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Northern Star Academies Trust

Staff Code of Conduct

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Introduction

Students, parents and the public are entitled to the highest standards of conduct from all Northern Star Academies Trust (NSAT) employees. School employees are in a position of great trust and responsibility and it is essential that their conduct is above reproach. However, it is not always obvious what is and is not acceptable, particularly to those who are new to education or have never worked in a public sector organisation.

This Code of Conduct sets out, in the simplest terms, the standards of behaviour expected by the directors and senior leaders of the academy trust. Its aim is to help employees to make sensible choices in their conduct and to protect them from potential criticism or allegations. This policy forms part of a staff member's contract of employment and failure to comply with it, and with the associated school policies, may result in disciplinary action being taken, including legal action where this is warranted. **If you are in any doubt about the correct course of action to take, talk to your line manager.**

Although the chief aim of this Code is to support and protect employees in their roles, employees should also be aware that failure to observe the standards set out in this Code will be regarded as serious and may result in disciplinary action, which may include dismissal.

In addition to this Code of Conduct, all employees engaged to work under teachers' terms and conditions of employment have a statutory obligation to adhere to the Teachers' Standards (England) and in relation to this policy, Part 2 of the Teachers' Standards – Personal and Professional Conduct.

Scope

This document applies to all staff members who are:

- Employed by the Trust, including the headteacher and volunteers.
- Employed in units or bases that are attached to the school.

This document does not apply to:

- School catering or cleaning staff employed by external contractors.
- Any other employees of external contractors.

These employees are governed by their own employment contracts and any relevant laws pertaining to their activities within the school, for example, the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

This Code does not apply to Governors when they are fulfilling their statutory role, including as a link governor and when attending meetings with senior staff and/or the Governing Body. However, should a Governor take a volunteer role within the school, then they should be considered to be an associated person under this policy whilst undertaking that role.

Safeguarding students

In accordance with 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' 2018, all NSAT staff have a responsibility to safeguard students and protect their own welfare.

All NSAT staff have a responsibility to ensure that they provide a learning environment in which students feel safe, secure and respected.

To effectively safeguard students, staff members are required to follow the procedures outlined in this Staff Code of Conduct and the relevant school's **Child Protection/Safeguarding Policy**, ensuring that they do not act in a way that may put students at risk of harm, or lead others to question their actions.

In accordance with the school's Child Protection/Safeguarding Policy, staff members will be prepared to identify students who may be subject to, or at risk of, abuse and neglect and will follow the necessary reporting and referral procedures.

Any staff member that has concerns about another staff member's actions or intent that may lead to a student being put at risk of harm will report this in line with the **Whistleblowing Policy** to the headteacher immediately so appropriate action can be taken.

If the concern is regarding the headteacher, staff will report this to the chair of the relevant schools' governing body immediately.

All NSAT staff will partake in the appropriate safeguarding and child protection training; additionally, all staff will receive regular, but at least annually, safeguarding and child protection updates.

All NSAT Staff must be aware that confidentiality should never be promised to a student – staff will understand the procedures if a student discloses a potential safeguarding issue, in accordance with the school's Child Protection/Safeguarding Policy.

Attendance

The school 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.

Be on time (or early) for the start of your working day and for each lesson.

Refer to the school's **NSAT Attendance Management Policy** if they need time off for any reason other than personal illness.

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

Professional behaviour and conduct

Staff members are expected to treat other colleagues, students, parents, and external contacts with dignity and respect.

Employees should recognise and respect the work demands of, and contributions made by, others within the workplace. This respect can be demonstrated by completing tasks to agreed deadlines, attending calendared meetings promptly and communicating effectively with others. Employees are expected to take direction and leadership from senior staff within the school.

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

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

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

Staff members will inform the headteacher if they are subject to a criminal conviction, caution, ban, police enquiry, investigation or pending prosecution.

Staff will be aware that professional behaviour and conduct is expected to be extended to extra-curricular trips and visits too. All staff attending a trip or visits will act in accordance with this policy.

Staff will act appropriately in terms of the views they express (in particular political views) and the use of school resources at all times and will not use school resources for party political purposes.

Dress and appearance

The school expects that staff members will:

- Ensure that their appearance is clean and neat when at work or representing the school.
- Wear clothing appropriate to your work that is culturally sensitive and without contentious slogans.
- Wear identity badges as required by your school.
- Remember that they are role models for students, and that their dress and appearance should reflect this.
- Not dress in a way that would cause embarrassment or offence to students, parents, colleagues or other stakeholders.
- Cover any tattoos or body art whilst in school; small earrings are acceptable, but all other body piercings must be removed.

The Directors reserve the right to enforce additional standards, e.g. in relation to piercings or body modifications, provided this complies with employment law.

Smoking, alcohol and other substances *(smoking includes e-cigarettes/vaping)*

Staff will not smoke on, or within the immediate surroundings of the school premises.

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

The taking of illegal drugs or alcohol during working hours is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Staff members must never attend work under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.

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

Health and safety *(see Health and Safety Policy, Lone Working Policy, Educational off-site visits procedures)*

Staff members will:

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

Comply with health and safety regulations and use any safety equipment and protective clothing which is supplied to them.

Comply with hygiene requirements.

Comply with accident reporting requirements.

Report all health and safety concerns to an appropriate person.

Inform the Headteacher of any paid work which is undertaken elsewhere, for compliance with The Working Time Regulations 1998 (as amended).

Conflicts of interest, gifts, hospitality and bequests *(see Gifts and Hospitality Policy and Safe Working Practice for Adults Working with Children, HHSAT Finance & Governance Manual)*

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

For the purposes of this policy, a financial conflict of interest is one where there is, or appears to be, opportunity for personal financial gain, financial gain for close relatives or friends, or where it may be reasonable for a third party to take the view that financial benefits may affect an individual's actions.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Relationships with students

The school expects that staff will:

Maintain professional boundaries and relationships with students at all times, and will consider whether their actions are warranted, proportionate, safe and necessary.

Act in an open and transparent way that would not lead to others questioning their actions.

Ensure that they do not establish social contact with students for the purpose of securing a friendship, or to pursue or strengthen a relationship.

Ensure that they do not develop personal or sexual relationships with students: this includes sexual remarks and discussing their own sexual relationships with, or in the presence of, students.

Only contact students via the school's established mechanisms: staff should not give your personal contact details to students, including your mobile telephone number or personal e-mail address unless, in exceptional circumstances, and agreed with a senior member of staff.

Under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, it is an offence for a person aged 18 or over to have a sexual relationship with a child under 18 where that person is in a position of trust in respect to that child, even if the relationship is consensual.

Physical contact with students

The school understands that there are circumstances in which it is entirely necessary for staff to have physical contact with students, e.g. when applying first aid and assisting with intimate care, but staff will only do so in a professional and appropriate manner in line with relevant school policies.

When physical contact is made with students, it is imperative that it is conducted in a way that is responsive to the student's needs, is of limited duration and is appropriate to their age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity and background.

Staff will seek the student's permission, where possible, before initiating contact.

Staff will always use their professional judgement when determining what physical contact is appropriate, as this may differ between students. As such, the student's feelings and wishes will always be taken into account.

Staff will never touch a student in a way that is indecent and will always be prepared to explain their actions.

Staff will be aware that even well-intentioned physical contact may be misconstrued by a student, an observer or by anyone to whom this action is described and, therefore, will be prepared to justify their actions.

Staff will not engage in rough play, tickling or play fights with students.

Extra caution will be taken where it is known that a student has previously suffered from abuse or neglect.

Physical contact will never be secretive; if a member of staff believes an action could be misinterpreted, this will be reported to the Headteacher and appropriate procedures will be followed.

Where it is necessary in PE classes for teachers to demonstrate use of equipment, this will be conducted with another member of staff if possible. If a student is required to participate, their consent will be given before doing so.

If a child is in distress and in need of comfort as reassurance, staff may use age-appropriate physical contact, such as placing their hand on the student's shoulder. Staff will remain self-aware of their actions at all times and ensure that their contact is not threatening, intrusive or subject to misinterpretation.

Staff may also use reasonable force only as a means of physical contact with students for restraint purposes, such instances will always be in accordance with the school's **Use of Reasonable Force Policy**.

Transporting students

Staff should not offer lifts to a student outside your normal working duties, unless agreed with your line manager and the parents/carers, preferably with written permission in advance. In an emergency, report afterwards to a senior manager and parents/carers.

When it is necessary to transport students off-site, staff will ensure that the transport arrangements of the vehicle meet all legal requirements, they have an appropriate licence and the vehicle is roadworthy, has a valid MOT certificate and is insured.

Code of Conduct for Employees with Children at the School

It is recognised that some staff will have social contact with students because their own children are students at the school or have friends who are students; or the staff member is related to a student; or the staff member is friends with a parent. In these circumstances, the staff member should make their line manager aware of the situation so that any contact with students is not misconstrued. There is no requirement to discuss every instance of social contact but there is a requirement to raise any specific concerns in line with this code of conduct.

The employee will maintain a professional relationship with their child with regard to communication, e.g. talking to them as they would any other pupil and not discussing family matters.

Regardless of their relationship to the child, the school expects that while at work the employee will:

Maintain professional boundaries with their child and consider whether their actions are warranted, proportionate, safe and necessary.

Act in an open and transparent way that would not lead to others questioning their actions.

Ensure that they do not establish social contact with other pupils or discuss personal matters and relationships, as far as possible.

The employee's child will not seek the employee during the school day unnecessarily, e.g. to talk about non-school related matters.

The employee will communicate the requirements of this document to their child to ensure appropriate boundaries are maintained at school.

The employee will always have due regard to the Data Protection Policy.

Under no circumstance will the employee discuss safeguarding issues, behavioural issues or any other sensitive work-related issues, e.g. redundancies, with their child.

The school takes a zero-tolerance approach to the disclosure of any sensitive information.

If any sensitive information is leaked, the employee will be disciplined in accordance with the Staff Code of Conduct.

If the employee discloses any school information to their child, and the child shares this with other pupils, the employee's child may be disciplined in accordance with the **Behaviour Policy**.

The staff member will not engage in gossip about matters relating to the school and its community with other parents, staff members or their child.

If the employee's child is involved in any behavioural concerns, the employee will remain impartial until a full investigation has been conducted.

If the employee's child is found to be behaving inappropriately, the employee will adhere to the disciplinary procedures as outlined in the **Behaviour Policy**.

Taking photographs or videos of students

Photographs and videos will only be taken using school equipment – using personal mobile phones for this purpose is prohibited, unless permission has been granted under exceptional circumstances.

Consent for taking photographs will be obtained from parents, or the student themselves, if they are deemed old enough and able to make the decision for themselves.

Students who have not had consent provided to have their photograph taken or be filmed will have their wishes respected.

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

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

Staff should not:

Display or distribute images of students without consent from parents/carers. Nor should images/videos be uploaded to staff private social media accounts.

Use images that may cause distress.

Take images 'in secret', or in situations that may be construed as being secretive.

Use school cameras or recording devices for personal use.

Inappropriate Images

Staff should ensure that students are not exposed to any inappropriate images or web links.

Staff should report immediately to a senior member of staff any indecent images of children found in school. Do not attempt to investigate the matter or evaluate the material as this may lead to evidence being contaminated.

You should report to your line manager or a senior member of staff any other unsuitable material found in school e.g. during an internet search.

Staff must not access, make or store indecent images of children. This will lead to criminal investigation and likely barring from work with children.

Do not use equipment belonging to school to access or create adult pornography and do not bring personal equipment containing pornographic or unsuitable images or links to them into the workplace. This will raise serious concerns about your suitability to work with children.

E-safety *(see Staff Acceptable Use Policy, Information Security Policy)*

Staff will adhere to the procedures outlined in the school's **Acceptable Use Policy** and **Information Security Policy** at all times.

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

Staff will not engage in inappropriate use of social networking sites including contacting students or their family members, accepting or inviting friend requests from students or their family members, or following students or their family members on social media.

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

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

Staff should not use mobile phones in lessons, or on duty except in cases of emergency. Phones should be kept switched off or on silent mode and not be left on display during lessons, with the exception of places determined by the school.

Data protection and confidentiality (see *GDPR Data Protection Policy*)

Regarding personal and sensitive data, staff members are required, under the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018, to:

Consider the legal basis for collecting the data, ensuring that this is documented.

Ensure that the data is stored on a GDPR-compliant server, and that the data is not held for any longer than necessary.

Securely dispose of the data when the relevant retention period ends.

Staff members will not disclose sensitive information about the school, its employees or the LA to other parties. If you receive a request to pass on personal information and you are uncertain as to whether you should, then you should consult a senior member of staff.

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

Staff members have the right to request access to data that is held about them. Such requests will be made to the Data and Compliance Director in writing in accordance with the school's **GDPR Data Protection Policy**.