



CODE OF CONDUCT FOR SCHOOL STAFF

Approved and signed by the Board of Trustees by virtual meeting:

14.12.20

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I. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Trustees of Discovery Multi Academy Trust have set out this Code of Conduct for all Trust employees. Responsibility for day to day implementation will fall to the Chief Executive Officer. It has been consulted on and agreed with staff representatives at the Trust's schools.
- 1.2 In addition to this policy, all staff have an obligation to adhere to all relevant statutory legislation and the national and local terms and conditions for both teaching and support staff. Staff are expected to ensure they treat everyone with respect, oppose any forms of discrimination and bullying and are sensitive to other people's needs, attitudes and lifestyles.
- 1.3 Employees should be aware that a failure to comply with the following Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action, which could lead to dismissal.

2. PURPOSE, SCOPE AND PRINCIPLES

- 2.1 This Code of Conduct is designed to give clear guidance on the standards of behaviour all staff (including supply staff) at Discovery schools are expected to observe. 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 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.
- 2.2 This Code of Conduct applies to:
 - All staff who are employed by the Trust, including the Chief Executive Officer and any supply staff.
 - All staff in units or bases that are attached to the Trust.
- 2.3 The same expectations will be shared with, and apply to, regular visitors to Trust schools, the such as peripatetic staff and regular volunteers; though it is acknowledged that external staff will be covered by the relevant Code of Conduct of their employing body.
- 2.4 Where employees have complied with the Code of Conduct, the Trust will protect employees against unjustified allegations of wrong doing.
- 2.5 This Code of Conduct cannot cover every eventuality and further guidance should be sought from the Chief Executive Officer or, in the case of the Chief Executive Officer, from the Chair of Trustees and/or the Trust's HR advisor, if individuals are unsure of the standards expected of them.

3. SETTING AN EXAMPLE

- 3.1 All staff who work in Trust schools will set good examples of behaviour and conduct which can be copied by pupils. Therefore, staff must demonstrate high standards of conduct in order to encourage our pupils to do the same.
- 3.2 All staff must also avoid putting themselves at risk of allegations of abusive or unprofessional conduct.

4. SAFEGUARDING PUPILS, STAFF AND VISITORS

- 4.1 Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play in safeguarding children. School staff are particularly important as they are in a position to identify concerns early on and provide help for children, to prevent situations from escalating, by working with other agencies to protect them from harm.
- 4.2 Staff have a duty to safeguard pupils from:
 - physical abuse
 - sexual abuse
 - emotional abuse, including verbal assaults
 - bullying
 - neglect
 - unequal treatment or discrimination
- 4.3 The duty to safeguard pupils includes the duty to report concerns about a pupil to the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead. The Chief Executive Officer will ensure all staff are familiar with, and have received appropriate training including refresher training on, the school's Safeguarding Policy, and understand the provisions of the Whistleblowing Procedure. In addition, all staff should read the Department for Education's (DfE) statutory document *Keeping children safe in education: Statutory guidance for schools and colleges* (July 2018, or subsequent edition), which is available on the DfE's website.
- 4.4 Staff must not demean or undermine pupils, their parents or carers, colleagues or visitors to the school.
- 4.5 Staff should ensure they comply with the Trust's IT and social media policies, particularly with regard to the use of personal equipment. For example, the use of personal mobile phones or devices to record or photograph children is prohibited, and staff should only use school equipment for this purpose. Staff are expected to keep mobile phones switched off during staff meetings and for the periods of the working day when they are in contact with children. In exceptional circumstances (such as critical illness of a family member) the Head of School should be notified if a phone needs to be used. Where staff are in any doubt about the Trust's expectations regarding their behaviour, they should seek guidance immediately from a member of the senior leadership team.

- 4.6 Staff must ensure the highest standards of safety and welfare are taken in respect of pupils under their supervision and other colleagues and visitors to the school.
- 4.7 Staff have a duty to inform the headteacher (or suitable senior person in their absence) if they believe that a colleague or visitor is behaving in a way that compromises the safety or wellbeing of any child, group of children or a member of staff. Where staff have concerns about the Head of School, this should be referred to the Chief Executive Officer. Where staff have concerns about the Chief Executive Officer, the matter should be referred to the Chair of Trustees or in his/her absence the Vice Chair of Trustees.
- 4.8 Staff can report their concerns about child protection directly to the appropriate external agency if they consider the circumstances warrant this; however, staff are encouraged in the first instance to raise this with the school's DSL initially.
- 4.9 If staff have concerns about safeguarding or child protection practice in the school, they should raise this with the Headteacher or Chair of Governors wherever possible. Staff can also use the school's Whistleblowing Policy, where they consider this to be more appropriate. Further advice and support can be obtained from other agencies including trade unions.

5. ALLEGATIONS, CRIMINAL CHARGES AND CHANGES TO STATUS

- 5.1 Staff facing allegations, criminal charges and changes to status must disclose this, without delay, to their Head of School and the Chief Executive Officer. They must do this in all circumstances, whether they personally feel the matter is relevant or not. If in doubt, staff should seek advice from the Chief Executive Officer.
- 5.2 Examples of changes could include revisions to registration status, receiving a conviction, warning, reprimand, caution or awaiting sentence or whilst any criminal allegations made against the employee are being investigated. Such offences include motoring convictions. In all cases these must be declared as soon as practically possible to allow the Trust to assess the potential risks to their employment. Staff may be suspended if this is felt appropriate in the circumstances, for example, if their clearance status changes or is under review.
- 5.3 Staff are expected to disclose immediately any incidents or allegations of wrongdoing arising from alternative employment, voluntary work, incidents outside of work, or from previous employment which may or may not be covered by pre-employment checks that could affect their suitability to work with children, such as allegations of sexual misconduct or violence. Failure to do this may result disciplinary action which could lead to dismissal.
- 5.4 Staff in posts covered by the 'Disqualification' requirement under the Childcare Act 2006, must ensure that they comply with the requirement to disclose

offences relevant to themselves and to those who live or work at their home, and keep this information up to date throughout the year. The Chief Executive Officer and the Trust's HR advisor can provide further guidance in relation to this and, where in any doubt, all working at Trust schools should seek further advice.

- 5.5 The schools' Safeguarding Policies provide more detail on the Trust's position and approach to safeguarding vulnerable groups.
- 5.6 The implications of any disclosures will need to be considered and could result in disciplinary action, possibly leading to dismissal if employees are no longer able to fulfil their role.
- 5.7 Failure to disclose information may result in disciplinary action which could lead to dismissal.

6. PUPIL DEVELOPMENT

- 6.1 Staff must comply with all school and Trust policies and procedures, paying particular attention to those who support the well-being and development of pupils.
- 6.2 Staff must co-operate and collaborate with colleagues and with external agencies where necessary to support the development of pupils.
- 6.3 Staff must follow reasonable instructions that support the development of pupils.

7. HONESTY AND INTEGRITY

- 7.1 Staff must maintain high standards of honesty and integrity in their work. This includes the handling and claiming of money and the use of school property and facilities. All staff should therefore familiarise themselves with the relevant policies, including those in relation to financial procedures.
- 7.2 All staff must comply with the Bribery and Corruption Act 2018. A person may be guilty of an offence of bribery under this act if they offer, promise or give financial advantage or other advantage to someone; or if they request, agree or accept, or receive a bribe from another person. If you believe that a person has acted in a corrupt way, you should refer to the Trust's Whistleblowing Procedure.
- 7.3 Gifts from suppliers or associates of the Trust must be declared to the Head of School and passed onto the central team, to be recorded in the central gift register. This does not include "one off" token gifts from pupils or parents (e.g. at the end of the term or year). However, it could include offers of hospitality and invitations to events. Individual gifts from members of staff to individual pupils should not be given as they are inappropriate and could be misinterpreted.

- 7.4 Any personal interests, financial or otherwise, which could be seen to conflict with a member of staff's role at the Trust or its schools must be declared. This could include where a close personal relationship exists with a potential supplier tendering for a contract with the Trust. Staff are expected to complete a form declaring any pecuniary interests on an annual basis.
- 7.5 Staff must declare membership of any organisation classed as a secret society. This should be made in writing and sent to the Headteacher, who will record it.
- 7.6 The advice of the Head of School should be sought wherever doubt exists about the status of gifts, offers of hospitality or a potential situation of conflict of interest.

8. PROFESSIONAL ATTIRE

- 8.1 Whilst it is acknowledged that appearance is a matter of personal taste, it is expected that staff will present themselves in a professional manner which sets a good example to students and exhibits the importance of the job they undertake. However, clothes should be practical for the tasks required e.g. sportswear when teaching P.E.
- 8.2 Staff should be mindful of the health and safety implications, for example, when wearing jewellery, ensuring appropriate footwear, etc.
- 8.3 Staff are expected to dress with regard to the audience, particularly when representing the Trust's schools at external events.
- 8.4 Staff should not dress in a manner which could cause offence or embarrassment to others.
- 8.5 Staff should refer to the Staff Dress Code for further detail. No dress code can cover all contingencies, so staff must exert a certain amount of judgement in their choice of clothing and if in doubt this should be discussed with their line manager.

9. CONDUCT AND PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN WORK

- 9.1 All members of staff should arrive at a time which enables them to begin their contracted hours duties and responsibilities promptly. If in doubt, staff should clarify this with their line manager.
- 9.2 Staff are expected to take professional responsibility for fulfilling their role and, whatever that role, it is essential to the overall success of the Trust and its schools. This includes the professional courtesy of meeting deadlines that have been set and having a proactive dialogue with colleagues at the earliest opportunity if there are issues which prevent a task being completed on time. Staff will be positive in their thinking and approach, seeking constructive solutions to problems and by de-personalising issues. Staff will adhere to the Discovery behaviours in their day to day approach to work.

- 9.3 Staff will communicate effectively and fairly with all stakeholders and operate under the Nolan principles for those in public life (see Appendix A). They will treat all colleagues and visitors with professional respect and courtesy, showing appreciation for the contributions of others.

10 CONDUCT OUTSIDE WORK

- 10.1 Staff should not engage in conduct outside work which could seriously damage the reputation and standing of the Trust or any of its schools. This includes via a variety of methods of communication, e.g. social media, word of mouth, written, phone, text, etc.
- 10.2 Staff must notify the Head of School and Chief Executive Officer of any criminal charges brought against them, regardless of whether they consider these to be relevant to their working life (see also section 5 above). In some circumstances, criminal offences may need to be referred to the relevant disciplinary body by the Head of School or Chief Executive Officer, and staff need to be aware that this could result in removal of QTS. Offences that involve violence, possession or use of illegal drugs, or sexual misconduct are regarded as unacceptable and will usually result in loss of QTS. Disciplinary action within a school context could also lead to referral to other agencies.
- 10.3 Staff must exercise caution when using information technology and be aware of the risks to themselves and others. Staff must not engage in inappropriate use of social networking sites which may bring themselves, the school, school community, or employer into disrepute. Staff must not access illegal, adult or other inappropriate sites using school computers, nor should they use IT equipment for activities that are not related to work, during their paid working hours (e.g. internet shopping).
- 10.4 If staff are intending to undertake additional work outside the school day or their contracted hours, it is expected that they will discuss this with their Head of School, who will review the Working Time Regulations, health and safety implications and the potential effects on their work performance, and carry out a risk assessment, as necessary.
- 10.5 The Trust will not unreasonably preclude any of its employees from undertaking additional employment, taking into consideration the personal circumstances of the employee in question, but any such employment must not, in the Chief Executive Officer's and Trustee's view, conflict with or react detrimentally to the Trust's interests or endanger the health and safety of themselves or others.
- 10.6 No personal business activity or outside work of any sort may be undertaken by employees during their normal working hours for the school. Similarly, no school equipment, accommodation or resources may be used in connection with these activities.

11 CONFIDENTIALITY

- 11.1 Staff must treat all information that they have access to within their school as confidential.
- 11.2 Where staff have access to confidential information about pupils 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. Staff are advised to familiarise themselves with the expectations of the Data Protection Policy.
- 11.2 All staff are likely at some point to witness actions which need to be confidential and handled sensitively and according to correct procedures. These must only be discussed in the appropriate forum and with the relevant individuals (whether school staff or third parties). Where in doubt, staff must seek the advice of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).
- 11.3 However, staff have an obligation to share with their line manager or the school's DSL any information which gives rise to concern about the safety or welfare of a pupil or colleague. Staff must never promise a pupil that they will not act on information that they are told by the pupil.

12 DISCIPLINARY ACTION

- 12.1 Failure to meet these standards of behaviour and conduct may result in disciplinary action, which could lead to dismissal.

Appendix A

Nolan Seven Principles of Public Life

Whilst not applicable to all aspects of school life, the general principles apply.

(Originally published by the Nolan Committee: The Committee on Standards in Public Life was established by the then Prime Minister in October 1994, under the Chairmanship of Lord Nolan, to consider standards of conduct in various areas of public life, and to make recommendations).

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 for themselves, their family, or their friends.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Leadership

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.