



EMPLOYEE CODE OF CONDUCT

This Code applies to all Leading Edge employees, including those who work under a contract of service with Leading Edge Academies Partnership

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Document Control

Document version numbering will follow the following format. Whole numbers for approved versions, e.g. 1.0, 2.0, 3.0 etc. Decimals will be used to represent the current working draft version, e.g. 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 etc. For example, when writing a procedural document for the first time the initial draft will be version 0.1.

The table below provides details of the changes made to this document, to inform those reviewing and approving the document.

Document Edition	Section	Details of Change
1.1	All	Updated in line with 'Guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings'.
1.2	All	Reviewed by Director of People – 'staff' amended to 'employees', employee relations updated.
2.0	All	Approved by Chief Executive Officer in line with Scheme of Delegation, 13 May 2024

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Introduction

The Leading Edge Academies Partnership (the 'Trust') is a group of six distinct and unique schools located in beautiful coastal and island settings in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. We are fortunate to include a mix of primary and secondary schools, as well as an all-through school with boarding provision and off island bases. This diversity makes for a dynamic and varied perspective.

We offer a values-based education to the communities we serve and welcome employees, workers, students, parents/carers and volunteers from all different ethnic groups and backgrounds. The Trust achieves its vision and mission through co-construction, with everyone empowered to shape the future and contribute towards the Trust's success.

The term 'Trust Community' includes all employees, trustees, governors, students, parents/carers, volunteers and visitors.

We are a values-based Trust, which means all actions are guided by our three 'Es' as follows:

- **Excellence** – 'Outstanding quality'
- **Evolution** – 'Continuous change'
- **Equity** – 'Fairness and social justice'

This policy is based on the value of **'Equity'**

Policy statement

All employees have personal, professional and legal responsibilities, including treating others with dignity and respect, acting honestly, using public funds and Trust equipment appropriately, adhering to health and safety guidelines and practising equal opportunities at all times. These expectations are set out below and should be fully observed by all staff. In addition, as employees of a public funded organisation, employees are required to comply with the 'Seven Principles of Standards in Public Life', known as the 'Nolan Principles' (see Appendix 1).

This document highlights the principal areas where employees need to be aware of their responsibilities when working at the Trust and is a framework for behaviour.

Related policies

- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- Employee Disciplinary
- Low Level Concerns
- Allegations Made Against Employees
- Grievance
- ICT and Internet Acceptable Use
- Social Media
- Health and Safety
- Gifts and Hospitality
- Equality and Diversity

Aims

This policy aims to reflect the Trust's core values and sets the way in which employees are expected to conduct themselves. By creating this code, we aim to ensure our Trust creates an environment where everyone feels safe, happy and is treated with respect.

Employees should not put themselves in a position where duty and private interests conflict and should not make use of their employment to further private interests.

Employees of the Trust have an influential position in their respective schools and act as role models for pupils by consistently demonstrating high standards of behaviour.

We expect all employees, Trustees, Members, Governors and volunteers to act with personal and professional integrity, respecting the safety and wellbeing of others.

Please note that this code of conduct is not exhaustive. If situations arise that are not covered by this code, employees will use their professional judgement and act in the best interests of the Trust and all its pupils.

Failure to follow the code of conduct may result in disciplinary action being taken, as set out in our employee disciplinary procedure.

Legislation

In line with the statutory safeguarding guidance '[Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)', we have an employee code of conduct that covers acceptable use of technologies, employee/pupil relationships and communications, including the use of social media.

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

This policy also applies to work-related functions held outside of normal working hours, either on or off any of the Trust's premises, such as Christmas parties, leaving celebrations or working lunches.

The Trust will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour towards its employees. In such cases, consideration will be given to referring the matter to the Police.

General obligations

Employees set an example to pupils. They will:

- Maintain high standards in their attendance and punctuality
- Use appropriate language in the academy and when undertaking academy business
- Never direct inappropriate or offensive language towards pupils
- Treat pupils and others with dignity and respect
- Show tolerance and respect for the rights of others
- Uphold fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs
- Express personal beliefs in a way that will not overly influence pupils, and will not exploit pupils' vulnerability or potentially lead them to break the law
- Understand the statutory frameworks they must act within
- Adhere to the relevant national standards e.g. Teachers Standards

Safeguarding

Employees have a duty to safeguard pupils from harm and to report any concerns they have. This includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse and neglect.

Employees will familiarise themselves with the Trust's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and procedures and the Prevent initiative, and ensure they are aware of the processes to follow if they have concerns about a child.

Our safeguarding policy and procedures are available in the school staff room and from the school office. New employees will also be asked to confirm that these documents have been read and understood as part of their induction process.

Allegations that may meet the harm threshold

This section is based on 'Section 1: Allegations that may meet the harm threshold' in part 4 of Keeping Children Safe in Education.

Low-level concerns about employees

A low-level concern is a behaviour towards a child by anyone working in the school that does not meet the harms threshold, but is inconsistent with the employee Code of Conduct and may be as simple as causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt'. For example, this may include (but not limited to):

- Being over friendly with children;
- Having favourites;
- Taking photographs of children on their mobile phone;
- Engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door; or,
- Using inappropriate sexualised, intimidating or offensive language.
- Erosion of boundaries
- Befriending families online who they have met through their role within The Trust
- Staff that come to mind in Safer Recruitment/Safeguarding training ('flying low of radar')
- Shouting or speaking disrespectfully to or about children
- Adopting risky 'alter egos' online
- Staff that are online 'influencers' and use their role within The Trust to meet their own needs (for example, to promote their own business or enterprise)
- Staff who 'like' or 'share' inappropriate/extreme material or opinions on social media (for example, making, liking or sharing derogatory comments about individuals or groups with protected characteristics)
- Using offensive language or making derogatory comments about individuals or groups with protected characteristics
- Staff that are unable to safeguard their own children
- Staff who display coercive/controlling behaviour outside or inside the workplace
- Staff that do not role model the ethos of modern Safeguarding in Education

Any low-level concerns should be reported in line with the procedure set out in our Low Level Concerns Policy.

Anyone working in our schools are encouraged to self-refer if they find themselves in a situation that could be misinterpreted. If someone is not sure whether behaviour would be deemed a low-level concern, it should be reported.

All reports will be handled in a responsive, sensitive and proportionate way.

Unprofessional behaviour will be addressed and supported to correct it at an early stage.

The Trust believes this creates and embeds a culture of openness, trust and transparency in which our values and expected behaviour are constantly lived, monitored and reinforced by everyone, while minimising the risk of abuse.

Power and positions of trust and authority

As a result of their knowledge, position and/or the authority invested in their role, all those working with children in a school or education setting are in a position of trust in relation to all pupils on roll.

This means that employees should not:

- Use their position to gain access to information for their own advantage and/or a pupil's or family's detriment.
- Use their power to intimidate, threaten, coerce or undermine pupils.
- Use their status and standing to form or promote relationships with pupils which are of a sexual nature, or which may become so.

The relationship between a person working with a child/ren is one in which the adult has a position of power or influence. It is vital for adults to understand this power, that the relationship cannot be one between equals and the responsibility they must therefore exercise.

The potential for exploitation and harm of vulnerable pupils means that adults have a responsibility to ensure that an unequal balance of power is not used for personal advantage or gratification.

Employees should always maintain appropriate professional boundaries, avoid behaviour which could be misinterpreted by others and report any such incident to a senior manager. This is as relevant in the online world as it is in the classroom; employees engaging with pupils and/or parents online have a responsibility to model safe practice at all times, in accordance with the Trust's ICT & Internet Acceptable Use and Social Media policies.

The unequal balance of power is also applicable to employees of the Trust.

Employee - pupil relationships

Employees will observe proper boundaries with pupils that are appropriate to their professional position. They will act in a fair and transparent way that would not lead anyone to reasonably assume they are not doing so.

If employees and pupils must spend time on a one-to-one basis, employees 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

Employees should avoid contact with pupils outside of school hours if possible.

Personal contact details should not be exchanged between employees and pupils. This includes social media profiles (see Social Media Policy).

For gifting, please refer to the Gift and Hospitality policy.

Employees should maintain high standards of honesty and integrity in their role. This includes when dealing with pupils, handling money, claiming expenses and using school property and facilities.

If an employee 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 Headteacher.

Employee - employee relationships

Employees with line management responsibilities or any employee that has a position that may be deemed one of power/seniority must observe proper boundaries with other employees, appropriate to their professional position.

Showing respect towards colleagues involves acknowledging their basic dignity, having empathy for their life situation, listening to and encouraging their opinions and input, and validating their contributions. We expect all our employees to treat each other with respect.

It is important to ensure that colleagues are not bullied, abused, harassed or discriminated against, and to refrain from making comments that may damage their reputation.

Where an employee believes that they have been unfairly treated they may refer to the Trust's Grievance Policy.

Personal relationships

It is recognised that there may be occasions where personal relationships exist amongst individuals at work. Where such employees are, or may be, working closely with colleagues with whom they have a personal relationship, they must:

- Ensure that any such relationships do not adversely affect their employment or ability to carry out their role
- Protect against bias/unfair advantage or prejudice, particularly where they have supervisory or managerial responsibility over another
- Avoid situations where there is potential for conflict of interest
- Ensure that situations do not develop where other employees feel unable to speak openly and honestly or feel that a relationship is having an adverse impact on their own employment.

The reason for this is to protect all parties from any accusations of breaches of confidentiality or the abuse of authority or conflict of interest.

A personal relationship is defined as:

- A family relationship (e.g. Grandparents, in-laws & step-parents), siblings and children & grandchildren (including in-laws and step children)
- A sexual/romantic relationship
- A business/commercial/financial relationship; or
- Any other close personal friendship or relationship

NB. This list is not exhaustive.

An employee involved in any part of the recruitment process who has a personal relationship with an applicant should declare this from the outset. They should also not act as a referee for that person where possible. Such employees must not be involved in the following:

- Recruitment processes
- Decisions relating to pay in respect of that individual
- Decisions related to or the management of the employees performance
- Any conduct issues that arise that may involve the employee.

Employees must disclose in writing to the Headteacher any personal relationship which develops or ends during the course of employment. If an employee is in doubt as to whether their relationship should be disclosed, they should seek advice from the Headteacher. In these circumstances, any disclosure will be treated fairly and confidentially.

Communication and social media

Employees must abide by the Trust's Social Media Policy at all times.

Employees' social media profiles should not be available to pupils and should set public profiles to private. Employees should refrain from accepting friend requests from pupils.

Employees should not attempt to contact pupils or their parents via social media, or any other means outside school, to develop any sort of relationship. Employees should not make any efforts to find pupils' or parents' social media profiles.

Employees will ensure that they do not post any images online that identify children who are pupils at the school without their consent. Employees should not post any images that may bring the Trust into disrepute.

No employee shall disclose to the public or media the contents of a confidential or exempt report made to a Committee or the Trust. No proceedings of any Committee meeting taken in confidence, including the content of any data, document, paper, report nor the contents of any document before the Committee in confidential session should be disclosed unless required by law or expressly authorised. Employees should not make statements on matters of policy to the media without consulting the CEO.

Acceptable use of technology

Employees must abide by the Trust's ICT & Internet Acceptable Use Policy at all times.

Employees will not use technology in school to view material that is illegal, inappropriate or likely to be deemed offensive. This includes, but is not limited to, sending obscene emails, gambling and viewing pornography or other inappropriate content.

We have the right to monitor emails and internet use on the school IT system (please refer to the ICT and Internet Acceptable Use Policy for further information in this regard).

Confidentiality

In the course of their role, employees are often privy to sensitive and confidential information about the school, colleagues, pupils and their parents.

This information will never be:

- Disclosed to anyone without the relevant authority
- Used to humiliate, embarrass or blackmail others
- Used for personal advantage
- Used for a purpose other than what it was collected and intended for

This does not overrule the duty of an employee to report child protection concerns to the appropriate channel where employees believe a child is at risk of harm.

If there is any doubt about whether information can be released, employees should consult the Data Protection Officer. GDPR Regulations should be adhered to.

Employees must:

- Work within the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000.
- Observe the school's procedures for the release of personal information held about other employees or members of the public.
- Not misuse their position by seeking information they do not need to know to carry out their duties.

Employees must ensure that when communicating at work or working from home, whether via email or video conferencing for example, that confidentiality is maintained. Every effort must be made to ensure verbal and visual communications are not overheard.

Health and Safety

Employees have a duty to take reasonable care of themselves and cooperate with management under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. These responsibilities are identified in the school's Health and Safety policy. Employees are required to act at all times in accordance with this policy and generally to act in such a way to ensure your own safety and that of others. Any action which potentially puts at risk the health and/or safety of yourself or others will be viewed seriously and may result in disciplinary action being taken.

Honesty and integrity

Employees should maintain high standards of honesty and integrity in their role. This includes when dealing with pupils, handling money, claiming expenses and using school property and facilities.

Employees will not accept bribes. For any gifts received, please refer to the Gifts and Hospitality Policy.

Where there are any updates to the information provided to the school, the employee will advise the school as soon as reasonably practicable. Consideration will then be given to the nature and circumstances of the matter and whether this may have an impact on the employment of employee.

Dress code

The Trust recognises that dress and appearance are matters of personal choice and self-expression. However, all employees must dress in a manner that is appropriate to a professional role and which promotes a professional image.

Employees should dress in a manner that is not offensive, revealing or sexually provocative and in a manner that is free from political or contentious slogans. They should dress safely and appropriately for the tasks they undertake and pay regard to any health and safety considerations.

For safety reasons appropriate footwear should be worn.

Offensive tattoos and body art should be covered while employees are in school.

Discreet earrings and body piercings are acceptable, however, those which could pose a health and safety risk whilst undertaking the tasks of the role should be removed while on school premises.

Conduct outside of work

Employees will not act in a way that would bring the school, or the teaching profession, into disrepute. This covers conduct including but not limited to relevant criminal offences, such as violence or sexual misconduct, as well as negative comments about the school on social media.

Alcohol, drugs and other substance misuse

The Trust wishes to promote the health and wellbeing of employees and minimise problems at work arising from the effects of alcohol, drugs (whether prescribed or illegal) and solvents etc. Employees are encouraged to seek help from occupational health as soon as they believe they have a problem. Any such help or onward referral will be handled confidentially.

Employees whose performance or behaviour falls below the acceptable standard may be the subject of the Trust's disciplinary, capability or support plan procedures.

Employees who cause danger or inconvenience as a result of alcohol, drugs or other substance misuse may be the subject of the Trust's disciplinary procedure.

Employees taking prescribed medication are required to advise their line manager if any of these are likely to have an effect on their ability work, drive or use equipment etc., as required by their employment with the Trust.

There is a strict no smoking policy on all Trust sites.

For more information please refer to the Trusts Alcohol, drugs and other substance misuse policy.

Sponsorship

Where the school, or a party to the school, sponsors an event or service, employees, or any partner, spouse or relative must not benefit from the sponsorship.

Employees must seek guidance from the headteacher if they are involved with any event or service that the school proposes to sponsor.

Corruption, other employment, contractors and private trading

Employees must be aware that it is a serious criminal offence for them corruptly to receive or give any gift, loan, fee, reward or advantage for doing, or not doing, anything or showing favour, or disfavour, to any person in their official capacity.

Under no circumstances should Trust orders be used for personal advantage or purchases and no employee should receive any discount or advantage as a result of their employment with the Trust. Employees are not allowed to carry out private trading either for goods or services; including the posting and distribution of private trading literature on the Trust's premises nor may they do so elsewhere whilst on school duties.

Employees must not allow their private interests to come into conflict with their work.

With the consent of the Headteacher and to comply with the Working Time Regulations Act 1998, an employee may engage in any other business or take up any additional work outside their working hours providing that it does not impact on, distract them from or conflict with their schoolwork.

Any relationship or friendship with external contractors or potential contractors should be made known to the COO (Chief Operating Officer). Orders and contracts must be awarded on merit by fair competition in accordance with relevant procedure rules and regulations and no special favour should be shown to businesses run by, for example, friends, partners or relatives. No part of the local community should be discriminated against. The Trust will abide by the DfE guidance on related party transactions.

Employees who engage or supervise contractors or have any other official relationship with contractors and have previously had or currently have a relationship in a private or domestic capacity with contractors, should declare that relationship to the COO. When a conflict of interest is disclosed, the Trust reserves the right to remove the employee from any areas of direct or indirect involvement in the matter concerned.

Criminal charges and convictions

In accordance with the Independent School Standards Regulations, the Trust requires all applicants to disclose criminal convictions, whether committed in the UK or elsewhere.

Employees must:

- Notify the school in writing if charged with any criminal offence or if convicted of any criminal offence; this includes cautions.
- If charged with an offence, advise the school, as their employer, immediately after they are charged (i.e. next working day).

It should be noted that the term 'conviction' includes a finding of guilt, regardless of whether or not a conviction is recorded. Failure to notify the school in either case will constitute grounds for disciplinary action.

Intellectual Property and Copyrights

All intellectual property rights (that is copyright, design rights and the right to patent inventions) relating to anything created or invented by employees in the course of their duties belongs automatically to the school, unless otherwise agreed. Employees must not exploit the rights to any such thing without written permission from the school.

Publications and Dealing with the Press

Employees must not:

- Publish any material which comments on the activities, policies etc of the school without the consent of the headteacher.
- Make comments to the press or media unless specifically authorised to do so. Where requests for comments are received, they should be passed on to the headteacher.
- Where employees wish to publish an article unconnected with the school then the article must not link them to the school.

Political Neutrality

The Trust will not concern itself with the political beliefs of individuals and employees must not allow their own political beliefs to interfere with the work of the school. Employees may not display party political posters, including election material, in any place of work.

Equal Opportunities

The Trust is committed to the promotion and implementation of equal opportunities both internally and externally. It aims to ensure that everyone is treated equally and not in any way disadvantaged by factors which could prevent the implementation of fair policies and operations. The Trust will recognise the differences that exist and seek to understand the needs of people within the groups which are afforded protection or assistance through this policy.

The Trust expects all employees to uphold its Equality and Diversity Policy and to accept the duty not to discriminate, either in employment practices or in the provision of facilities and services by reference to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Discrimination, Harassment, and Victimisation

Employees must treat all other employees, pupils, parents, and people with whom they come into contact with courtesy and respect and must not make any remarks or gestures relating to the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation which may cause offence. Any complaint of discrimination, harassment, or victimisation or complaints made on the grounds of any of the

protected characteristics listed above, will be taken seriously and will be the subject of a thorough investigation and the Employee Disciplinary Policy where appropriate.

Identity Badges

Employees will be issued with identity badges which must be worn when required by the school/Trust.

Appendix 1

The Seven Principles of Public Life

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

Selflessness – Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.

Integrity - Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Objectivity - In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

Accountability - Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Openness - Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

Honesty – Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.