



# **Staff Code of Conduct**

Person responsible for policy: HR Director

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## Introduction

### What is a Code of Conduct?

A Code of Conduct is designed to give clear guidance on the standards of behaviour all school staff are expected to observe across the River Learning Trust ("the Trust") and the individual schools should notify staff of this code and the expectations therein. This code of conduct aims to protect the reputation of both employees and the River Learning Trust, it also aims to protect the rights and interests of children and young people.

This document is not intended to be exhaustive and does not replace the general requirements of the law, common sense and good conduct.

This code does not replace or take priority over the school's child protection procedures which can be found on the Trust website. All staff must be aware of the action that must be taken by employees when child abuse or neglect is suspected, whether inside the school, at home or elsewhere, or following any disclosure of alleged abuse. Copies of all agreed policies are available from the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead.

School staff are role models and are in a unique position of influence and must adhere to behaviour that sets a good example to all the pupils/students within the school. As a member of a school community, each employee has an individual responsibility to maintain their reputation and the reputation of the school, whether inside or outside working hours.

This code of conduct should be read in conjunction with the following policies and documents relating to conduct and behaviour, of which all individuals working for, or with the school are expected to comply:

- Guidance for Safer Working Practices 2022
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022 (or the latest version)
- Teachers Standards (DfE)
- Use of Reasonable Force Policy (DfE) guidance

*This covers both the teaching standards and personal and professional conduct*

- School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document
- Schools behaviour management policies
- Disciplinary procedure
- Allegations of abuse made against staff and volunteers working with children
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policies
- Staff IT Acceptable Use Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Social Media Policy
- All policies and external guidance relating to behaviour and/or conduct.

### Who does it apply to?

This policy applies to all employees, workers, contractors or supply workers of the River Learning Trust. For the purposes of this policy any wider groups are referred to as 'employee'

### **What is my responsibility?**

1. You must:
  - read this code along with supporting policies and guidance;
  - ensure you understand it, read and comply;
  - ask if there are any points that are unclear;
  - use this code of conduct, alongside other policies mentioned above, to guide you in your role.
2. Breach of this code of conduct may lead to disciplinary action which could result in dismissal.

### **What are the main points?**

3. The public is entitled to expect the highest standards of behaviour from Trust employees.
4. Employees represent the Trust and are trusted to act in a way which promotes the Trusts interests and protects its reputation.
5. Employees are accountable for their actions and should ask the Headteacher, School Business Manager or RLT Central HR Team for advice if they are not sure of the appropriate action to take.

### **Staff / pupil relationships**

It is important that all adults working within the Trust must understand:

- that the nature of their work and the responsibilities related to it, place them in a position of trust. Is an offence under The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO Act) 2012 for a person aged 18 or over to have a sexual relationship with a child under 18 (or those over 18 who remain in education, such as Sixth Form) where that person is in a position of trust in respect of that child, even if the relationship is consensual.
- the term 'low level concern' as described in *KCSIE 2021* and *Allegations of abuse made against staff and volunteers working with children Policy*. The term 'low-level' concern does not mean that it is insignificant, it means that the behaviour towards a child does not meet the harm threshold. A low-level concern is any concern – no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt' - that an adult working in or on behalf of the school or college may have acted in a way that is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work; and does not meet the allegations threshold or is otherwise not considered serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO.

### **Conduct Outside of Work**

6. Staff must not engage in conduct outside work which could damage the reputation and standing of the Trust or the employee's own reputation or the reputation of other members of the school community.

- o In particular, criminal offences that involve violence or possession or use of illegal drugs or sexual misconduct are likely to be regarded as unacceptable.
- o Staff must exercise caution when using information technology in general and social media in particular and be aware of the risks to themselves and others. This includes any online activity which may or has the potential to bring themselves, the Trust, the school and or associated persons into disrepute.
- o Staff must exercise caution when using social media and or similar when any association implied or direct is made between them as an individual and the Trust and or a school within the Trust
- o Staff must be alert to the need for professional boundary management where there is any overlap between their professional employed role at RLT (e.g. as a teacher or TA) and their friendship or friendship by association circle (e.g. friendship circle of their child or children).
- o Staff may undertake work outside school, either paid or voluntary, provided that it does not conflict with the interests of the Trust nor be to a level which may contravene the working time regulations or affect an individual's work performance.

## **Confidentiality**

7. Where staff have access to confidential information about pupils/students or their parents or carers, staff must not reveal such information except to those colleagues who have a professional role in relation to the pupil/student. Please refer to the schools Safeguarding Policy, as an overview:
  - o All staff are likely at some point to witness actions which need to be confidential. For example, where a pupil/student is bullied by another pupil/student (or by a member of staff), this needs to be reported and dealt with in accordance with the appropriate school procedure. It must not be discussed outside the school, including with the pupil's/student's parent or carer, nor with colleagues in the school except with a senior member of staff with the appropriate role and authority to deal with the matter.
  - o However, staff have an obligation to share with their manager or the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead any information which gives rise to concern about the safety or welfare of a pupil/student. Staff must never promise a pupil/student that they will not act on information that they are told by the pupil/student.
  - o As part of their whole school approach to safeguarding schools should ensure that they promote an open and transparent culture in which all concerns about all

adults working in or on behalf of the school (including supply teachers, volunteers and contractors) are dealt with promptly and appropriately - see *Allegations of abuse made against staff and volunteers working with children* for more information on Low Level and other concerns

8. Employees must not use any information obtained in the course of their employment to cause damage to the Trust or for personal gain or benefit. Nor should they pass information on to others who may use it in such a way.

### **Outside Commitments & Interests**

9. Conflicts of interest may occur if a decision of the Trust could affect an employee, or close friends and relatives, either positively or negatively. Interests could include involvement with businesses which have existing or proposed contracts with the Trust or any of the individual schools.

Employees should ask themselves the question “Would a member of the public think that they or their family would benefit from the connection between their personal interest and their employment with School or Trust?”

If the answer is yes, then they must disclose their interest to the Headteacher in writing.

10. Employees may hold their own personal and political views but must act professionally at work and not allow these views to interfere with their work or relationships with pupils and colleagues.
11. Employees should ensure that their activities outside work do not conflict with their duty to the Trust, for example:
  - All teaching and support staff should inform the Headteacher before engaging in any other business or accepting additional employment.

### **Frequently asked questions**

- **What should an employee do if they know that someone is breaching this code of conduct?**

Often it is those closest to an organisation who realise that there is something wrong. Sometimes people are reluctant to act upon their concerns because they think that they are being disloyal, or because they are afraid that they might be victimised if they speak up.

The Trust has a Whistleblowing Policy to enable employees to raise concerns in an appropriate manner and to ensure that they do not suffer any detriment as a result of doing so.

- **Can an employee's partner's business tender for a contract?**

The Code of Conduct does not preclude anyone from having the opportunity to tender for business. However, the process must be, and be seen to be, fair, open and

transparent. To this end employees would need to make the Headteacher aware of their interest, take no part in the tendering process and ensure that they do not pass on any information which would give that business any advantage in the process.

- **Can an employee's relative apply for a job in the school I work in?**

Yes. They can apply and would be considered based on their suitability for the role. They should declare their relationship on the appropriate section of the application form.

If the employee is involved in recruiting for the role they should not be involved in any stage of the appointment and should disclose the relationship as soon as they are aware that their relative or close personal friend is applying for the role so that someone else can be assigned to the appointments process.

- **Can an employee take an evening job?**

All teachers and support staff should inform their Headteacher prior to taking on any additional work.

- **Can employees' campaign for a political party outside of work?**

Employees may campaign on behalf of a political party however when engaged on school and Trust business they must remain politically neutral and not allow their personal or political views to interfere with their duties.

Individuals are free to take part in activities organised and authorised by the Trade Unions without declaring an interest.

- **What should an employee do if the code of conduct doesn't cover their specific situation?**

In the first instance seek advice from the Headteacher, School Business Manager or RLT HR.