

Lift Schools policies

Ethical and Professional Standards Policy

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This policy should be read in conjunction with our [code of conduct](#).

1. Scope and general principles

- 1.1. We are committed to providing a professional and ethical environment, which serves and protects the trust and all its schools.
- 1.2. Policies cannot provide an exhaustive list of what is, or is not, appropriate behaviour for all contexts. There will be occasions and circumstances where decisions have to be made, or actions taken, in the best interests of the pupil where no specific guidance has been given. All employees and volunteers irrespective of whether or not they work directly with pupils, are expected to make responsible and informed judgements in the best interests and welfare of the pupils and must:
 - 1.2.1. place the well-being and learning of pupils at the centre of their professional practice
 - 1.2.2. have high expectations for all pupils
 - 1.2.3. be committed to addressing underachievement, and work to help pupil's progress regardless of their background and personal circumstances
 - 1.2.4. treat pupils, parents and colleagues fairly and with respect, take their knowledge, views, opinions and feelings seriously, and value diversity and individuality
 - 1.2.5. model the characteristics they are trying to inspire in pupils, including enthusiasm for learning, a spirit of enquiry, honesty, tolerance, social responsibility, patience, and a genuine concern for other people
 - 1.2.6. respond sensitively to the differences in the home backgrounds and circumstances of pupils, recognising the key role that parents and carers play in pupils' education

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- 1.2.7. seek to work in partnership with parents and carers, respecting their views and promoting understanding and cooperation to support the young person's learning and well-being in and out of school
- 1.2.8. reflect on their own practice, develop their skills, knowledge and expertise, and adapt appropriately to learn with and from colleagues
- 1.3. The same professional standards should always be applied regardless of culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity.
- 1.4. Additionally, teachers are required to comply with the prevailing statutory guidance Teachers' Standards, including Part 2, Personal and Professional Conduct, the principles of which are followed by this and our other policies.
- 1.5. Volunteers are also expected to abide by the Nolan Principles of Public Life.
- 1.6. This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time, subject to consultation in accordance with the union recognition agreement.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

- 2.1. It is the responsibility of all those working with the trust and its schools to abide by our code of conduct, and to make an annual electronic declaration that they have read and understood various policies, and have had the opportunity to ask questions about them.
- 2.2. It is the responsibility of the principal and other managers as appropriate to:
 - 2.2.1. make their staff aware of trust and local school policies and procedures
 - 2.2.2. identify any actual or potential breaches of policy or misconduct or unprofessional behaviour, address them promptly, using informal procedures where possible, but implementing formal procedures where necessary.
- 2.3. Any employee who is found to have committed a breach of policy may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behaviour may constitute gross misconduct and, as such, may result in summary dismissal. Examples of gross misconduct are included the Disciplinary Policy.
- 2.4. All those working with us and our schools have a duty to raise issues of concern. Where issues of child welfare and protection are concerned, including allegations against our employees, the procedures described in the applicable Safeguarding Policy must be followed. Other concerns should be reported to the relevant line manager, and where there are concerns about the integrity of that process, the procedures described in our Whistleblowing Policy should be followed. An employee who, in good faith, "whistleblows" or makes a public interest disclosure will have the protection of the relevant legislation.

3. Propriety, Behaviour and Appearance

- 3.1. All adults working with children have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of pupils. They should adopt high

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standards of personal conduct in order to maintain the confidence and respect of their colleagues, pupils and the public in general. An individual's behaviour or actions, either in or out of the workplace, should not compromise their position within the work setting or bring the school into disrepute. The misuse of drugs or alcohol, and acts of violence or threatening behaviour would be examples of such behaviour. Refer also to our policy on [Bullying and Harassment Policy](#), and to the examples of gross misconduct in the [Disciplinary Policy](#).

- 3.2. A person's dress and appearance are matters of personal choice and self-expression. However, employees and volunteers must ensure they are dressed in ways which are appropriate to their role and not likely to be viewed as offensive, revealing or sexually provocative and specifically should not distract, cause embarrassment or give rise to misunderstanding, should be culturally sensitive and free of any political or otherwise contentious slogans, and not considered to be discriminatory. Those who dress or appear in a manner that may be considered as inappropriate could render themselves vulnerable to criticism or allegations of misconduct.
- 3.3. Employees and volunteers are expected to maintain high standards in their own attendance and punctuality.
- 3.4. Personal property of a sexually explicit, or otherwise offensive nature such as books, magazines, CDs, DVDs or such material on any electronic media must not be brought onto or stored on any of our premises or equipment.

4. Conflicts of Interest

- 4.1. As explained in more detail in the [Financial Procedures Manual](#) all employees and volunteers have a duty to avoid personal interests or transactions that might influence their objective judgement and might conflict with the best interests of the Group, their school or its pupils.
- 4.2. A conflict of interest can occur when someone takes actions, or has interests, goals or obligations that may divide their loyalties and interfere with the impartial and productive performance of their duties. *Interests* include commercial, financial or political interests of employees (and trustees) or related parties¹.
- 4.3. Examples of conflicts of interest might include:
 - 4.3.1. the ownership, financial interest in, obligation to, or board membership of, a customer, supplier, other school or multi-academy trust, or other third party, including not-for-profit organisation, interacting with the trust;
 - 4.3.2. profiting personally, or assisting others to profit, from any advantage that might arise as a result of someone's position of authority, influence or access to confidential information.

¹ A related party is a person or entity related through close family relationship, or otherwise through ownership, control or the existence of significant influence.

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- 4.4. Conflicts must be resolved to the satisfaction of the trust as soon as possible. Where a potential or actual conflict of interest does arise, this must be disclosed and registered using this link to the [Register of Interests](#).
- 4.5. Whilst all volunteers are required to complete this register annually, **employees are only required to declare an interest if it represents a conflict of interest** and after they have discussed it with their line manager. If further clarification is required, contact the governance team: (governance@liftschools.org).

5. Close personal relationships

- 5.1. A conflict of interest may also occur where there is a close personal relationship between two employees at Lift Schools or with a prospective employee. A close personal relationship is defined as:
- 5.1.1. employees who are married, dating or in a partnership or cohabiting arrangement
 - 5.1.2. immediate family members e.g. parent, child, sibling, grandparent/child
 - 5.1.3. other relationships e.g. extended family (cousins, uncles, in-laws), close friendships, business associates (outside the school)
- 5.2. All employees are required to disclose a close personal relationship with a colleague or applicant for a position with us.
- 5.3. It is inappropriate for an employee to line manage, or sit on an appointment panel for those with whom s/he has a close personal relationship. Employees must not be involved in any decisions relating to performance management, discipline, promotion or pay adjustment for anyone where there is a close personal relationship. Nor should they seek in any way to influence such decisions.
- 5.4. Where this situation does arise, the individual/s should inform their line manager as soon as possible, to enable advice to be taken, and their working arrangements considered appropriately. Any decision and subsequent action will be taken in full consultation with both parties and without unlawful discrimination.

6. Bribery and corruption

- 6.1. The Group maintains a policy of zero-tolerance of any form of bribery. The Bribery Act 2010 defines bribery as giving or receiving a financial or other advantage in connection with the 'improper performance' of a position of trust, or of a function that is expected to be performed impartially or in good faith. For more details, refer to the [Anti-Bribery and Corruption Policy](#) and to the [Expenses, Gifts and Hospitality Policy](#).

7. Protection of trust assets

- 7.1. All employees and volunteers are expected to safeguard both the tangible and intangible assets of the trust, and to use them efficiently and appropriately in the interests of the trust and all of its stakeholders.

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- 7.2. **Tangible assets** include books and other teaching materials, photocopiers, printers, projectors, audio-visual equipment, computers, communication devices and networks, stationery, musical instruments, sports and other extra-curricular equipment, catering equipment, buildings, furniture, fixtures and fittings, and vehicles. Some personal administrative use of assets (such as internet and communication systems) may be inevitable, but such personal use should be kept to a very minimum, and must in no event be in pursuit of personal opportunities or commercial gain.
- 7.3. **Intangible assets** include the reputation of our schools, and of the Lift Schools 'brand'. They also include confidential information, and intellectual property such as copyrights, patents, trademarks, and proprietary pedagogical or administrative methodologies, resources and materials developed by the Trust. All staff are required to uphold the highest standards of diligence, confidentiality, discretion, and loyalty to the Trust in protecting these intangible assets.
- 7.4. No commitment of the resources of the trust and its schools may be made without proper authorisation. All those with authority to make financial commitments on behalf of the Trust or for procurement or disposal of Trust assets must ensure that they are aware of, and comply with our Scheme of Delegation and Financial Procedures Manual.

8. Relationships and contact with Pupils

- 8.1. Employees and volunteers must maintain professional boundaries in all their interactions with pupils. More details of expectations are included in an appendix Professional Boundaries, which includes topics such as social media, infatuations and crushes, physical contact, one-to-one situations, behaviour management, transporting pupils and off-site educational visits.

9. Environmental considerations

- 9.1. Staff and pupils are encouraged and expected to be respectful and considerate to the community and to the environment. As far as practically possible, we are committed to pursue environmentally efficient and sustainable solutions in the development and maintenance of premises, and in the procurement and management of consumables.
- 9.2. Additionally, schools should have procedures and resources in place that help to:
- 9.2.1. minimise the use of non-renewable and environmentally damaging resources
 - 9.2.2. minimise wastage (e.g. paper, electricity)
 - 9.2.3. maximise recycling
 - 9.2.4. increase awareness of environmental issues amongst students and staff

10. Related policies and guidance

- 10.1. Our policies are published on our website.

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- 10.2. They are also published on the left-hand column of the statutory information page of each school website. This page also includes local school policies and other statutory information.
- 10.3. Staff are expected to be aware of where to find policies and to ask questions if they are not clear about what is expected of them.

11. Appendix A - professional boundaries

- 11.1. These guidelines provide some additional guidance regarding relationships and contact with pupils. They should also be read in conjunction with our Safeguarding Policy and related policies.
- 11.2. **Please note:** unless otherwise stated, the reporting of concerns should be to the relevant Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), or in their absence, to the Deputy DSL.

11.3. Sexual contact with children and young people and abuse of trust

- 11.3.1. A relationship between an adult and a child or young person is not a relationship between equals. There is potential for exploitation and harm of vulnerable young people. Adults should maintain appropriate professional boundaries and avoid behaviour, which might be misinterpreted by others. Any incidents or behaviour with this potential should be reported.
- 11.3.2. Any sexual behaviour or activity, by an employee or volunteer with or towards a child or young person is illegal. The same laws apply as with adults in relation to non-consensual sexual behaviour to protect children and young people. Specific legal provisions regardless of whether there is consent additionally protect where a person aged 18 or over is in a specified position of trust with a child or young person or under 18 years of age. The Sexual Offences Act 2003 makes it an offence for that person to engage in sexual activity with or in the presence of that child/young person or to cause or incite that child to engage in or watch sexual activity.
- 11.3.3. Sexual behaviour includes non-contact activities, such as causing a child or young person to engage in or watch sexual activity or the production of indecent images of children. 'Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)', defines sexual abuse as "forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening".
- 11.3.4. Employees and volunteers must not have sexual relationships with pupils, have any form of communication with a child or young person which could be interpreted as sexually suggestive or provocative i.e. verbal comments, letters, notes, texts, electronic mail, phone calls, social networking contact or physical contact. The adult should not make sexual remarks/comments to, or about, a child or young person or discuss their own sexual relationships with or in the presence of pupils. Employees and volunteers should take care that their language or conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Attitudes, demeanour and language all require care.
- 11.3.5. There are occasions when adults embark on a course of behaviour known as 'grooming' where the sole purpose is to gain the trust of a child or young person, and manipulate

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that relationship so that sexual abuse can take place. Employees and volunteers should be aware that conferring special attention without good reason or favouring a pupil has the potential to be construed as being part of a 'grooming' process, which is a criminal offence.

11.4. Infatuations and Crushes

- 11.4.1. A child or young person may develop an infatuation with an employee or volunteer or other adult who works with them. An adult who becomes aware that a pupil may be infatuated with them or a colleague, must report this without delay so that appropriate action can be taken to avoid any hurt, distress or embarrassment. The situation will be taken seriously and the adult should be careful to ensure that no encouragement of any kind is given to the pupil.
- 11.4.2. Examples of situations which must be reported include where an employee or volunteer is concerned:
 - 11.4.2.1. that they might be developing a relationship with a pupil which could have the potential to represent an abuse of trust;
 - 11.4.2.2. that a pupil is becoming attracted to them or that there is a developing attachment or dependency
 - 11.4.2.3. that actions or words have been misunderstood or misconstrued by a pupil such that others might wrongly suspect an abuse of trust
 - 11.4.2.4. about the apparent development of a relationship by another employee or volunteer, or receives information about such a relationship.

11.5. Social contact, social media and networking

- 11.5.1. Communication between children and young people and employees and volunteers, by whatever method, should take place within clear and explicit professional boundaries. This includes, but is not limited to, the wider use of technology such as mobile phones, tablets, text messages, emails, instant messages including via Google Chat, websites, social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, chat-rooms, forums, blogs, apps such as Whatsapp, Tik Tok, gaming sites, digital cameras, videos including video conferencing such as Google Hangout, web-cams and other handheld devices. Employees and volunteers should not share any personal information with pupils. They should not request, nor respond to, any personal information from the child/young person, other than that which might be appropriate as part of their professional role. If such non-professional contact does occur (accidentally or otherwise), the adult should advise the DSL or DDSL prior to any response.
- 11.5.2. Employees and volunteers must not give their personal contact details such as home/mobile phone number; home or personal email address or social networking details to pupils under any circumstances.

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- 11.5.3. Employees and volunteers should ensure that all possible privacy settings are activated to prevent pupils from making contact on personal profiles and to prevent students from accessing photo albums or other personal information that may appear on social networking sites.
- 11.5.4. Employees and volunteers should not engage in conversation with pupils, past and present, irrespective of their age, on any social networking site. Offers of assistance to a pupil with their studies via any social networking site are inappropriate and leaves the employee vulnerable to allegations being made.
- 11.5.5. Employees and volunteers are advised not to have online friendships with parents or carers of pupils, or members of the governing body/trustees. Where such online friendships exist, employees must ensure that appropriate professional boundaries are maintained at all times.
- 11.5.6. Employees and volunteers are responsible for what they communicate in social media and must be aware that what they have published might be read by trust employees, pupils, the general public, future employers and friends and family for a long time. Employees must ensure that their online profiles are consistent with the professional image expected by us and should not post material which damages the reputation of Lift Schools or which causes concern about their suitability to work with children and young people. Those who post material that may be considered inappropriate could render themselves vulnerable to criticism or allegations of misconduct, which may be dealt with under our disciplinary policy. Even where it is made clear that the writer's views on such topics do not represent those of Lift Schools, such comments are inappropriate.

11.6. Physical contact and personal privacy

- 11.6.1. There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for employees to have physical contact with pupils, but it is crucial that they only do so in ways appropriate to their professional role. When physical contact is made with pupils this should be in response to their needs at the time, of limited duration and appropriate given their age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity, culture and background. It is not possible to be specific about the propriety of each physical contact, since an action that is appropriate with one pupil in one set of circumstances may be inappropriate in another, or with a different pupil.
- 11.6.2. Physical contact should never be secretive or casual, or for the gratification of the adult, or represent a misuse of authority. If an employee or volunteer believes that an action could be misinterpreted, the incident and circumstances should be reported to the DSL or DDSL as soon as possible and recorded in the school's incident book, and, if appropriate, a copy placed on the pupil's file.
- 11.6.3. Physical contact, which occurs regularly with a pupil or pupils, is likely to raise questions unless the justification for this is part of a formally agreed plan (for example in relation to pupils with SEN or physical disabilities). Any such contact should be the subject of an agreed and open school policy and subject to review. Where feasible,

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employees should seek the pupil's permission before initiating contact. Staff should listen, observe and take note of the pupil's reaction or feelings and – so far as is possible – use a level of contact which is acceptable to the pupil for the minimum time necessary.

- 11.6.4. *There may be exceptional occasions when a distressed pupil needs comfort and reassurance. This may include age-appropriate physical contact. Employees should remain self-aware at all times in order that their contact is not threatening, intrusive or subject to misinterpretation.***
- 11.6.5. Where staff have a particular concern about the need to provide this type of care and reassurance s/he should seek further advice from the DSL.
- 11.6.6. Some staff, for example, those who teach PE and games, or who provide music tuition will on occasions have to initiate physical contact with pupils in order to support a pupil so they can perform a task safely, to demonstrate the use of a particular piece of equipment/instrument or assist them with an exercise. This should be done with the pupil's agreement. Contact under these circumstances should be for the minimum time necessary to complete the activity and take place in an open environment. Employees should remain sensitive to any discomfort expressed verbally or non-verbally by the pupil.
- 11.6.7. Pupils are entitled to respect and privacy when changing clothes or taking a shower. However, there needs to be an appropriate level of supervision in order to safeguard pupils, satisfy health and safety considerations and ensure that bullying or teasing does not occur. This supervision should be appropriate to the needs and age of the pupils concerned and sensitive to the potential for embarrassment.
- 11.6.8. Staff with a job description which includes intimate care duties must have appropriate training and written guidance provided by, or arranged by, the individual school. No other staff should be involved in intimate care duties except in an emergency.

11.7. One to one situations and meetings with pupils

- 11.7.1. One to one situations have the potential to make children/young persons more vulnerable to harm by those who seek to exploit their position of trust. Adults working in one to one settings with pupils may also be more vulnerable to unjust or unfounded allegations being made against them. Central team employees must recognise this possibility and plan and conduct such meetings accordingly. Every attempt should be made to ensure that the safety and security needs of both employees and pupils are met. Managers should undertake a risk assessment in relation to the specific nature and implications of one to one work for each worker and pupil. Where such a meeting is demonstrably unavoidable, it is advisable to avoid remote or secluded areas of the school, to ensure a leader or manager is aware and to ensure that the door of the room is left open and/or visual/auditory contact with others is maintained. Any arrangements should be reviewed on a regular basis.

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- 11.7.2. Pre-arranged meetings with pupils away from the school premises, or on the school site when the school is not in session, are not permitted unless written approval is obtained from their parent/ guardian and the Principal.
- 11.7.3. No child or young person should be in or invited into the home of an adult who works with them.

11.8. Behaviour management and physical intervention

- 11.8.1. All pupils have a right to be treated with respect and dignity. Corporal punishment is unlawful in all schools. Staff must not use any form of degrading treatment to punish a pupil. The use of sarcasm, or of demeaning or insensitive comments towards pupils is not acceptable in any situation. Deliberately intimidating pupils by shouting aggressively, hectoring or overbearing physical presence is not acceptable in any situation.
- 11.8.2. Physical intervention can only be justified in exceptional circumstances. Non-statutory guidance is available from the Department of Education website. See '[Use of Reasonable Force in Schools](#)'.
- 11.8.3. Staff may legitimately intervene to prevent a pupil from committing a criminal offence, injuring themselves or others, causing damage to property, engaging in behaviour prejudicial to good order and to maintain good order and discipline. Staff should have regard to the health and safety of themselves and others.
- 11.8.4. Under no circumstances should physical force be used as a form of punishment. The use of unwarranted physical force is likely to constitute a criminal offence.

11.9. Transporting Pupils

- 11.9.1. In certain situations, e.g. out of school activities, employees or volunteers may agree to transport pupils. A designated employee should make transport arrangements in advance. Wherever possible and practicable, transport should be provided other than in private vehicles, with at least one adult additional to the driver acting as an escort.
- 11.9.2. Adults should ensure that their behaviour is safe and that the transport arrangements and the vehicle meet all legal requirements. They must ensure that the vehicle is roadworthy and appropriately insured and that the maximum capacity is not exceeded.
- 11.9.3. It is inappropriate for staff to offer lifts to a pupil outside their normal working duties, unless this has been brought to the attention of the DSL or DDSL and has been agreed with parents/carers. It is good practice to have a second adult in the car.
- 11.9.4. There may be occasions where a pupil requires transport in an emergency situation or where not to give a lift may place a pupil at risk. Such circumstances must always be recorded and reported to DSL and DDSL and parents/carers.

11.10. Educational visits and school clubs

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- 11.10.1. Employees and volunteers should take particular care when supervising pupils in the less formal atmosphere of an educational visit, particularly in a residential setting, or after-school activity. Adults remain in a position of trust and the same standards of conduct apply.
- 11.10.2. Adults involved in off-site activities and educational visits should be aware of our Off-site Educational Trips & Visits Policy.

11.11. Curriculum

- 11.11.1. Many areas of the curriculum can include or raise subject matter which is sexually explicit, or of an otherwise sensitive nature. Care should be taken to ensure that resource materials cannot be misinterpreted and clearly relate to the learning outcomes identified by the lesson plan. This plan should highlight particular areas of risk and sensitivity. Refer to our guidance on Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) and the relevant school RSE programme for more information.
- 11.11.2. The curriculum can sometimes include or lead to unplanned discussion about subject matter of a sexually explicit or otherwise sensitive nature. Responding to pupils' questions can require careful judgement and employees must take guidance in these circumstances from a senior member of staff. Employees and volunteers must not enter into or encourage inappropriate discussion about sexual activity or behaviour.

11.12. Annual affirmation

- 11.12.1. This appendix, along with the policy to which it belongs, form part of the documents which all staff and volunteers are required to read and to confirm annually that they have understood and had the opportunity to ask questions about. For more details refer to the code of conduct which includes a link to the [annual affirmation statement](#).