



**Meridian
Trust**

Code of Conduct Policy

Document Control

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Meridian Trust
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Table of Contents

Paragraph	Reference	Page
1.0	Introduction	3
2.0	The main principles of the code	3
3.0	General Responsibilities	4
4.0	Conflicts of interests	5
5.0	Bribery, gifts, and hospitality	5
6.0	Funds and resources	6
7.0	Confidentiality	6
8.0	Respect for others	7
9.0	Relationships between employees	7
10.0	Health and Safety	7
11.0	Conduct in meetings	7
12.0	Representing the Trust externally	8
13.0	Appearance and Dress	8
14.0	Smoking, drugs, and Alcohol	8
15.0	Safeguarding	8
16.0	Learning and Development	9
17.0	Reporting concerns	9
18.0	Monitoring and review of policy	10
19.0	Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)	10
20.0	General Data Protection Regulations	10
21.0	Further information	10

1.0 Introduction

The Trust, and all Meridian Trust employees will foster and maintain a culture of the highest professional standards. This Code of Conduct sets out the standards expected and the duty upon employees, workers, volunteers, academy councillors, and trustees to abide by it. The main principles of the code are consistent across all Meridian Trust and are expected to be fully complied with. It provides guidance on how to ensure that your actions and behaviour are consistent with the Trust's values and the high standards of conduct.

This Code of Conduct cannot provide a complete checklist of what is, or is not, appropriate behaviour for employees. However, it does highlight behaviour that is illegal, inappropriate, or inadvisable. There will be occasions and circumstances in which staff must make decisions or act where no specific guidance has been given.

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the latest publications from the Department of Education - Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) and Safer Working Practices, and Trust policies as listed on the related policy list.

You must familiarise yourself with the contents of this policy and act in accordance with its principles and provisions at all times. This policy will support employers and employees to recognise, support and display expected behaviour when we are in work and as part of our employment. Where employees do not adhere to the Code of Conduct support will be in place to support where necessary.

Whilst every attempt has been made to cover a wide range of situations, it is recognised that no policy can cover all eventualities. There may be times when professional judgement is required for situations not covered by this document, or which directly contravene the guidance given by the employer. It is expected that in these circumstances staff will always advise their senior colleagues of the justification for any such action taken or proposed. Line managers should ensure compliance with the Trust Disciplinary Policy and seek advice from the Trust HR Manager before commencing any disciplinary action. Staff should be aware that failure to adhere to the Trust's Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action.

2.0 The main principles of the code

The main principles of the Code of Conduct are as follows, in addition, this list is supported by the expectations of all related policies listed above:

- General responsibilities
- Conflicts of interest
- Bribery, gifts, and hospitality
- Funds and resources
- Confidentiality
- Respect for others
- Relationship between employees
- Health and Safety
- Conduct in meetings
- Representing the Trust externally
- Appearance and dress

- Smoking, drugs, and alcohol
- Safeguarding
- Learning and Development
- Reporting concerns

3.0 General responsibilities

You must fulfil your duties and obligations responsibly, always acting in good faith and in the best interests of the Trust.

- 3.1** You must comply with your terms of appointment, the Trust's policies and procedures and statutory guidance relating to your role. All employees engaged under Teachers' Terms and Conditions of employment have a statutory obligation to comply with Teachers' Standards, in particular in relation to this policy, Part Two: Personal and professional conduct.
- 3.2** You must not conduct yourself in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing the Trust into disrepute. This includes membership of, or participation in, activities organised by groups or organisations whose values are inconsistent with the Trust's (for instance, discriminatory organisations or groups which holds and promotes extremist views) which could create reasonable doubt in your ability to comply with the Trust's values and the Trust Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy and our PREVENT duty.
- 3.3** You must not bring the Trust's name into disrepute or affect its integrity by your actions or words, either within the Trust or outside. This includes the use of, or entries on, social networking sites (such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and others) in line with the Trust e-Safety and IT use Policy.

This includes making derogatory comments, or sharing inappropriate images, about the Trust, its employees, workers, pupils or other partners or services, either in person or in writing or via any web-based media such as a personal blog or other site. This also applies if you do not name the Trust but where its identity can reasonably be inferred, or where you use a pseudonym, but your identity can reasonably be inferred.

If you have a genuine concern about possible wrongdoing, you must report it either through the Trust Grievance Policy or the Trust Whistleblowing Policy in addition you may refer to the Trust Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy.

- 3.4** You must not act in a way that unjustifiably favours or discriminates against individuals, groups, or interests.
- 3.5** You must respect the appropriate channels for safeguarding and the protection of children. You must not act outside the Trust's established procedures such as the Trust Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Keeping Child Safe in Education (KCSIE) and Safer Working Practices.
- 3.6** You must not misuse your position, for example, by using information acquired in the course of your duties for your private interests or those of others.
- 3.7** You must respect the principle of collective decision-making and corporate responsibility. This means that once the Executive board has decided you must support that.

- 3.8** You must consult your manager before taking on any outside work or any position, paid or unpaid. Any such work or position must not interfere with your existing job or conflict with the interests of your job or the Trust. Managers will respond to this request within 10 working days.
- 3.9** Self-disclosure - employees are expected to maintain high standards to retain public confidence. a. Employees must therefore notify their manager if they are the subject of any investigation or allegation. Where an employee makes such a disclosure, the circumstances should be explored and may include seeking a further disclosure from the DBS.
- 4.0 Conflicts of interests**
You must take all reasonable steps to ensure that no conflict arises or could reasonably be perceived to arise between your duties and your personal interests financial or otherwise.
- 4.1** You must declare and record conflicts of interest. Amongst other things, these require you to declare any private interests which may, or may be perceived to, conflict with the duties of your role.
- 4.2** You must not be involved in the decision on the appointment of staff where you are related, or are closely connected, to an applicant. You must declare any such relationship to the appropriate person. You must not be involved in decisions relating to discipline, promotion, pay or benefits for any member of staff to whom you are related or closely connected.
- 4.3** You must not be involved in the appointment of a contractor or supplier where you are related, or closely connected, to an organisation or individual applying or tendering for a contract. You must declare any such relationship to the appropriate person. You must not be involved in establishing the terms of a contract, or its ongoing monitoring and management, where you are related, or closely connected, to the contractor or supplier as stated in the Trust's Financial Handbook.
- 4.4** Except where specifically permitted, you must normally avoid using the Trust's contractors and suppliers for private purposes. Where this is unavoidable, you must not receive a favourable service because of your connection with the Trust. Prior approval must be sought before using the supplier or contractor and a written declaration made confirming that NO financial or other advantage has been secured as a result of the relationship with the Trust.
- 4.5** You must not use, or attempt to use, your position to promote your personal interests or those of any connected person, business, or other organisation as per the Trust's Financial Handbook.
- 5.0 Bribery, gifts, and hospitality**
You must not offer, seek, or accept bribes or inducements to act improperly or corruptly. You must not seek or accept gifts, hospitality or other benefits that might reasonably be seen to compromise your judgement or integrity or place you under an obligation.
- 5.1** You must comply with legislation and the Trust's Financial Handbook in relation to:
- (1) bribery and corruption; and
 - (2) the giving, receiving, approval and recording of gifts and hospitality.
- 5.2** You must not canvass or seek gifts or hospitality or other benefits.
- 5.3** The receipt of a gift, while performing duties, raises an issue of ethical conduct if the acceptance of the gift places the employee in a real or apparent conflict of interest. This does not include the

end of year gifts that students bring in for teachers / staff. Any gifts received of a value that causes concern, should be reported to the Academy Head. The Trust Financial handbook sets out the conditions as to when gifts need to be reported for tax purposes.

6.0 Funds and resources

You must not misuse the Trust's funds or resources.

- 6.1** You must comply with the Trust's Financial Handbook regarding the use of its funds and resources. 'Resources' includes staff, information, telephone, computer and other IT facilities, equipment, stationery, and transport.
- 6.2** You must ensure that the organisational funds and resources entrusted to you are used efficiently, economically, and effectively.
- 6.3** You must comply with the Trust's Financial Handbook regarding procurement, ensuring value for money and fairness in decision-making.
- 6.4** You must take reasonable measures to protect the Trust's funds, resources, property and assets from theft, damage, and misuse.
- 6.5** You must comply with the Trust's e-Safety and IT Use Policy relating to the acceptable or unacceptable use of email, intranet, and internet services. Amongst other things, these policies and procedures prohibit access to pornographic or illicit material, and the use of unauthorised or unlicensed software.
- 6.6** You must claim reimbursement only for expenditure that was properly and reasonably incurred in carrying out the Trust's business. You must ensure that any expenses claim you make is accurate and complies with the Trust's Financial Handbook.

7.0 Confidentiality

You must handle information in accordance with data protection legislation and the Trust's Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy.

- 7.1** You must comply with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018 which governs the protection of personal data. All personal data, whether on paper or electronically is subject to the provisions of the Act. (The Trust's Data Protection and Confidentiality policy and procedures give further guidance).
- 7.2** You must not disclose without authority any confidential Trust information. This duty continues to apply after you have left the Trust or relinquished your position.
- 7.3** You must not, without permission, pass or distribute to the press or media or any other external recipient information or materials relating to the Trust.
- 7.4** You must not, without prior authority:
 - (1) appear to represent the views or position of the Trust.
 - (2) write letters to the press or other recipients.
 - (3) write media articles, blog posts or tweets etc., about the Trust and its activities.
 - (4) make comments or statements to the media - if approached you must pass the enquiry to the appropriate person.

This does not include where information is divulged under the Trust's Whistleblowing Policy to an external authority.

- 7.5** You must not prevent another person from gaining access to information to which they are entitled by law.

8.0 Respect for others

You must always treat others with respect.

- 8.1** You must comply with the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy. Equality laws prohibit discrimination on grounds including age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation and impose positive duties to eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote equality. The Trust's policy gives further guidance, it is useful to refer to Trust SENDV Policy when working with young people and the Trust Transgender Guidance document.

- 8.2** You must not harass, bully, or attempt to intimidate any person. The Trust Dignity at Work Policy gives further guidance. This includes adhering to the legal requirement for the prevention of sexual harassment in the workplace.

- 8.3** You must not display materials in the workplace (or on any social media sites) which other people might reasonably find offensive or use language which other people might reasonably find offensive.

9.0 Relationship between employees

Employees must maintain a constructive, professional relationship based on a sound understanding of their respective roles.

- 9.1** You must avoid inappropriate personal familiarity with colleagues in person, via electronic means (e.g. email, Teams and via social media networks. You must consider whether using electronic/social media as a method of communication is appropriate in the circumstances and, if so, ensure all such communications comply with the Trust e-Safety and IT Acceptable Use Policy.

- 9.2** You must not use informal channels to lobby or influence colleagues on matters of the Trust's business.

- 9.3** You must not knowingly mislead the board or any or the Trust's committees or panels. In presenting information, you must set out the facts and relevant issues truthfully.

10.0 Health and Safety

Your conduct must not endanger the health, safety or security of yourself or others.

- 10.1** You must comply with the Trust Health, Safety & Environmental Policy and bring to the attention of the appropriate person any risks to yourself or others.

- 10.2** You must comply with current legislation and the Trust's policy on smoking/vaping and on the use of alcohol, illegal drugs, and other substances

11.0 Conduct at meetings

Your conduct at meetings must meet a high standard of integrity, commitment, and courtesy.

- 11.1** You must be courteous to all other attendees and respect the position of the meeting chair in line with the Trust Dignity at Work Policy.
- 11.2** You must not use threatening or aggressive behaviour, or act in a disruptive way in line with the Trust Dignity at Work Policy.
- 12.0 Representing the Trust**
In representing the Trust at external events and in dealings with outside bodies, you must uphold and promote the Trust's values, objectives, and policies.
- 12.1** You must not become involved in, or be seen to endorse, any activity that may bring the Trust into disrepute. This includes but is not limited to illegal, immoral, racist, or other discriminatory activity in line with the Trust Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy.
- 12.2** In engaging in activities which promote the work of the Trust to the outside world, you must demonstrate commitment to the Trust and support for its values, policies, and goals always.
- 13.0 Appearance and Dress**
You must select a manner of dress and appearance appropriate to their professional role.
- 13.1** A person's dress and appearance are matters of personal choice and self-expression and some individuals will wish to exercise their own cultural customs. However, you should select a manner of dress and appearance appropriate to your professional role and which may be necessarily different to that adopted in your personal life in line with the Safer Working Practices.
- 13.2** In certain areas, an agreed uniform, protective clothing, or other exceptions are in place (such as for PE staff, catering, and premises staff). You may wear sportswear or casual clothing and footwear for practical or physical activities.
- 13.3** Visible tattoos that display images that could cause offence to others must be appropriately covered. Academy Heads should be aware that certain tattoos that depict religious iconography may be acceptable. Discussions should take place with the individual before any action is taken.
- 14.0 You must never arrive at work under the influence of alcohol or drugs.**
- 14.1** Drinking alcohol or taking drugs (apart from appropriately prescribed medication or over-the-counter remedies) at work or during breaks is also strictly prohibited.
- 14.2** The schools are non-smoking sites. You must not smoke, vape or use e-cigarettes on the premises or outside the school gates. Any member of staff wishing to smoke, vape or use an e-cigarette must leave the school grounds. You must not smoke, vape or use an e-cigarette whilst working with or supervising pupils offsite.
- 15.0 Safeguarding**
You must always adhere to both Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) and Safer Working Practices guidance's within the Trust's schools/academies/places of work. Part 4 of the Kcsie document refers to allegations against staff. Staff and line managers should be aware of the Trust statement document as to how allegations of abuse against staff will be managed. Advice must be sought from the Trust HR Manager.

15.1 You must play an active part in the Trust's safeguarding measures to ensure the overall safety of the children within the Trust's schools/academies/place of work.

15.2 You must undertake annual training on:

Safeguarding and Child Protection

Prevent

E Safety and Data Protection

Other training as identified by the Trust or Principal of the school

This will be offered through Core provision or your local academy.

15.3 You must read and ensure you understand the requirements of the following policies on an annual basis:

E-Safety and IT Policy

Safeguarding and Child Protection

Safer Working Practices

Code of Conduct Policy

Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)

Whistleblowing Policy

16.0 Learning and development

In partnership with the Trust, you must take responsibility for your own learning and development, regularly updating and refreshing your skills and knowledge.

16.1 You must play an active part in the Trust's supervision and performance appraisal processes. At the appropriate induction, appraisal, or supervision meeting, you must make clear your personal training and development needs, so that they can be considered in the Trust's forward budgeting and planning. Unless there are exceptional reasons, you must attend all learning and development events that have been arranged, either for you alone or as part of a group. Part time teachers who wish to attend training outside of their directed time should obtain agreement in advance, including arrangements for remuneration.

17.0 Reporting concerns

You must report any reasonable and honest suspicions you may have about possible wrongdoing.

17.1 If you are aware of potentially dishonest or fraudulent activity, or material breaches of this code you must report it to the appropriate senior person in the Trust or by following the Trust's Whistleblowing Policy.

17.2 If you believe that you are being required to act in a way which conflicts with this code, you must report it to the appropriate senior person within the Trust or by following the Trust's Grievance Policy.

17.3 You must not victimise any person who has used or intends to use or is suspected of having used the Trust's confidential reporting procedures to report the misconduct, or alleged misconduct, of others.

17.4 In reference to KCSIE, allegations made against or concerns which are raised in relation to staff could be considered under two levels of safeguarding concern. Level 1 is where allegations may meet the harms threshold. Level 2 is where allegations or concerns do not meet the harms threshold but may be considered as 'low-level' concerns. Further detail is found in part 4 KCSIE, Trust Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy and Trust Managing Allegations Policy.

18.0 Monitoring and review of policy

The policy will be reviewed every three years. Any required changes will be consulted upon with the trade Unions that make up the JCNC. Effective publication of the Code of Conduct policy is essential in ensuring that the workforce is aware of the Trust's standards.

19.0 Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)

The Trust recognises that there may be a variety of problems or changes in an individual's life that could have a dramatic effect on them and, on occasions, impact decisions they make during their employment. To help manage personal and work-related issues the Trust offers an independent, confidential, and free Employee Assistance Programme.

This service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. This service is available to all employees. Independent advice or support may be sought from the confidential employee support line on 03303 380 0658. Alternatively, you can find information which is available online at www.vivup.co.uk

20.0 General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

Unless stated elsewhere in this policy, the data gathered within this process is processed in line with our Data Protection policy. This policy can be found on our [website](#).

Any data gathered within this process will be retained in line with our records retention policy which can be found on our website.

If you have any questions about the way your data has been gathered and contained, please contact the Trust Data Protection Officer (DPO) at DPO@meridiantrust.co.uk

21.0 Further Information

Employees requiring further information or clarification of this policy should contact the HR Person in the school or the core trust HR team.