

## **Code of Conduct Policy 2025**

The Link Academy Trust (the Trust) is a company limited by guarantee and an exempt charity, regulated by the Department for Education (DfE). All Members of the Board of Trustees are Directors of the company as well as Trustees of the exempt charity; the term 'Trustee' used in this policy also means Director. This policy applies to all staff employed by the Trust and any reference in the policy to staff will also include casual workers, agency staff and volunteers.

### **1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE**

This policy is designed to ensure that all staff are treated fairly and consistently, to ensure the efficient and safe environment of work and to promote the maintenance of good relations between all employees and pupils.

The policy sets out the main standards of behaviour and performance required by all staff and in addition for teachers includes the Teacher's Standards as set out in Appendix 1. You are under a duty to comply with these standards of behaviour and to behave in a professional and reasonable manner.

Staff should familiarise themselves with and abide by the code of conduct and Disciplinary procedure, which applies to all employees. Failure to comply with the standards of performance and behaviour outlined in this policy may result in disciplinary action in accordance with the Trust Disciplinary procedure.

This policy is in conjunction with the other policies the Trust has in place and should be read with them.

### **2. OBJECTIVES OF A SAFE SCHOOL CULTURE**

- To safeguard our pupils and protect all staff;
- To create and maintain an ethos of mutual respect, openness, trust, and fairness within our Trust;
- To make clear expectations of performance and conduct;
- To give staff the confidence to report concerns with full confidentiality;
- To exercise appropriate sanctions.

### **3. GENERAL STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOUR**

#### **3.1 Personal Standards**

Personal standards of behaviour must be high in dealing with other staff, volunteers, governors, trustees, parents, and children.

Public confidence would be undermined if staff:

- Take drugs or drink alcohol while at work/on duty, or drink at social events within or outside working hours to the extent that their work could be affected. (See the Acceptable Behaviour Policy.)

- Threaten, fight or assault anyone on the school/Trust premises, or persist in verbal or non-verbal behaviour, which would intimidate anyone. It should be noted that this also means any such action outside the school/Trust premises which could potentially bring the school/Trust into disrepute.
- Steal take without authority, or deliberately damage things that belong to the school/Trust or externally bringing the school/Trust into disrepute.
- Use their position within the school/Trust inappropriately to advance the interests of any other person or organisation with which they are associated, or show favour to any friends, family, or personal contacts.

#### 4. **GENERAL OBLIGATIONS**

Staff members are expected to behave and conduct themselves in a way which demonstrates the school's/Trust's values in order to encourage pupils to do the same.

Staff should not:

- use inappropriate or offensive language, including sexual remarks, or encourage others to do so;
- discuss personal or sexual relationships with or in the presence of pupils;
- consume or be under the influence of alcohol or any substance, including prescribed medication which could affect their ability to carry out their duties and care for pupils;
- behave in a manner which would lead anyone to question their suitability to work with children.

While working for us you should at all times maintain professional and responsible standards of conduct. In particular you should:

- observe the terms and conditions of your contract, particularly with regard to:
  - hours of work and punctuality;
  - confidentiality;
  - safeguarding requirements
  - leave and sickness absence
  - data protection and information security
- observe all Trust policies, procedures, rules, and regulations take reasonable care in respect of the health and safety of colleagues and third parties and comply with the Trust's Health and Safety Policy;
- comply with all reasonable instructions given by your line manager or any other member of the senior leadership team; and
- act at all times in good faith and in the best interests of the Trust, school, pupils, and staff.

Failure to maintain satisfactory standards of conduct may result in action being taken under our Disciplinary procedure.

#### 5. **SAFEGUARDING**

Staff have a duty of care to protect pupils from harm, which includes physical, emotional, or sexual abuse or neglect. Staff should be aware of the Trust's Safeguarding and Child Protection procedure, including the process of making referrals to children's social care. A

copy of this policy and all associated policies are available from the school/Trust websites or your Executive/Academy Head/Administrator.

Staff must report any concerns they have about a pupil or colleague's conduct to the Designated Safeguard Lead, or in their absence the deputy. Refer to the Child Protecting and Safeguarding Policy.

Staff should follow and be aware of the [Keeping Children Safe In Education 2024](#) document.

## 6. **RELATIONSHIPS**

### **Staff-Pupils**

Staff members are in a position of trust and therefore must exercise the proper boundaries with pupils that are professional and appropriate to their role.

Where staff must work on a one-to-one basis with pupils, they will obtain consent from their line manager or the Executive/Academy Head in the first instance and this will take place where there is visual access or where the door can remain open.

Staff must not contact or engage with pupils on social media unless they are of the appropriate age and no longer at the school. Staff must only use their Trust email account or other communication systems provided by the school/Trust in order to communicate with pupils.

If the Trust has been made aware of any allegations of inappropriate conduct against a staff member, the Trust will act in accordance with our Disciplinary procedure and the framework set out in [Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024](#) guidance.

Stakeholders and employees must declare any relationships that they may have with pupils outside of school; this may include mutual membership of social groups, tutoring, or family connections. Stakeholders and employees should not assume that the school/Trust are aware of any such connections. A declaration form is available at Appendix 2 of this document for declaration of such relationships.

### **Staff-Parents/carers**

Staff are encouraged to establish a positive working relationship with parents/carers and maintain good communication where appropriate.

Communication between staff and parents/carers should be professional, clear, and constructive. Staff must only communicate with parents/carers via the school/Trust systems and not via any other means.

There is a general expectation that staff will:

- Be polite to members of the public at all times.
- Give/provide their name when speaking or writing to parents/carers and other members of the public or school community when speaking or writing on behalf of the school/Trust.
- Ensure that any information provided in relation to the school/Trust is accurate.

- Ensure that any information provided to third parties is in line with the Data Protection Act 2018.
- Respect confidential information provided to them in the course of their work.
- Avoid doing anything which could make the public doubt the motives or integrity of a member of staff of the school/Trust or bring the school/Trust into disrepute.
- Ensure that any significant concerns or complaints expressed to them by parents' carers, or the general public are passed on to the senior management of the Trust.

## **7. RECEIVING GIFTS**

While the Trust understands that often staff members receive gifts from pupils and their parents, staff are reminded to take care not to accept any gifts that might be construed as a bribe or lead the giver to expect any preferential treatment.

Small gifts as a token of appreciation are usually acceptable, however, it is unacceptable to receive gifts of a significant value or to give gifts to pupils and their parents in return.

Gifts with a higher value than £15, must be declared to the Deputy CEO.

Further details on gifts can be found in the Trust's Gifts & Hospitality policy.

## **8. BULLYING AND HARASSMENT**

The Trust is committed to providing a working environment free from harassment and bullying and ensuring all staff and pupils are treated, and treat others, with consideration, dignity, and respect.

Bullying and/or harassment, is any unsolicited physical, verbal, or non-verbal conduct, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour which is unwanted and that has the purpose of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, degrading and hostile environment for them.

Bullying and harassment at work or outside of work is not acceptable and will not be tolerated. All incidents of bullying and/or harassment will be dealt with under our Disciplinary procedures as a case of possible misconduct or gross misconduct.

Staff who make complaints or who participate in good faith in any investigation must not suffer any form of retaliation or victimisation as a result. Anyone found to have retaliated against or victimised someone in this way will be subject to disciplinary action under our Disciplinary procedure.

## **9. CONDUCT OUTSIDE OF WORK**

Staff shall not engage in conduct which may bring the school/Trust, themselves or other members of the school/Trust community into disrepute. Any such conduct could lead to summary dismissal, in particular criminal offences that involve violence, possession or use of illegal drugs or sexual misconduct will not be tolerated.

Staff must be mindful of their use of technology and social networking websites. Staff must not post any derogatory, misleading comments about the school/Trust, its employees or pupils online or on social media. Staff must ensure that their personal social media profiles are not available to pupils.

If you see any misuse of social media, or social media content that disparages or reflects poorly on us, you should report it to your line manager or another member of the senior leadership team. Failure to comply with the standards outlined in this policy, may be dealt with in accordance with the Disciplinary Policy and Procedures.

#### **10. DRESS CODE**

Staff are required to dress in a manner that is suitable and appropriate to their role. This means that staff should not wear clothing with slogans or images which may be considered as offensive or inappropriate, revealing or displays any political slogans. Denim is not considered appropriate, particularly if it is ripped or frayed. Similarly revealing clothing is not permitted, although shorts may be worn as part of a sports session.

Footwear must be safe, smart and have regard to health and safety considerations. Staff should not wear flip flops or similar footwear at any time for safety reasons.

Where the Trust provides safety clothing and equipment, including protective footwear, it should be worn or used as appropriate and as directed.

Jewellery should be kept to a minimum. Nose rings, eyebrow rings and other facial or visible piercings are prohibited, but one discrete earring or pair of earrings may be worn.

Tattoos should not be visible. Those that are not covered by normal clothing should be covered by a sticking plaster or other appropriate material while at work. Particularly long nails that could cause injury are not permitted.

Hair and beards should not compromise health and safety. Long hair should be tied back, with hair and beard nets being worn at all times when handling food.

Religious and cultural clothing are permitted, subject to health and safety considerations.

#### **11. CONFIDENTIALITY**

During their employment, staff will have access to sensitive and confidential information relating to the school/Trust, other members of staff, pupils, and their parents/carers. Staff shall not disclose such information to any person unless otherwise authorised, to report safeguarding concerns or as required by law.

#### **12. IT AND COMMUNICATION DEVICES**

Misuse or excessive personal use of our telephone or email system or inappropriate internet use will be dealt with under our Disciplinary procedure. Misuse of the internet can in some cases be a criminal offence. It will usually amount to gross misconduct to misuse our systems by creating, viewing, accessing, transmitting, or downloading any of the following material (this list is not exhaustive):

- Sending, forwarding, or reading private emails at work;
- Sending or forwarding chain emails, junk emails, cartoons, jokes, or gossip;
- Pornographic material (that is, writing, pictures, films, and video clips of a sexually explicit or arousing nature);
- Offensive, obscene, or criminal material or material which is liable to cause embarrassment to the school/Trust or to our pupils;
- A false and defamatory statement about any person or organisation;
- Material, which is discriminatory, offensive, derogatory or may cause embarrassment to others;
- Confidential information about the school/Trust, or any of our staff or pupils (except as authorised in the proper performance of your duties);
- Unauthorised software;
- Any other statement which is likely to create any criminal or civil liability (for you or the school/Trust); or
- Music or video files or other material in breach of copyright.

Any such action will be treated very seriously and is likely to result in summary dismissal.

Personal use of social media or mobile phones are prohibited during working hours. Outside of these hours, staff should only use their mobile phones in areas where pupils are not present.

Staff must not use their mobile camera or any camera to take pictures of pupils or post images of pupils online without their consent. Images of pupils must be saved on the school's/Trust's computer systems only.

If you disclose your affiliation with us on your profile or in any social media postings, you must state that your views do not represent those of the school/Trust (unless you are authorised to speak on our behalf). You should also ensure that your profile and any content you post are consistent with the professional image you are required to represent.

You should make it clear in social media postings, or in your personal profile, that you are speaking on your own behalf. Write in the first person and use a personal email address.

The Trust reserves the right to retrieve the contents of email messages or to check internet usage (including pages visited and searches made) as reasonably necessary in the interests of the school/Trust, including for the following purposes (this list is not exhaustive):

- To monitor whether use of the email system or the internet is legitimate and in accordance with this policy;
- To find lost messages or to retrieve messages lost due to computer failure;
- To assist in the investigation of alleged wrongdoing; or
- To comply with any legal obligation.

Where evidence of misuse is found, we may undertake a more detailed investigation in accordance with our Disciplinary procedure, involving the examination and disclosure of monitoring records to those nominated to undertake the investigation and any witnesses or managers involved in the Disciplinary procedure. If necessary, such information may be handed to the police in connection with a criminal investigation.

**13. DOCUMENTS TO BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE STAFF CODE OF CONDUCT POLICY**

- Disciplinary Policy;
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- Whistleblowing Policy;
- Acceptable Behaviour Policy;
- GDPR/Data Regulations/Data Protection Act 2018;
- School Mobile and Smart Technology Policy;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024;
- Health and Safety Policy.
- Sexual Harassment Policy

This Policy is reviewed by HR and the Remuneration Committee.

**Approved by the Board of Trustees: 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025**

## APPENDIX 1

### PART TWO: 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.

## Appendix 2

### **Relationships with pupils outside of work declaration**

It is recognised that there may be circumstances whereby stakeholders/employees are known to pupils outside of work. Examples include membership of sports clubs, family connections, or private tutoring.

All stakeholders and employees must declare any relationship outside of school that they may have with pupils.

Employee's Name	Pupil Name	Relationship

I can confirm that I am fully aware of the code of conduct relating to contact out of school with pupils in line with this policy.

If I am tutoring a pupil outside of school I am aware that the following must be adhered to:-

- I do not, at any point, teach the child in question as part of my daily timetable - this is a stipulation of such tutoring
- I emphasise to parents that this is done completely independently of the academy
- No monies come through the academy at any point, informally (e.g. via the child) or formally
- No private tutoring is to take place on the academy premises

I confirm that if these circumstances change at any time I will complete a new form to ensure the academy is aware of any relationships.

Signed .....

Date .....

**Once completed, signed and dated, please return this form to the Trust HR Operations Manager [hr@thelink.academy](mailto:hr@thelink.academy)**

