

INTRODUCTION

The Directors of Torfield and Saxon Mount Academy Trust are required to set out a Code of Conduct for all employees. In line with the statutory safeguarding guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education, this includes, amongst other aspects, the acceptable use of technologies (including the use of mobile devices), staff/pupil relationships and communications, including the use of social media.

All employees at Torfield School and Saxon Mount School are expected to actively and positively support the aims and vision of the Trust by demonstrating high standards of professional conduct.

Appraisal, HR policies and safeguarding procedures help to ensure that high standards are maintained. Staff at our academies are expected to be role models for children and young people and it is important we are consistent in our approach to professional conduct

Our duty to safeguard students is paramount, as is our determination to make all aspects of our provision outstanding. Safeguarding is a key duty and all staff must be familiar with and in compliance with all safeguarding policies and practice adopted by the academy trust.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Policies and Procedures: All academy policies and procedures should be observed by all staff. The aspects covered below all relate to a number of academy policies and procedures, it is the responsibility of staff to familiarise themselves with these. Some policies will require staff to sign to acknowledge they have read them. Copies may be found on the internal IT network and on the academy website. This expectation is extended to include correct use of and compliance with financial and resourcing procedures. All staff are expected to take responsibility for accessing help and support should it be needed.

Duty of Care: All staff have a duty of care to keep young people safe and to protect them from sexual, physical and emotional harm. Children have a right to be safe and to be treated with respect and dignity. Staff are required to understand their responsibilities and always act in the child's best interests and within the policies and procedures of the academy trust. All staff are responsible for their own actions and behaviour and should avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intervention.

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
- Using inappropriate language

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 managed, 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 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.

Equality: Professional standards must always be maintained when dealing with children and young people, colleagues, parents / carers and other professionals as well as any visitors to the academy. This is regardless of culture, disability, gender, language, race, religion and/or sexual identity. All children and young people must be treated equally and with respect at all times.

Health and safety: All activities should be carried out with the highest regard for the health and safety of all stakeholders. There is a separate academy trust policy, but the overall aim is excellence in health and safety practice, by means of continuous improvement of standards, and the comprehensive use of risk assessments to systematically reduce and manage the causes of accidents/incidents and ill-health. Everyone holds a responsibility to ensure and manage their own safety at work and that of other staff and pupils.

Attendance and Punctuality: Staff are expected to strive for 100% attendance and punctuality including on INSET days, except for sickness, approved compassionate grounds, or, where punctuality is concerned, unforeseen or circumstances outside of the individual's control. Staff absence is to be notified by 7.30 a.m. at the latest on each day of absence. All staff need to be prompt and on time to lessons, lesson changeover and for break or lunch duties. Lateness can result in health and safety risks and supervision concerns. Staff are required to inform a senior leader in advance if they are going to be absent or late for their duty / lesson changeover. Where possible they should arrange a duty swap with a colleague.

Confidentiality: Staff are expected to treat any information they may receive about children or young people, or academy trust business in a discreet and confidential manner. Individual children or young people, information of a sensitive or confidential nature regarding individuals or groups, or any aspect of academy trust business, should never be discussed by staff in front of other students, or shared externally without permission from a senior leader. Only designated persons are entitled to communicate with the press, radio or television companies. Confidential information about pupils or trust business should not be disclosed by anyone unless required by law or consent from relevant parties has been gained. Confidential information should not be used for any purpose other than what it was collected and intended for. This does not overrule the duty to report child protection concerns to the appropriate channel where staff believe a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm.

Professional Boundaries: Staff are in a position of trust and the relationship with children and young people is not one of equals. Professional boundaries should be maintained at all times. The aim is to offer support and care within the boundaries of the professional role we undertake.

Power and Positions of Trust: Occasionally, a child or young person may develop an inappropriate interest or infatuation with a staff member who works with them. All staff should deal with these situations sensitively and appropriately to maintain the dignity and safety of all concerned. Should any child or young person develop an inappropriate interest or become infatuated with a member of staff, this must be reported to the Headteacher immediately.

One to One Situations: These should be conducted in an open and transparent fashion i.e. with the knowledge of, or with other staff nearby, and if necessary with an open door.

Social Contact with children and young people: All social contact outside of school hours with pupils should be avoided. Home or mobile phone numbers; addresses or email addresses should not be exchanged. Staff should not establish or seek to establish social contact with students or their families. This includes the use of ICT and social media. There may be occasions when there are social contacts between children and young people and staff, where for example a parent and member of staff are part of the same social circle. These contacts will be easily recognised and openly acknowledged. Nevertheless, there must be awareness on the part of those working with children and young people that some social contacts can be misconstrued as inappropriate.

Personal Living Spaces: No pupil should ever be invited into the home of an adult who works with them, unless the reason for this has been firmly established and agreed with parents/carers and a

member of SLT or the Executive Headteacher. Under no circumstances should students assist with chores or tasks in the home of a member of staff who works with them. This also applies to friends or family of a staff member.

Physical Contact with Students: This will usually be avoided unless within the guidance of the behaviour and positive handling policies. Possible exceptions, using professional judgement, might include greetings or congratulations such as handshakes; the guiding of a student to where they need to be or a pat on the back in an appropriate situation. Sometimes children need to be reassured or comforted. Some pupils require assistance to manage their personal care or to change clothing for PE. Again, professional judgment can be used in these situations. There should not be any physical contact when students are getting changed or showering, unless students require support for changing, and respect and privacy must be shown to them at this time. All physical contact is currently minimised and staff are required to also consider the control measures identified in the risk assessment and staff guidance in relation to Covid-19.

It is an offence to have a sexual relationship with any student up to the age of 18 and will be seen as a serious breach of conduct leading to dismissal, and even though technically legal beyond 18, such a relationship may well be viewed as a serious breach of professional trust.

Communication with Students (including the use of technology): Staff must ensure that they establish safe and responsible online behaviours. All staff are asked to sign the Staff Acceptable Use ICT statement. Staff must ensure that they are compliant with all data protection, retention and security policies in all aspects of communication with pupils. Communication between students and staff, by whatever method, should take place within clear professional boundaries. Staff should not share any personal information with a child or young person. Staff should ensure that all communications are transparent and open to scrutiny. Staff should not become 'friends' / linked with / joined with or be a member of an online community that includes present or former pupils. Staff are advised not to post their personal details or inappropriate materials on social networking sites.

Photography and Videos: Staff should be clear about the purpose of recording images and about what will happen to them once the activity is concluded. Informed written consent from parent/carers is sought and those students whose images cannot be used are recorded on SIMS. Staff must also be fully compliant with all data protection, retention and security policies in all aspects of recording images of pupils.

Use of Mobile phones / devices: Mobile phones / devices should be switched off or silent at all times. Staff should only use their mobile phones / devices for personal calls or messages during personal time, in private and away from pupils. Staff should not store parent's or student's telephone numbers on their own mobile phone. Staff may be issued with a school phone for use in case of emergency on school trips or off-site activities. Staff should not use their mobile phone or other mobile device as a camera or video /audio recorder to record sound or images of students.

Emails/Letters: Official letters or emails sent on behalf of the academy should be on headed notepaper. All letters on headed notepaper must be approved by the Headteacher or another member of the SLT.

General conduct: All staff are expected to carry out their duties within the spirit of mutual respect, co-operation and support. A member of staff should not behave in such a way as to bring either Torfield School or Saxon Mount School into disrepute. Staff are expected to behave in a manner both within and outside of working hours which would not lead any reasonable person to question their suitability to work with children or act as a role model. All adults working with children and young people have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of children and young people. Staff should positively promote the work of each academy in the trust and should not engage in negative communication or conversations about individuals or the academies. This includes both within and outside of work.

Declarations of business interests and under the Childcare Disqualification regulations: All staff are required to sign an annual declaration of business interests at the beginning of each academic year as part of the suite of annual forms and declarations. If associated circumstances

change within the year, presenting individuals with a change to the declaration made, staff are expected to request and complete a new declaration form obtained from the Director of Finance and Resources.

Declarations for any changes to DBS or childcare disqualification status: Staff are required to declare any incidents or circumstances that change or impact upon their initial employment check status under DBS or childcare disqualification as possible following the event changing the circumstance. This must be done in writing to the Director of Finance and Resources. Failure to declare a change in either circumstance could result in disciplinary action.

Planning and Preparation: All staff should ensure they are up to date with information and should check emails, SIMS information, pigeon holes and briefing notices at least daily to ensure they are aware of situations and events that will affect them.

Participation: As in all organisations and life generally, the more staff put in, the more they get out and therefore being engaged fully in all activities is an essential part of school life. In accordance with directed time staff are required to attend all relevant meetings including Parental Consultation evenings and Open Evenings. All staff are also expected to participate in the wider professional life of the academy such as by attending fairs, events and activities and supporting school trips and holiday clubs outside of the school day, where possible.

Educational Visits and After-School Activities: Organisers will follow academy policy and procedure in planning and risk assessing such visits and activities. Staff/child ratios will be considered and where overnight stays are involved, the gender mix of staff will be carefully considered. No pupil of the opposite sex should be allowed to enter the bedroom / sleeping area of another pupil. On residential trips staff must not smoke and no alcohol should be consumed.

Conflicts of interest: Staff must declare any potential interest they have that is potentially in conflict with the values and aims of the academies s. Staff should not undertake additional employment such as caring / supervising / tutoring children who are current pupils at either academy, unless with the agreement of the Headteacher. Any staff who are externally employed as examiners / markers should not conduct any marking / related activity on the academy premises.

Gifts and Rewards: The giving of gifts or rewards to students is part of academy policy and procedure for supporting positive behaviour or recognising particular achievements. Staff must not accept gifts from children unless they are small token gifts appropriate to a celebration.

Dress and appearance: Staff should dress in ways which are appropriate to their professional role and this may need to be different to how they dress when not at work. As a rule of thumb, staff are expected to dress as they would for an interview. At primary level this may include smart and appropriate non-business type clothing for those staff working directly with very young children or those with higher levels of need. At secondary level, it will include smart professional type clothing at all times, other than when undertaking particular activities such as PE / vocational learning or other activities that would require non – professional type clothing or task specific clothing. Flip flops and casual or beach wear are not appropriate. Staff should not:

- Chew gum
- Expose tattoos or body piercings (except earrings)
- Use inappropriate language in either spoken or written form
- Eat or drink in the corridors

Smoking

Smoking of any kind (E.G. Vaping) is forbidden on all parts of the academy property by all staff, pupils and other visitors and contractors. This includes the areas immediately outside the academy entrances. Any staff who wish to smoke must do so in their own time, either outside of normal hours of work, or during their break. No provision is made for any additional 'smoking breaks' during the working day. Any staff leaving the site should sign out and in to register their absence from site.

All staff are expected to comply with this Code of Conduct. Teaching staff are furthermore required to conduct themselves within the guidance of the 'personal and professional conduct' section of the Teachers' Standards. Deviation from the aforementioned codes of conduct and practice may lead to disciplinary action being taken where appropriate. (Teachers' standards, GOV.UK – DfE, see pages 5 and 14).