Staff Code of Conduct

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Rationale

The Flourishing Schools Federation is committed to providing a safe, supportive and inclusive environment in which pupils can flourish academically, socially and emotionally. Staff are expected to maintain the highest standards of professional conduct and personal integrity at all times.

This Code of Conduct sets out the standards of behaviour expected of all employees, volunteers, governors, agency staff, contractors and anyone working on behalf of the Federation.

The Code aims to:

- Safeguard pupils and staff.
- Promote professional standards.
- Maintain public confidence in the Federation.
- Support a culture of respect, accountability and excellence.
- Ensure compliance with statutory safeguarding, employment and equality requirements.

Failure to comply with this Code may result in disciplinary action.

Key Principles

We aim to ensure our federation is an environment where everyone is safe, happy and treated with respect.

In Practice

All staff are expected to:

- Demonstrate the highest standards of professional conduct and behaviour at all times. In particular, staff will:
- Place the welfare, safety and wellbeing of children above all other considerations.
- Demonstrate the highest standards of conduct and professionalism, acting with honesty and integrity at all times.
- Maintain high standards of attendance, punctuality, performance and personal accountability.
- Treat pupils, parents, governors, colleagues, visitors and members of the wider community with dignity, courtesy and respect.
- Promote equality, diversity and inclusion, ensuring that the principles of the Equality Act are upheld.
- Use polite, professional and appropriate language at all times.
- Uphold and actively promote British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
- Act in accordance with statutory guidance, Federation policies, professional expectations and the Teachers' Standards.
- Uphold the reputation of the Federation both during and outside working hours.
- Express personal beliefs appropriately and professionally, ensuring that pupils are not unduly influenced and that their vulnerability is never exploited.
- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries and avoid placing themselves at risk of allegations of abusive, improper or unprofessional conduct.
- Take reasonable care of the pupils under their supervision and work to safeguard their welfare and educational development.
- Staff should exercise professional judgement at all times and act as positive role models

whose behaviour promotes the values and expectations of the Federation.

As professionals we will:

- Follow the federation's policies and practices.
- Work as part of a team, contributing to as well as learning from others.
- Behave in a positive way despite any personal problems that we may have, especially in front of the pupils.
- Share any concerns or issues with an appropriate member of staff so that they can be resolved.
- Maintain confidentiality about anything that we see or hear in the federation.

1. Safeguarding

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

All staff must:

- Read and comply with Keeping Children Safe in Education and Federation safeguarding procedures.
- Know the identity of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Deputy DSLs.
- Report concerns immediately using CPOMS and, where necessary, directly to the DSL.
- Remain vigilant to signs of abuse, neglect, exploitation, radicalisation and harmful behaviours.
- Recognise that safeguarding concerns may arise both online and offline.
- Understand that children may be at risk from family members, peers, strangers or members of staff.
- Be alert to child-on-child abuse.
- Recognise that poor mental health may be an indicator of abuse, neglect or trauma.
- Understand responsibilities relating to online safety, filtering and monitoring systems.
- Support early intervention and Family Help processes where appropriate.
- Report concerns relating to volunteers, contractors, supply staff or visitors.

Staff must never:

- Promise confidentiality to a child making a disclosure.
- Investigate safeguarding concerns themselves.
- Delay reporting information because they are uncertain whether abuse has occurred.

All concerns must be reported immediately.

2. Staff/pupil relationships

Staff are responsible for maintaining appropriate professional boundaries with pupils at all times.

Staff must not:

- Form inappropriate relationships with pupils.
- Share personal contact details.
- Communicate with pupils through personal social media accounts.
- Exchange personal gifts with pupils.
- Engage in secretive behaviour.
- Meet pupils socially without the knowledge and approval of school leaders.

Staff must recognise that they are in a position of trust and that inappropriate conduct may lead to disciplinary action, referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service and, where applicable, criminal investigation

If staff members and pupils must spend time on a one-to-one basis, staff will ensure that:

- This takes place in a public place that others can access
- Others can see into the room
- A colleague or line manager knows this is taking place

If a staff member is concerned at any point that an interaction between themselves and a pupil may be misinterpreted, this should be reported to their line manager or the Heads of Schools/Executive Headteacher.

3. Physical contact with pupils

Physical contact should only occur when:

- Necessary to support learning.
- Required to prevent injury.
- Needed as part of an agreed care plan.
- Appropriate within recognised educational practice.

Any physical contact should:

- Be proportionate.
- Be necessary.
- Be age appropriate.
- Occur in an open and transparent manner.

Force must only be used in accordance with Federation policy and statutory guidance.

4. Sexual Harassment

The Federation is committed to providing a workplace free from sexual harassment.
Sexual harassment is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Examples include:

- Unwanted comments of a sexual nature.
- Sexual jokes or innuendo.
- Unwelcome physical contact.
- Sharing inappropriate images or materials.
- Sexualised language or behaviour.
- Persistent unwanted attention.

Any allegation of sexual harassment will be taken seriously and investigated promptly.
Staff must report concerns immediately through the appropriate management channels.
Victimisation of anyone raising a genuine concern will not be tolerated.

5. Communication with Pupils and Parents

Communications must be professional, transparent and capable of scrutiny.
Staff should:

- Use Federation-approved communication systems.
- Ensure communication is appropriate and related to educational purposes.

- Maintain accurate records where required.

Staff must not:

- Use personal email accounts for school business.
- Contact pupils through personal social media accounts.
- Use messaging applications unless authorised by the Federation.

6. Social Media and Online Conduct

Staff must maintain appropriate professional boundaries when using social media and other online platforms. Personal use of social media should not compromise professional relationships, the reputation of the Federation, or the safety and wellbeing of pupils.
Staff should ensure that their personal social media profiles are not readily accessible to pupils. Where personal accounts are used, staff are advised not to use their full name and should apply the highest available privacy settings to minimise the likelihood of pupils accessing their profiles.

Staff must not:

- Attempt to contact current pupils through social media or other personal online platforms.
- Initiate or develop personal relationships with pupils or their families through social networking sites.
- Search for, follow, or monitor pupils' personal social media accounts without a legitimate safeguarding reason.
- Post images or information that identify pupils without appropriate consent and authorisation.
- Accept or send social media requests to current pupils.
- Post content that could undermine public confidence in themselves, the Federation, the profession, or the wider school community.
- Comment negatively about pupils, parents, colleagues, governors or the Federation.

Staff must:

- Apply the highest available privacy settings to personal social media accounts.
- Ensure that their online conduct remains professional at all times.
- Exercise good judgement when publishing written content, photographs, videos or personal opinions online.
- Remain mindful that online activity, whether public or private, may affect their professional reputation and that of the Federation.
- Adhere to the Federation's Online Safety, Acceptable Use and Social Media policies.

The Federation recognises that some members of staff are also parents or carers of pupils attending Federation schools. In such circumstances, staff should exercise professional judgement when interacting with other parents online and must ensure that such interactions do not create actual or perceived conflicts of interest or compromise professional boundaries.
Particular care should be exercised when interacting online with former pupils and their families. Staff should consider the age of the individual, the nature of the previous professional relationship and whether such contact could reasonably be perceived as inappropriate.
Staff should recognise that behaviour online is subject to the same professional expectations as behaviour in the workplace and should conduct themselves accordingly.

7. Use of Technology and Artificial Intelligence

Federation technology systems are provided primarily for educational and business purposes. All staff are expected to use these systems safely, responsibly and in accordance with Federation policies and procedures.

Staff must:

- Follow the Federation's Acceptable Use Policy and all related ICT procedures.

- Protect passwords, login credentials and confidential information.
- Comply with data protection legislation and confidentiality requirements.
- Use Federation systems, devices and internet access responsibly and professionally.
- Take reasonable steps to prevent unauthorised access to Federation systems and data.
- Report any actual or suspected data breaches, cyber security incidents or misuse of technology immediately.

Staff must not:

- Use Federation technology to access, create, download, store or share material that is illegal, inappropriate, discriminatory, offensive or otherwise unsuitable within an educational environment.
- Use Federation systems for activities such as gambling, accessing pornography, distributing obscene material or engaging in unlawful activities.
- Use personal mobile phones, personal laptops or Federation equipment for personal purposes in front of pupils, except where there is a legitimate educational, operational or safeguarding reason.
- Use personal devices to take photographs or videos of pupils.

An exception may apply where the use of a personal device is necessary to support a pupil's immediate medical needs or in an emergency situation, for example contacting emergency services or supporting a pupil's healthcare plan.

Only Federation-approved devices should be used to take photographs, videos or other recordings of pupils in accordance with Federation policies on photography, safeguarding and data protection.

The Federation reserves the right to monitor the use of its IT systems, including email, internet access and network activity, in accordance with legal requirements and Federation procedures.
Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The Federation recognises the growing use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies and expects staff to use such tools responsibly and professionally.

Staff must:

- Use AI tools only in accordance with Federation guidance, policies and procedures.
- Remain professionally accountable for any work, decisions or communications that involve the use of AI technology.
- Review and verify all AI-generated content for accuracy, appropriateness, bias, safeguarding implications and educational suitability before it is used or shared.
- Ensure that AI-generated materials are consistent with the Federation's expectations for quality, professionalism and safeguarding.

Staff must not:

- Enter confidential, personal or sensitive information relating to pupils, parents, carers, staff, governors or Federation business into unauthorised AI systems.
- Use AI in a way that compromises data protection, confidentiality, safeguarding or intellectual property requirements.
- Rely on AI-generated content without appropriate professional review and oversight.

The use of AI should enhance professional practice and efficiency but must never replace professional judgement, safeguarding responsibilities or accountability for decision-making.

8. Data protection and confidentiality

Staff will have access to confidential information concerning pupils, families, colleagues and the Federation.
Such information must:

- Only be accessed where necessary.
- Be shared on a need-to-know basis.
- Be stored securely.
- Be handled in accordance with GDPR and Federation policies.

Confidential information must not be discussed in public places or disclosed to unauthorised individuals.

9. Health and Safety

All staff share responsibility for maintaining a safe working environment.

Staff must:

- Comply with health and safety requirements.
- Report hazards promptly.
- Follow risk assessments.
- Support emergency procedures.
- Take reasonable care of themselves and others.

Particular attention must be given to:

- Medical needs.
- Allergies and anaphylaxis procedures.
- Educational visits.
- Manual handling.
- Site security arrangements.

10. Appearance and dress

The federation expects that staff members will:

- Ensure that their appearance is clean and neat when at work or representing the federation.
- Dress in a manner that is appropriate to their role – the federation will make reasonable adjustments to uniform expectations to suit disabilities, medical conditions, and religious and cultural beliefs.
- Remember that they are role models for pupils, and that their dress and appearance should reflect this.
- Not dress in a way that would cause embarrassment to pupils, parents, colleagues or other stakeholders.
- Cover any tattoos or body art that could be considered discriminatory towards protective characteristics whilst in the federation; close-fitting piercings are acceptable.

11. Attendance

The federation expects that 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.
- Make routine medical and dental appointments outside of their working hours or during holidays where possible.
- Refer to the federation's Special Leave Policy if they need time off for any reason other than personal illness.

- Follow the federation's absence reporting procedure when they are absent from work due to illness or injury.

12. Financial inducements

Staff members will:

- Familiarise themselves and comply with the federation's financial regulations.
- Declare to the Governing Body, in writing, any gifts received, with the exception of:
    - Low cost, functional items suitable for business rather than personal use and displaying the supplier's logo – these items may be accepted.
    - Non-excessive gifts offered by parents or pupils to federation staff to express their gratitude, but staff members should always refuse monetary gifts.
    - Hospitality in the form of meals and drinks where it is part of a normal business meeting.
    - Authorised visits to exhibitions, demonstrations, conferences, business meals and social functions in connection with the federation's business, which shall be at the federation's expense.
- Only accept offers to specific events after authorisation from the Governing Body.

Collections received by classes in the form of vouchers are acceptable and don't need to be declared to the Governing Body as long as not in excess of £150.

12. Transporting pupils

Where transporting pupils is authorised:

- Appropriate risk assessments must be completed.
- Vehicles must be roadworthy.
- Drivers must hold a valid licence.
- Appropriate insurance must be in place.
- Safeguarding procedures must be followed.

One-to-one transport arrangements should be avoided wherever possible.

13. Conduct outside of work

Staff are expected to maintain professional standards both inside and outside work and must not act in a way that could bring the Federation or the teaching profession into disrepute.
Staff may undertake paid or voluntary work outside the Federation provided that it does not create a conflict of interest, adversely affect their duties, or damage the reputation of the Federation.

Off-duty conduct may become a disciplinary matter where it:

- Affects an individual's suitability to work with children.
- Brings the Federation or teaching profession into disrepute.
- Damages confidence in the Federation.
- Creates safeguarding concerns.

This includes, but is not limited to, behaviour involving violence, illegal drugs, sexual misconduct, discriminatory behaviour, or inappropriate social media activity.
Staff must inform the Executive Headteacher of any arrest, charge, caution, conviction or investigation that may affect their suitability for employment or work with children.

14. Honesty, Integrity and Probity of Records

Staff are expected to maintain the highest standards of honesty and integrity.

The deliberate falsification of the following may constitute gross misconduct and may also amount to a criminal offence.

- Qualifications.
- References.
- Attendance records.
- Financial documents.
- Personnel records.
- Assessment information.
- Official school documentation.

15. Whistleblowing

Staff who have concerns regarding the below, should raise these through the Federation's Whistleblowing Policy:

- Safeguarding.
- Fraud.
- Misconduct.
- Illegal activity.
- Malpractice.

Staff making genuine disclosures will be supported and protected from victimisation.

16. Smoking, alcohol and other substances

- Staff must not smoke/vape on Federation premises, within sight of the school entrance, or when visible to pupils, parents or visitors.
- Staff must not smoke/vape whilst supervising or working with pupils off-site, including during educational visits, trips or outdoor learning activities.
- The use of alcohol or illegal drugs during working hours is strictly prohibited.
- Staff must not attend work under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.
- Staff are expected to ensure that alcohol or substance use outside work does not adversely affect their performance, judgement or ability to carry out their duties safely and effectively.
- Where alcohol or drug use impacts on a staff member's performance, attendance, conduct or capability, the Federation may take appropriate action in accordance with its policies and procedures.

17. Declaration of interests

Staff must declare any personal, financial or professional interest that could, or could be perceived to, conflict with their duties or the interests of the Federation.
This includes:

- Financial interests, such as business ownership, consultancy work, investments, intellectual property rights, gifts or hospitality.
- Personal relationships that may influence recruitment, promotion, supervision, appraisal or decision-making.
- Any relationship, activity or affiliation that could result in a real or perceived conflict of interest.
- Situations where family members, close friends or associates may benefit from Federation decisions or activities.

Staff should:

- Declare any actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest as soon as it arises.

- Seek advice from the Executive Headteacher if unsure whether an interest should be declared.
- Submit an annual declaration, including a nil return where no interests exist.

Membership of a trade union or staff representative group does not need to be declared.
All declarations will be recorded on the Register of Business Interests. Failure to declare a relevant interest may be treated as a serious disciplinary matter.

Appendix 1

When we speak to others we will:

- use a positive statement rather than a negative one so that children can learn what we expect of them in any situation.
- use a calm tone of voice at all times, to explain something to or instruct the children, so that they can follow our words without feeling threatened or uncomfortable.
- not use sarcastic words or phrases as these demean children and prevent them from developing high self-esteem.
- speak respectfully to other adults at all times, even if we disagree with them.

As professionals we will:

- avoid workplace gossip and negativity as it breeds resentment and becomes a roadblock to effective communication and collaboration. We all have a duty to take active steps to divert conversations away from this if we come across it.
- maintain confidentiality about anything that we see or hear in the federation, so that parents and children can trust us and as a way of showing respect to our fellow professionals.
- work as part of a team, contributing as well as learning from others and helping to build up a strong workforce so that we can provide the best possible learning opportunities for the children.
- work within the federation's policies and practices, so that what we do is consistent with what has been agreed between all members of the staff and the governors.
- treat everyone with respect.
- give constructive criticism that is expressed clearly but in a way which lets the other person retain their dignity and self-respect and supports their development.
- dress appropriately, so that we set a good example for the children and to show that we are here to work.
- behave in a positive way despite any personal problems that we may have, especially in front of the children.

Appendix 2 Teachers' Standards

Personal and Professional Conduct
A teacher is expected to demonstrate consistently high standards of personal and professional conduct.

The following statements define the behaviour and attitudes which set the required standard for conduct throughout a teacher's career.

Teachers uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school, by:

- treating pupils with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to a teacher's professional position.
- having regard for the need to safeguard pupils' well-being, in accordance with statutory provisions.
- showing tolerance of and respect for the rights of others.
- not undermining fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
- ensuring that personal beliefs are not expressed in ways which exploit pupils' vulnerability or might lead them to break the law.
- Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach, and maintain high standards in their own attendance and punctuality.
- Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.