



**Acorn**  
Education Trust

# Staff Code of Conduct

Person responsible	Anna Williams
Approved by directors	
First written	/ last amended November 2019

For review	Reviewed	Signature
July 2020	Completed	Anna Williams
July 2021		
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*All policies are renewed annually. If no change then just signed. If an amendment or full change is required, this is recorded.*

## Statement of Intent

Acorn Education Trust expects all of its students to receive the highest possible quality of teaching and learning within a positive and respectful environment.

Employees in every school should understand that their own behaviour, and the manner in which they conduct themselves with their colleagues, pupils, parents/carers and other stakeholders, sets an example.

Acorn Education Trust recognises that the majority of staff members act appropriately and treat each other with dignity and respect; however, we consider it important to clarify the expected standards.

This document applies to all staff members who are:

- Employed by the Trust
- Employed in units or bases that are attached any school.

This document does not apply to:

- Peripatetic staff members who are centrally employed by the LA.
- School catering staff employed by name of catering provider.
- Employees of external contractors.

These employees are governed by their employment contracts and any relevant laws pertaining to their activities within the school, for example, the Data Protection Act 1998.

## Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to statutory legislation, including, but not limited to, the following:

- The Data Protection Act 1998
- The Education Act 2002
- The Children Act 1989
- The Working Time Regulations 1998 (as amended)

This policy also has due regard to statutory guidance, including, but not limited to, the following:

- DfE 'Keeping children safe in education' 2020
- DfE 'Working together to safeguard children' 2018

## **Related Policies**

This Staff Code of Conduct has due regard to the following Trust and school policies and procedures:

- At Trust level
- Charging and remissions
- Data protection
- Fraud
- Hospitality and gifts
- Social media
- Equal opportunities policy
- Whistleblowing
- Safeguarding statement
- Health and safety
- At school level
- Child Protection
- Behaviour
- Use of Force to Control and Restrain Children
- Internet Safety
- Health and Safety
- Use of Photography and Video
- Professional standards

## **1. Safeguarding Students**

- 1.1 Safeguarding is the responsibility of each individual school
- 1.2 Adults working in each school should know the name of the Designated Safeguarding Lead in school, be familiar with the local Child Protection arrangements, be familiar with the safeguarding policy and understand their responsibility to safeguard and protect children and young people.
- 1.3 In accordance with 'Keeping children safe in education' guidance, all staff members have a responsibility to safeguard pupils and protect their welfare.
- 1.4 All staff members have a responsibility to ensure that they provide a learning environment in which pupils feel safe, secure and respected.
- 1.5 In order to effectively safeguard pupils, staff members are required to follow the procedures outlined in this Staff Code of Conduct and the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, ensuring that they do not act in a way that may put pupils at risk of harm, or lead others to question their actions
- 1.6 In accordance with each school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, staff members will be prepared to identify pupils who may be subject to, or at risk of, abuse and neglect, and will follow the necessary reporting and referral procedures
- 1.7 When dealing with a safeguarding issue, adults should discuss and/or take advice promptly from the Safeguarding Lead or the Deputy safeguarding Lead to ensure that such situations can be handled promptly and sensitively.
- 1.8 A record should be kept of any such incident and of decisions made/further actions agreed, in accordance with school record keeping policy.
- 1.9 Staff should apply the same professional standards regardless of gender or sexuality.
- 1.10 Any staff member that has concerns about a staff member's actions or intent that may lead to a pupil being put at risk of harm will report this in line with the Whistleblowing Policy to the headteacher immediately so appropriate action can be taken. If the concern is about the headteacher then they should report to the chair of the Academy Council.
- 1.11 Adults working in a school must work, and be seen to work, in an open and transparent way.
- 1.12 Staff should be aware that breaches of the law and other professional guidelines could result in criminal or disciplinary action being taken against them.

## **2. Professional Conduct**

### **2.1 Introduction**

2.1.1 All adults working with children and young people are in a position of trust in relation to the individuals in their care. Staff are expected to adopt high standards of personal integrity and conduct and behave in such a way that does not compromise their position either within or outside The Acorn Education Trust.

2.1.2 Staff should understand the responsibilities that are an intrinsic part of their employment or role, they should make a professional judgement about their actions and behaviour and

seek to avoid conduct, which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation or intentions.

2.1.3 If there is an incident where staff feel there may be a concern, they should discuss the circumstances that informed their action, or their proposed action with a senior colleague, to help ensure that the safest practices are employed and the risk of actions being misinterpreted reduced.

2.1.4 Records should be made of any incidents and decisions made or further actions agreed, with their justifications, in accordance with school policy

2.1.5 Staff members are expected to treat other colleagues, pupils, parents/carers, and external contacts with dignity and respect.

2.1.6 The use of foul and abusive language will not be tolerated

2.1.7 Discrimination, bullying, harassment or intimidation, including physical, sexual and verbal abuse, will not be tolerated.

2.1.8 Staff members will not misuse or misrepresent their position, qualifications or experience, or bring the school into disrepute.

2.1.9 Staff members will not use their power to intimidate, threaten, coerce or undermine students make (or encourage others to make) unprofessional personal comments which scapegoat, demean or humiliate other individuals or might be interpreted as such.

2.1.10 Staff members will inform the headteacher if they are subject to a criminal conviction, caution, ban, police enquiry, investigation or pending prosecution. Staff who work with children under 8 years of age must sign an additional declaration of disqualification. This is obtained in schools.

## 2.2 Appearance and dress

2.2.1 Staff should ensure that they are dressed decently, safely and appropriately for the tasks that they undertake and that through their appearance, they promote a positive and professional image.

2.2.2 Where dress codes exist in schools, these should not discriminate in any way.

2.2.3 All staff must remember that they are role models for students, and that their dress and appearance should reflect this.

2.2.4 Staff should not dress in a way that would cause embarrassment to students, parents/carers colleagues or other stakeholders.

## 2.3 Attendance

2.3.1 All staff members will attend work in accordance with their contract of employment and associated terms and conditions in relation to hours, days of work and holidays.

2.3.2 All routine medical and dental appointments must be made outside of working hours or during holidays, where possible.

2.3.3 Staff must refer to the Trust's Staff Leave of Absence Policy if they need time off for any reason other than personal illness.

2.3.4 Staff must follow the school's absence reporting procedure when they are absent from work due to illness or injury.

## 2.4 Conduct outside of school

2.4.1 Staff may undertake work outside school, either paid or voluntary, provided that it does not conflict with the interests of the school. The nature of the work cannot be seen to bring the school into disrepute, nor be at a level which may contravene the working time regulations or affect an individual's work performance.

2.4.2 Staff will not engage in outside work which could seriously damage the reputation and standing of the school or the employee's own reputation, or the reputation of other members of the school community. In particular, criminal offences that involve violence, possession or use of illegal drugs or sexual misconduct are unacceptable.

2.4.3 Staff will not engage in inappropriate use of social network sites which may bring themselves, the school, school community or employer into disrepute; this is explored further in section 4.

## 2.5 Smoking, alcohol and other substances

2.5.1 Staff will not smoke on any school premises.

2.5.2 Staff will not smoke whilst working with or supervising pupils off-site, such as when on educational visits and trips.

2.5.3 The taking of illegal drugs or alcohol during working hours is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Staff members must never attend work under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs. Please see section 3.8.5 for alcohol and school trips.

2.5.4 If alcohol or drug usage impacts on a staff member's performance, the school has the right to discuss the matter with the employee and take appropriate action in accordance with the school's disciplinary procedures, including referral to the police.

## 2.6 Health and safety

2.6.1 All staff must be familiar with and adhere to the school's Health and Safety Policy, and ensure that they take every action to keep themselves and everyone in the school environment safe and well.

2.6.2 All staff must comply with health and safety regulations and use any safety equipment and protective clothing which is supplied to them.

2.6.3 All staff must comply with hygiene requirements.

2.6.4 All staff must comply with accident reporting requirements.

2.6.5 All staff must inform the headteacher of any paid work which is undertaken elsewhere, for compliance with The Working Time Regulations 1998 (as amended).

## 2.7 Declaration of interest

2.7.1 Staff members are required to declare their interests, both personal and financial, where the group or organisation they are affiliated with would be considered to be in conflict with the ethos of the school.

2.7.2 For the purpose of this policy, a financial conflict of interest is one where there is, or appears to be, opportunity for personal financial gain, financial gain for close relatives

or friends, or where it may be reasonable for a third party to take the view that financial benefits may affect an individual's actions.

2.7.3 The term 'financial interest' means anything of monetary value, including:

- Payments for services
- Equity interests
- Intellectual property rights
- Hospitality or gifts

2.7.4 Examples of financial interests that must be declared include, but are not limited to, equity interests in services considered for use by the school.

2.7.5 Non-financial conflicts of interest can also come into conflict, or be perceived to come into conflict, with an individual's obligations or commitments to the school. These interests may include any benefit or advantage, including but not limited to, direct or indirect enhancement of an individual's career, or gain for immediate family or someone with whom the individual has a close relationship.

2.7.6 Examples of situations that could give rise to non-financial conflicts of interest include the following:

- Pressure or temptation to accept gifts, inducements or hospitality.
- Participating in the appointment, hiring, promotion, supervision or evaluation of a person with whom the individual has a close personal relationship.
- Where a member of staff has or develops a close personal relationship with a colleague.

2.7.7 Membership to a trade union or staff representative group does not need to be declared.

2.7.8 Staff members will also carefully consider whether they need to declare their relationship with any individual where this might cause a conflict with school activities.

2.7.9 Failure to make a relevant declaration of interests is a very serious breach of trust and, therefore, if employees are in doubt about a declaration, they are advised to contact the school or trade union.

2.7.10 All declarations, including nil returns, will be submitted in writing to the headteacher for inclusion on the Register of Business Interests.

## 2.8 Financial inducements

2.8.1 Staff should ensure that they use public funds entrusted to them in a responsible and lawful manner and that they do not give or receive any gift, loan, fee, reward or advantage, which might be misinterpreted.

2.8.2 Although staff should not give or receive gifts from students or parents on a regular basis or of any significant value, it is acceptable, however for staff to receive small tokens of appreciation, such as at Christmas time.

2.8.3 Staff should not seek or receive preferential rates for themselves by virtue of their dealings on behalf of the school.

2.8.4 Staff should ensure that gifts are declared if they are received.

2.8.5 Staff should generally only give gifts to an individual young person as part of an agreed reward system.

2.8.6 Where staff do give gifts, they should ensure that they are of insignificant value and given to all children equally.

2.8.7 Staff should only accept offers to specific events after authorisation from the Academy Council.

2.8.8 Staff should declare any gift that cannot be returned to the Academy Council, who will decide how it will be used.

2.8.9 Staff members shall not use school business contacts for acquiring materials or services at trade/discount prices for non-school activities, unless participating in concessionary schemes arranged by trade unions or other such groups.

## 2.9 Equality issues

2.9.1 All staff should adhere to the Trust's Equal Opportunities Policy, in addition to the requirements of the law.

2.9.2 Staff should not discriminate in recruitment and employment practices, nor in the delivery of services.

2.9.3 Staff should also ensure that in their dealings with parents and other members of the public, they ensure the provision of an efficient and impartial delivery to all individuals.

## 3. Contact with Students

### 3.1 Relationships with students

3.1.1 The Trust expects that staff will:

- maintain professional boundaries and relationships with pupils at all times, and will consider whether their actions are warranted, proportionate, safe and necessary.
- act in an open and transparent way that would not lead to others questioning their actions.
- ensure that they do not establish social contact with pupils for the purpose of securing a friendship, or to pursue or strengthen a relationship.
- ensure that they do not develop personal or sexual relationships with pupils; this includes sexual remarks and discussing their own sexual relationships with, or in the presence of, pupils.
- only contact pupils via the school's established mechanisms; personal phone numbers, email addresses or social media platforms will not be used to contact pupils.

### 3.2 Physical contact with students

3.2.1 It is unrealistic to suggest that teachers should never touch students. There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for staff to have physical contact with students, such as when a distressed student needs comfort and reassurance or as an integral part of some lessons such as PE and Music.

3.2.2 However, innocent actions and appropriate physical contact can often be misconstrued and it is therefore crucial that staff only initiate physical contact for the minimum time necessary and in ways appropriate to their own role and the needs of the child.

3.2.3 Staff should use their professional judgement at all times. Where feasible, staff should seek the child's permission before initiating contact. Where a member of staff thinks that an incident could have been misinterpreted it should be reported to the headteacher.

3.2.4 If staff members and students must spend time on a one to one basis, staff will ensure that this takes place in a public place that others can access and where others can see the room. A colleague or line manager must know this is taking place.

3.2.5 Any formally agreed plan for children with SEN or physical disabilities should be understood and agreed by all concerned and staff should be provided with relevant information about vulnerable students in their care where it is relevant for this to be provided in order for staff to be able to undertake tasks appropriately.

3.2.6 Extra caution may also be required where it is known that a child has suffered previous abuse or neglect. Many such children are often needy and seek out inappropriate contact, thereby leading staff to be vulnerable to allegations of abuse.

3.2.7 In this regard, staff should:

- be aware that even well intentioned physical contact may be misconstrued by the child, an observer or by anyone to whom this action is described.
- never touch a child in a way which may be considered indecent.
- always explain to a student the reason why contact is necessary and what form that contact will take.
- look at alternatives, where it is anticipated that a student might misinterpret contact, consider involving another member of staff, or a less vulnerable student in a demonstration.
- never indulge in horseplay, tickling or fun fights.
- always tell a colleague when and how they offered comfort to a distressed child and record any situations, where they think they may give rise to concern.
- adhere to the school's physical intervention policy and be acquainted with DfE Guidance in respect of physical contact with students and meeting the medical needs of children and young people in school.

### 3.3 Sexual contact with children and curriculum issues

3.3.1 It is a criminal offence for any adult in a position of trust to engage in any form of sexual activity with a young person under 18, even with their consent (Sexual Offences Act 2003). This also includes non-contact activities such as causing children to engage in or watch sexual activity.

3.3.2 There may be occasions when, as part of the curriculum, a teacher has to raise subject matter that is sexually explicit. In such situations, any lesson plan should highlight the areas of risk and sensitivity. Staff should respond to questions with careful judgement and avoid entering into inappropriate or offensive discussions about sexual activity.

3.3.3 In this regard, staff should not:

- use their status and standing to form or promote relationships with children, which are of a sexual nature.
- pursue sexual relationships with children and young people either in or out of school.
- enter into or encourage inappropriate or offensive discussion about sexual activity.
- make sexual remarks to a student (including email, text messages, phone or letter), or use any communication which could be interpreted as sexually suggestive or provocative.
- discuss their own sexual relationships with, or in the presence of students.
- discuss a student's relationships in inappropriate settings or contexts.
- confer special attention and favour upon a child which might be misconstrued as being part of the 'grooming' process.

3.4 Behaviour management and physical intervention

3.4.1 Corporal punishment is unlawful in all schools and physical force should never be used as a form of punishment; to do so is likely to constitute a criminal offence.

3.4.2 However in some circumstances, staff in schools have the right to use physical intervention/reasonable force for the shortest period necessary to control or restrain students. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 provides the legal power for school staff to use reasonable force to prevent students from committing a crime or causing injury, damage or disruption.

3.4.3 Staff should try to defuse situations before they escalate.

3.4.4 Staff should keep parents informed of any sanctions.

3.4.5 Staff should adhere to a School's policy on Behaviour Management and Use of Force to control or restrain children.

3.4.6 Where it is identified that staff are likely to have to restrain on a regular basis they should have received appropriate training.

3.5 Infatuations

3.5.1 In cases where a young person develops an infatuation, there is a high risk of words or actions being misinterpreted and for allegations to be made against staff.

3.5.2 Staff should report to a senior colleague any clear/apparent (whether they are verbal, written or physical), that suggest a student may be infatuated with them and respond sensitively to such situations in order to maintain the dignity of all parties.

3.6 Showering and changing

3.6.1 Children are entitled to respect and privacy when changing clothes or taking a shower.

3.6.2 However, there does need to be an appropriate level of supervision to safeguard young people and satisfy health and safety considerations. Any supervision must therefore be appropriate to the needs and age of the young people concerned.

3.6.3 Staff should avoid any physical contact when children are in a state of undress or any visually intrusive behaviour where there are changing rooms.

3.6.4 Staff should announce their intention of entering a changing room and avoid remaining in the room unless students require it.

3.6.5 Staff should not change in the same place as or shower with children.

### 3.7 Transporting students

3.7.1 Wherever practicable, an adult additional to the driver should act as an escort and all arrangements agreed with relevant parties in advance.

3.7.2 Staff should avoid using private vehicles wherever possible (if necessary, permission must be sought from the relevant senior staff and relevant parents)

3.7.3 Staff must ensure that they have the appropriate insurance (for business use) where they do have to use their private vehicle.

3.7.4 Staff should ensure that they are alone with a child for the minimum time possible.

3.7.5 Staff should be aware that the safety and welfare of the child is their responsibility until this is safely passed over to a parent/carer.

3.7.6 Staff should report the nature of the journey, the route and expected time of arrival in accordance with agreed procedures.

3.7.7 Staff should ensure that their behaviour and all arrangements ensure vehicle, passenger and driver safety, taking into account any specific needs that the child may have.

### 3.8 Educational visits and after school clubs

3.8.1 Staff should always take care to have another adult present during out of school activities, unless otherwise agreed with senior staff. Health and safety requirements should be strictly adhered to.

3.8.2 Staff should ensure that they display professional behaviour during activities that take place off the school site and ensure that their behaviour cannot be interpreted as seeking to establish an inappropriate relationship or friendship. Staff should therefore maintain a professional relationship with students at all times.

3.8.3 Where out of school activities include overnight stays, particular consideration should be given to sleeping arrangements, if applicable and students, staff and parents informed of the arrangements in advance.

3.8.4 In this regard, staff should therefore:

- undertake risk assessments
- have parental consent to the activity
- ensure that their behaviour remains professional at all times

3.8.5 Staff are not allowed to drink alcohol during any school trip or at any social event where students are present.

### 3.9 One to one situations and overnight supervision

3.9.1 When staff work regularly on an individual basis with children, they are generally more vulnerable to allegations.

3.9.2 To avoid such situations arising, meetings should, wherever possible, be arranged so that staff are visible and/or audible and not in secluded areas of the school.

3.9.3 Staff should not arrange to meet a student away from the school premises without good reason, but if this is necessary, only with the expressed approval of parents and a senior member of staff.

3.9.4 However, where a school makes provision for overnight supervision during exam periods and it is necessary for a student to stay with a member of staff in their home, this should only be with the parent's permission and after a full risk assessment has been carried out.

3.9.5 Staff should:

- ensure there is visual access and/or an open door in one to one situations
- inform other staff of the meeting beforehand, assessing the need to have them present or close by
- avoid the use of 'engaged' or equivalent signs wherever possible, as they may create an opportunity for secrecy or the interpretation of secrecy
- always report to a senior colleague any situation which gives rise to complaint, disagreement or misunderstanding or where a child becomes distressed or

### 3.10 First aid and administration of medication

3.10.1 In cases where first aid or medication needs to be administered, all staff should adhere to a School's Health and Safety policy.

3.10.2 A health care plan should be drawn up in circumstances where the child needs to take regular medication and any such agreement between the child, parents/carers and the school must be negotiated, agreed and recorded.

3.10.3 Where possible, children should be encouraged to administer the medication themselves, with the permission of parents.

3.10.4 Staff should:

- make relevant staff aware of the task being undertaken
- explain to the child what is happening

### 3.11 Intimate Care

3.11.1 All children have a right to safety, privacy and dignity when contact of an intimate nature is required. A care plan should be drawn up and agreed with parents for all children, including those with special needs, who require intimate care on a regular basis.

3.11.2 In this regard staff should:

- adhere to the school's intimate care guidelines
- make other staff aware of the task being undertaken

- explain to the child what is happening
- consult with colleagues where any variation from the agreed procedure or care plan is necessary and record the justification, sharing the information with parents.

3.11.3 A detailed Intimate Care Policy is in schools which should be referred to for further detail.

## **4. Technology**

### 4.1 E safety

4.1.1 Accessing child pornography or indecent images of children on the computer is illegal. Under no circumstances should adults in schools access inappropriate images on the internet. The same rule applies to the use of the school's equipment by members of staff at home, e.g. use of laptops.

4.1.2 Staff will adhere to the procedures outlined in the school's E-safety Policy and Acceptable Use Agreement at all times.

4.1.3 Staff are required to employ the highest security settings on any personal profiles they may have.

4.1.4 Staff will not engage in inappropriate use of social networking sites; this includes contacting pupils or their family members, accepting or inviting friend requests from pupils or their family members, or following pupils or their family members on social media.

4.1.5 The Trust understands that some staff members are also parents/carers of pupils at a school and, therefore, may wish to make contact with other parents/carers. When doing so, staff will exercise their professional judgement and will not contact family members on social media if this would lead to a conflict of interest.

4.1.6 Staff will remain mindful of their use of social media and their web-based presence; this includes written content, videos or photographs, and views expressed directly or indirectly which may bring themselves, the school or the school community into disrepute.

### 4.2 Mobile phones

4.2.1 Personal mobile phone numbers should only be given out if needed for school trips or activities.

4.2.2 Staff should not use their mobile device to take photos of students, or text or email students.

### 4.3 Photography and videos

4.3.1 Photographs and videos will only be taken using school equipment – using personal mobile phones for this purpose is prohibited, in accordance with the school's Photography at School Events Policy.

4.3.2 Consent will be obtained from parents/carers and pupils in the event of any images or videos of pupils which the school wishes to use, e.g. to publish on the website.

4.3.3 The wishes of the pupil will also be taken into account when taking images or videos, ensuring that those who do not wish to have their photograph taken or be filmed are respected.

4.3.4 The headteacher will always be notified of the proposed use of the imagery or video and the equipment, and ensure that the use of such is included in lesson plans where this is necessary.

4.3.5 All photographs and videos will be available for scrutiny, and staff will be prepared to justify the images or footage taken.

4.3.6 Careful consideration will always be given to the activities which are being filmed or photographed, in order to ensure that images or videos are not indecent and cannot be misused.

#### 4.4 Premises, equipment and communication

4.4.1 School equipment and systems are available only for school-related activities and will not be used for the fulfilment of another job or for personal use, unless specifically authorised by the headteacher.

4.4.2 Illegal, inappropriate or unacceptable use of school equipment or communication systems may result in disciplinary action and, in serious cases, could lead to an employee's dismissal.

4.4.3 Employees receiving inappropriate communication or material, or who are unsure about whether something he/she proposes to do might breach this policy, should seek advice from the headteacher.

4.4.4 The school reserves the right to monitor emails, phone calls, internet activity or document production, principally in order to avoid offensive or nuisance material and to protect systems from viruses, but also to ensure proper and effective use of systems.

4.4.5 Communication systems may be accessed when the school suspects that the employee has been misusing systems or facilities, or for the investigation of suspected fraud or other irregularity. Access will be secured by the systems manager, only with the permission of the governing board.

4.4.6 Passwords should not be shared and access to computer systems must be kept confidential except on the express request of the headteacher or systems manager. Breach of this confidentiality may be subject to disciplinary action.

4.4.7 School equipment that is used outside the premises, e.g. laptops, will be returned to the school when the employee leaves employment, or if requested to do so by the headteacher.

#### 4.5 Data protection and confidentiality

4.5.1 Staff members are required, under the Data Protection Act 1998, to collect, maintain and dispose of sensitive or personal data in a responsible manner.

4.5.2 Staff members will not disclose sensitive information about the school, its employees or the Trust to other parties.

4.5.3 The only exception whereby it is acceptable for a staff member to disclose information which would otherwise be considered confidential is when the confidential information gives rise to concerns about the safety or welfare of a pupil.

4.5.4 Staff members have the right to request access to data that is held about them; such requests will be made to the headteacher in writing, in accordance with the school's Data Protection Policy.

#### 4.6 Probity of records

4.6.1 The deliberate falsification of documents, such as references, academic qualifications or legal documents, is unacceptable. Where a staff member falsifies records or other documents, including those held electronically, this will be regarded as a serious disciplinary matter and potentially a criminal offence.