

Academies Trust

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# **Colleague Code of Conduct**

**(including electronic communications policy)**

Approved by Trust Board on 25 July 2019  
Applicable from 01 September 2019

# Colleague Code of Conduct

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## 1. Introduction

1.1 This Code of Conduct is based on key principles arising from the work of the Nolan Committee on standards in public life; it outlines the minimum standards for all colleagues of Co-op Academies Trust (“the Trust”) (including Headteachers/Principals, teaching staff, support staff, casual workers and members of the central team) and for any other persons working with our children and/or on our academy premises (for example, agency staff, volunteers, and contracted services).

1.2 Individual academies may develop and agree more detailed supplementary codes of practice on topics contained in this Code, with the aim of providing additional guidance and meeting local operational needs, as long as these are not contrary to the minimum standards set out in this document and are appropriately consulted on at a local level.

1.3 The Trust expects all colleagues to comply with this Code, and any supplementary guidance on colleague conduct issued by individual academies, or the Trust Board.

1.4 The Board believes that colleagues are responsible for their actions. It is the responsibility of colleagues to read the Code. The Headteacher/Principal is responsible for making the Code available to colleagues. If any of the provisions contained within this Code of Conduct, related codes of practice or any other policies are not fully understood colleagues must, in their own interests, seek clarification from their Headteacher/Principal (or Trust CEO for central team members).

1.5 This Code does not contain a comprehensive list of acts of misconduct. There may be other acts of commission or omission committed by colleagues that the Trust also views as misconduct and/or gross misconduct.

1.6 Pupils/students, colleagues, parents/carers and governors expect the highest standards of behaviour from Trust and Academy colleagues. Colleagues must not put themselves in a position where their honesty or integrity could be called into question. The Trust reserves the right to monitor colleagues, including surveillance, in accordance with relevant legislation such as the Regulatory and Investigatory Powers Act, Data Protection Act and Human Rights Act to ensure that the provisions of this Code of conduct are adhered to.

1.7 Failure to observe this Code of Conduct, failure properly to perform /her duties, serious misconduct or criminal offences committed during or outside working hours which bring the colleague, an academy, the Trust or the Sponsor into disrepute will be dealt with under the disciplinary policy, and the most serious cases may result in dismissal.

1.8 Colleagues who are seconded to work in another academy, school or organisation are expected to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with this Code of Conduct and in a way which meets the requirements of the school or organisation to which they have been seconded.

1.9 The Code is compatible with the conventions contained in the Human Rights Act.

## 2. Public Duty, Private Interest

### 2.1 General

- A colleague’s academy duties and private interests must not conflict. Colleagues must declare any private interests relating to their academy duties. This may include, but is not limited to, membership of organisations which would be generally considered to conflict with their academy duties.
- Colleagues must not behave in a way that could place pupils, their colleagues, or themselves at risk, and must have regard to the duty of care described in the Trust and / or an academy’s Health and Safety Policies and act in accordance with safe systems of work and codes of practice.

## 2.2 Fraud & theft

- Trust Board members, and Local Governing Body (LGB) members acknowledge the responsibility they have for the administration of public funds, and emphasise to the public and colleagues the importance placed on probity, financial control, selflessness and honest administration. They are also committed to the fight against fraud, whether perpetrated by colleagues, contractors or the public. Trust and academy colleagues must not use their position to obtain gain for themselves, business associates, friends or family either directly or indirectly. Please refer to separate policies on Fraud & Bribery.
- Colleagues must use public funds responsibly and lawfully. They must work to ensure that the Trust and its academies use their resources prudently and within the law and that the local community gets value for money. The Trust's Financial Procedures and Regulations and those of the Education Finance Authority (EFA) must be observed.
- Defrauding and stealing (or attempting to do so) from the Trust, an academy or any person / organisation in any way will not be tolerated. This includes deliberate falsification of claims, e.g. time sheets, mileage and travel/subsistence allowances with the intention of obtaining payment.
- The Trust Board and LGBs require colleagues to report genuine concerns relating to potential fraud, theft or unethical behaviour to the Headteacher/Principal, LGB, Chief Education Officer or Trust CEO. Further details are contained in the Trust's Whistle-blowing Policy.
- It is acknowledged that colleagues may not find it easy to 'blow the whistle' or report irregularities and the Trust Board / LGB members will give them full support in raising such concerns. Every effort will be made to respect a colleague's request for anonymity. However, colleagues are expected to demonstrate accountability and to co-operate fully with any scrutiny appropriate to their position. There are two sides to every story and the Trust Board / LGBs will undertake to give people a fair hearing. It is possible that some allegations will turn out to be mistaken. If, however, you make malicious or deliberately false allegations, disciplinary action may be taken against you.

## 2.3 Financial inducements; Gifts & hospitality

- On no account must an employee accept a financial payment or other inducement from any person, body or organisation, e.g. contractors, developers, consultants, etc. It is an offence for a colleague to accept any fee, gift, loan or reward whatsoever, other than their proper remuneration.
- Where a fee is paid by an external body for work undertaken by an employee of the Trust in the course of their employment (for example, speaking at a conference) this should be treated as a payment to the Trust, not to the individual colleague (see section 7).
- As a general rule, colleagues must refuse any gift or hospitality offered to them or their family that may be perceived to influence their judgement. Exceptions are gifts of negligible value that are usually given to a wide range of people, e.g. pens, diaries, calendars etc. and small gifts from children. Offers of hospitality must only be accepted when proper written authorisation has been received from the Headteacher/Principal or Trust CEO (on behalf of the Chair of the Trust Board). Further details are given in Trust / academy policies.
- There is an expectation that in addition to declaring those gifts received, colleagues will also declare those which have been correctly refused. Each academy, and the central trust team, is expected to maintain a gifts & hospitality register.

## 2.4 Colleague declarations of financial and other interests

- Colleagues must be aware that a personal relationship with another colleague could lead to a potential conflict of interest, particularly where there is an involvement in recruitment or a line

management relationship, and/or where a member of an academy Senior Leadership Team or the Central Team is involved. Colleagues should seek advice from their Headteacher/Principals (or Chair of Governors / Chief Education Officer) / Trust CEO, as applicable] where there is a potential conflict of interest of this nature.

- All colleagues have a statutory duty to declare any financial or other interest in any existing or proposed contract or an interest in, or association with, any organisation, services, activity or person that may cause a direct or indirect conflict of interest with their Trust / academy employment. Private interests preclude colleagues from participation in any such activities. All colleagues must abide by these regulations.
- Where a colleague makes representations, or applies for services in which they have significant influence by virtue of their employment position, on behalf of a relative, colleague, friend or some other person with whom they have a close relationship, they must declare a personal interest.
- Colleagues with such a conflict of interest must tell their Headteacher/Principal, Chair of Governors / Chief Education Officer [if Headteacher/Principal making the declaration], Trust CEO [central team members] or Chair of the Trust Board [Trust CEO] in writing. That person will then make alternative arrangements so that a colleague is not involved, or, where the colleague's skills are required, ensure appropriate supervision is provided so that undue influence or bias to their advantage is prevented. They will also review any such declarations annually.
- Headteachers/Principals and the Trust CEO are responsible for the monitoring of colleagues' activities in accordance with the provisions/declarations of this Code and any related codes of practice. Any such monitoring will comply with relevant legislation such as the Regulatory and Investigatory Powers Act, the Data Protection Act and the Human Rights Act.
- Colleagues in key roles may be asked to complete a 'declaration of interest form', even if they have not declared an interest.
- Colleagues are entitled to use all of the services of the Trust and their employing academy as appropriate but in doing so they will receive neither favour nor suffer discrimination or disadvantage. Colleagues must be aware at all times that members of the public expect the highest standards of fairness and equality to be upheld in the administration of services regardless of recipient. They have a responsibility to ensure that they conduct themselves in a manner which does not bring into question either their integrity or their motivation. At no time should they attempt to exert any pressure to obtain services because of their position or to access services other than through those channels available to members of the public. It is for these reasons they should ensure that personal interests are declared.

### **3. Relationships with prospective or current contractors**

- 3.1 If colleagues engage or supervise contractors, have an official relationship with contractors or a potential contractor, and/or have previously had or currently have a relationship in a private or domestic capacity with a contractor, they must declare that relationship to their Headteacher/Principal, Chief Education Officer or the Trust CEO.
- 3.2 All orders and contracts must be awarded on merit, by fair competition against other tenders. Colleagues must exercise impartiality and no favouritism must be shown to businesses run for example by friends, partners, relatives or business associates. No section of the community should be discriminated against in the tendering, evaluation and award processes.
- 3.3 Colleagues who are privy to confidential information on contracts for tender, or costs for either internal or external contractors, must not disclose that information to any unauthorised party or organisation.
- 3.4 Colleagues are expected to follow the Trust's Anti-Slavery & Human Trafficking Policy.

#### **4. Information technology & data security**

4.1 Colleagues must ensure that they follow the Trust's and academy security procedures in relation to the use of information technology (including but not limited to computers, tablets, mobile telephones, smart watches and linked devices) and the proper management of computer-held information. Particular care must be taken to observe established procedures when using passwords and when logging on and off. Colleagues must never share passwords, which may lead to unauthorised access to the Trust's / academy systems. Where this practice is found, colleagues should be aware it may lead to disciplinary action.

4.2 In respect of internet and intranet access, colleagues must comply with the Trust's policy and academy codes of practice, including the Electronic Communications Policy (Appendix A), and are required to sign a copy of the Information Systems Declaration (Appendix B), and relevant legislation such as the Regulatory and Investigatory Powers Act, Data Protection Act, Obscene Publications Act, Computer Misuse Act and the Theft Act.

#### **5. Social media**

5.1 Social Media should be used responsibly and colleagues should ensure that anything published does not bring their academy, the Trust or the Sponsor into disrepute, or constitute bullying or harassment of a colleague. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action including the possibility of dismissal.

5.2 The Trust expects colleagues to follow its Social Media Guidelines (see Annex A, section 8.3).

5.3 It is important that colleagues maintain a professional digital footprint, and think very carefully and be cautious about their "likes" and sharing of material via social media – taking care not to distribute material produced, supported or promoted by radical political groups that are at odds with our co-operative values and principles, and Ways of Being Co-op.

5.4 If a colleague sees something on social media posted by a colleague which they are uncomfortable with because it breaches this Code of Conduct and its Annexes, for example which they believe could bring the Trust or their academy in to disrepute or which could constitute bullying or harassment of a work colleague, they are encouraged to pass evidence of this to their Headteacher/Principal, or another member of their senior leadership team.

5.5 For additional guidance see further advice which has been published by our recognised trade unions for their members. For example:

<https://www.teachers.org.uk/help-and-advice/health-and-safety/e/e-safety-protecting-school-staff-guidance-members>

<https://www.nasuwt.org.uk/advice/health-safety/social-media-the-abuse-of-technology.html>

#### **6. Use of systems, property and facilities**

6.1 The property provided within the workplace, or to support the effective operation of a colleague's work such as telephones, mobile phones, the internet, intranet, e-mail, stationery, photocopiers and other machines or tools, materials, offices, car parks and facilities, may only be used for the Trust / academy business unless permission for private use is given by the Headteacher/Principal, Chief Education Officer or Trust CEO.

6.2 Trust / academy / sponsor telephones (mobile and land line) should not be used to make personal telephone calls or send personal texts, except in an emergency or where appropriate permission to make a call has been sought.

6.3 Any communications using Trust, academy or sponsor systems may be monitored. Any such monitoring will be in accordance with the law. Telephone call and e-mail/internet logging systems may be used to identify usage for private purposes.

6.4 Colleagues must adhere to all of the Trust / academy's specific system security measures that are currently in place or introduced in the future (and the sponsor's systems and measures if using equipment provided by the sponsor).

## **7. Secondary employment**

7.1 Any secondary employment (including voluntary work) undertaken must not conflict with the Trust / an academy's interests or bring it into disrepute, must not interfere with the proper performance of a colleague's duties, and must only be undertaken outside the colleague's working hours. In such a case it is the responsibility of the individual to ensure that they meet with all the appropriate taxation, insurance and Working Time Regulations associated with being self-employed / an employee of another organisation.

7.2 Colleagues are expected to discuss any other paid work with their Headteacher/Principal or their Line Manager [central team members] prior to taking it up. Where voluntary work will take up a substantial amount of time this should also be discussed.

7.3 Colleague appointments as Governors, Councillors, Trade Union officials, membership of the Territorial Army, as a Justice of the Peace or as a Member of the Employment Tribunal do not constitute secondary employment as described in this Code. Nonetheless the principles of staff making Headteachers/Principals or Line Manager [central team members] aware of these duties and seeking appropriate time off in a reasonable and timely manner apply.

7.4 The Trust Board understands the value and importance to both individuals and their academies of extending professional experience. Where a colleague wishes to provide their services on a consultancy basis, either to another organisation, or as a representative of another organisation, they should first obtain approval from their Headteacher/Principal and their School Governing Body. In the case of Headteachers/Principals, approval should be sought through the Chief Education Officer and the Chair of the LGB and the Trust CEO for central team members. Approval will be dependent on the needs of the Trust at that time.

7.5 Where the work takes place during normal working hours, any payments should be made to the academy or Trust through an invoicing system. The individual will be entitled to claim reasonable travel expenses for providing the service, though no additional remuneration will be possible.

7.6 Where the work takes place outside the school day – evenings or weekends – this is viewed as 'secondary employment'.

7.7 In such cases, approval must be obtained for the use of any materials owned by an academy / the Trust, or obtained through employment, therein. This is particularly important in relation to data protection and child protection.

7.8 While it is appreciated and understood that much good practice within education comes from sharing experiences and expertise, the Trust reserves the right to intellectual copyright over materials, research and innovative practices which have been developed in conjunction with or as a result of employment by Co-op Academies Trust or its academies.

## **8. Disclosure of information, confidentiality and references**

8.1 Colleagues should be fair and open when dealing with others and ensure that they have access to the information they need unless there is a good reason not to permit this.

8.2 Colleagues must act in accordance with, and observe, the law in handling all personal and other information. Special care must be taken in handling special category data, personal and confidential information, which must in no circumstances be inappropriately used. Colleagues may be personally prosecuted for offences under the Data Protection legislation. If any colleague is in doubt about their responsibilities, they must consult their Headteacher/Principal, Chief Education Officer or the Trust CEO.

8.3 Confidential, personal or financial information about any colleague, pupil or parent/carer, must not be disclosed to any organisation person, or normally, to any external organisation/agency, without the express approval of the person concerned. Colleagues seeking clarification about 'authorised' or 'unauthorised' persons should seek the guidance of their Headteacher/Principal, Chief Education Officer or the Trust CEO who will take specialist advice on the matter.

8.4 Colleagues must not abuse their position by disclosing confidential information to any third party, this will include the unauthorised release of confidential information regarding:

- competitive tendering or tendering for work which may be beneficial to a third party
- an employee or service user.

8.5 Colleagues must not use any information obtained in the course of their employment or tenure for personal gain or benefit or to attempt to obtain personal gain, nor pass it on to others who might use it in such a way.

8.6 If during the course of their employment colleagues are dealing with members of their family, partners, friends or business associates this must be declared to their Headteacher/Principal, Chief Education Officer or the Trust CEO as set down in sections 2.13 to 2.18 of this Code. Where such contact occurs, colleagues must be impartial and act in a professional manner.

8.7 References in relation to employment by Co-op Academies Trust and its academies should only be given by persons authorised to do so by the Headteacher/Principal, Chief Education Officer or Trust CEO.

## **9. Communications with the media**

9.1 It is the Trust's Policy that all media liaison relating to Trust and academy activities is handled by the Sponsor's Communications Service in conjunction with Headteachers/Principals, Chief Education Officer or the Trust CEO. If a colleague has ideas for positive stories about Trust/academy activities or is approached by a journalist they should refer to the Headteacher/Principal, Chief Education Officer or the Trust CEO before any information is given verbally, via e-mail or in writing. In exceptional circumstances (e.g. field trips) where such reference cannot be made, the colleague in charge may assume authority.

9.2 Where a colleague is writing material for publication which does not refer specifically to the Trust, Sponsor, or an academy, but does relate to their profession/occupation e.g. articles in professional journals, the colleague should notify their Headteacher/Principal, Chief Education Officer or the Trust CEO prior to publication.

9.3 Colleagues should be mindful that placing information in to the public domain through social media such as (but not limited to) Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and LinkedIn in relation to the Trust, their academy, or their work in general could constitute communications with the media (see section 5 above).

## **10. Neutrality**

10.1 Colleagues must not allow their personal or political beliefs or opinions to interfere with their work.

10.2 Whilst engaged in Trust/academy business, colleagues must not wear or display items that might bring the Trust and its academies in to disrepute or conflict with their work.



## 11. The community and service users

11.1 Colleagues must always remember their responsibilities to the users of the Trust and its academies and ensure courteous, efficient and impartial service delivery to all groups and individuals within the community.

11.2 Colleagues are expected to be as open as possible about their actions and the work of the Trust and its academies, notwithstanding the needs of confidentiality.

11.3 Colleagues must always act in a way that preserves public confidence in the Trust and its academies.

11.4 Colleagues have a duty at all times, to uphold the law and relevant guidance bearing in mind the public's trust placed in the Trust / academy colleagues.

11.5 The Trust Board will not tolerate a colleague's physical or emotional abuse, harassment, discrimination, victimisation or bullying of colleagues, pupils, governors, parents/carers, contractors or other members of the public. Such actions may be deemed to be misconduct or gross misconduct and may result in disciplinary action including dismissal. Colleagues must comply at all times with any additional policies issued by the Trust or individual academies in relation to dignity at work (including harassment, discrimination, victimisation and bullying).

## 12. Safeguarding and Child Protection

12.1 Colleagues working with children and young people are in a particular position of great trust. Any breach of that trust, or which impacts the safety or welfare of children and young people, including but not limited to assault, sexual misconduct, or breach of the policies and procedures meant to safeguard pupils, will be regarded as potential gross misconduct. This may lead to disciplinary action including the possibility of dismissal without notice.

12.2 Colleagues, agency staff, contract service personnel and volunteers who work with children and young people are subject to the requirements of the Trust's Safer Recruitment policy. They must, in their own interests, read any and all codes of practice and conduct, in conjunction with this Code of Conduct and must observe current legislation including (but not limited to) the Children's Act 1989 and any other relevant Child Protection Procedures.

12.3 Colleagues are expected to comply with the Guidance for Safer Working Practice 2019, which provides practical guidance about which behaviours constitute safe practice and which behaviours should be avoided. <https://www.saferrecruitmentconsortium.org/GSWP%20May%202019%20final.pdf>

12.4 All colleagues must adhere to their academy's local operating procedures in relation to safeguarding, child protection and PREVENT. This may include, but is not limited to, arrangements for private meetings with students, and caring for students who require assistance with personal care.

12.5 Any incidents involving assault, sexual offences or harassment, discrimination or victimisation against pupils, must be dealt with under the Trust's Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy and the appropriate Local Safeguarding Children Board's Child Protection Guidance and Procedures, and may be reported to the police.

12.6 Colleagues who witness any behaviour which they consider to be detrimental to the safety and welfare of children and people within our academies have a duty to report it to their Headteacher/Principal, to the Chair of Governors / Chief Education Officer if it relates to the behavior of the Headteachers/Principal, to the Trust CEO, or to 'blow the whistle' (refer to the Trust's Whistleblowing policy).

12.7 Colleagues working in posts covered by the Disqualification under the Childcare Act 2006 (DFE 2018) ("relevant posts") are required to complete a declaration form prior to commencing employment, and on an annual basis thereafter. They are required to declare immediately anything which could render them

disqualified, and are not permitted to work in a relevant post if disqualified unless a waiver is granted by Ofsted. The Trust expects all colleagues to declare immediately to their Headteacher / Principal / Chief Education Officer or Trust CEO (for Central Team members) any criminal charges brought or caution / conviction acquired during their employment with us, and to discuss any relationship or association (in the real world or online) which may have implications for the safeguarding of children in the academy so that an appropriate risk assessment can be carried out. Please seek advice from the Academy Safeguarding Lead and/or Trust HR Manager if appropriate.

12.8 It is acknowledged that colleagues may have genuine friendships and social contact with parents of pupils, independent of the professional relationship. Colleagues should, however, exercise professional judgement and seek advice if necessary, and be aware that behaviour outside of school can impact on suitability to continue in employment with Co-op Academies Trust. Colleagues must not contact pupils (or parents on school-related business) from their private email address or social media accounts: everything must go via agreed work-based communication channels.

### **13. Recruitment and other employment matters**

13.1 In accordance with the Trust's Equality, Diversity & Inclusion policy, colleagues must take care that they are not open to any charge of discrimination in recruitment or employment practices, by fully adhering to the Trust's Safer Recruitment policy.

13.2 To avoid any possible accusation of bias, colleagues must not be involved in selection and appointment processes where they are related to an applicant or have a close personal or business relationship with them. They should declare an interest where there is a potential conflict of interest in such cases.

13.3 Work decisions should be objective and always based on merit. Colleagues must not be involved in decisions relating to discipline, promotion or pay for any colleague who is a relative, or with whom they have a close personal or business relationship.

13.4 If there are exceptional reasons why 12.1 to 12.3 should not be complied with, or any doubt as to how to proceed, advice must be sought from the Chief Education Officer or Trust CEO, who will take professional advice before acting.

### **14. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

14.1 The Trust values variety and individual differences, and aims to create a culture, environment and practices at all levels which encompass acceptance, respect and inclusion. Colleagues must ensure that they read and adhere to the Trust's Equality, Diversity & Inclusion policy and Dignity at Work Procedure, and any related academy policy or guidance, and adhere to all related legal requirements, such as the Equalities Act and the Human Rights Act.

14.2 All colleagues, pupils, governors, parents/carers contractors, partners, trade union representatives and members of the public must be treated equally and in a way that creates mutual respect, they must not be discriminated against on grounds of ethnicity, gender, pregnancy or maternity, disability, age, religion or belief, marriage or civil partnership status, gender identity or sexual orientation.

### **15. Dress and personal appearance**

15.1 All colleagues act as ambassadors for the Trust and its academies, and are role models to pupils/students. They must therefore maintain a professional standard of dress and appearance that is appropriate or required for the workplace and to the work being undertaken. Colleagues must be clean and tidy and ensure good personal hygiene.

15.2 Where particular clothing is provided for health, safety and hygiene and/or uniform purposes it must be worn, this includes name badges.

15.3 Where an academy has adopted local guidelines on dress and personal appearance, this should be adhered to by all colleagues.

## **16. Health & Safety**

16.1 Colleagues are required at all times to observe and work to Trust and academy Health and Safety Policies and in accordance with safe systems of work, regulations and codes of practice, and relevant Health and Safety law.

## **17. Criminal convictions**

17.1 Under the terms of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) order 1975 (as amended in 2013), colleagues must disclose details of any unspent convictions, cautions, reprimands, bind-overs and final warnings they may have, including any criminal proceedings pending against them, with the exception of any criminal history that is protected or “filtered” (see Annex 2 of the Trust’s Safer Recruitment Policy). Failure to disclose such convictions and to comply with any of the above constitutes possible gross misconduct and may result in disciplinary action including the possibility of summary dismissal without notice.

17.2 Colleagues whose work involves driving must declare any motoring offences to their Headteacher/Principal / Chief Education Officer or Trust CEO.

17.3 Colleagues who have access to children or young people as part of their work are absolutely required to report any convictions whatsoever to their Headteacher/Principal / Chief Education Officer / Trust CEO. In this respect, colleagues must provide information of any pending criminal proceedings against them and subsequent cautions or convictions. See also section 12.

## **18. Drugs and alcohol**

18.1 Trust colleagues must attend work in a condition to undertake their duties in a safe manner.

18.2 The consumption of alcohol, illegal drugs or “legal highs” impairs performance and may constitute a health and safety risk and interfere with that person’s health and/or work performance. Where it is evident during working time or on academy premises that a person is under the influence or has detectably taken these substances or there is other substantial reason to believe this to be the case this will be regarded as potential gross misconduct. If the person has an underlying substance related problem this will be dealt with under the appropriate policy.

18.3 Any consumption of legal drugs (i.e. prescription or over the counter drugs) which impairs performance must be discussed with the Headteacher/Principal / Chief Education Officer / Trust CEO.

18.4 Trust Board members believe that consuming alcohol at any time when supervising young people or on school premises is inappropriate and may be regarded as an act of gross misconduct. Exceptions to this will be agreed in advance and notified to colleagues by the Headteacher/Principal / Chief Education Officer / Trust CEO for events such as colleague end of term gatherings and PTA functions.

18.5 Zero alcohol is the expectation when driving on school business.

18.6 Likewise the use of illegal substances will not be tolerated and will result in the Headteacher/Principal, Chief Education Officer / Trust CEO or Chair of Trust Board / Local Governing Body reporting the matter to the police.

18.7 Smoking by colleagues is prohibited on any site leased to, or operated by, Co-op Academies Trust. If colleagues find it necessary to smoke, they are actively encouraged to do so away from school boundaries and out of sight of pupils and, wherever possible, parents and the public.

18.8 The use of electronic smoking devices (vaping) on any site leased to, or operated by Co-op Academies Trust is prohibited and deemed to be covered by Section 18.7 of this policy.

18.9 Where an academy has adopted a local policy on drugs and alcohol, this supersedes it. However, an academy may have in place operational processes to support this policy.

## **19. General conduct**

19.1 Colleagues must obey lawful instructions and always act in a way that will not adversely affect the Trust or an academy's legal position. Colleagues are expected to promote the principles contained in this Code of Conduct by self-example and to demonstrate respect for others.

19.2 Trust Board members expect all colleagues to exercise sound personal judgement, to take account of the views of others and to take individual responsibility to decide a personal view on any issue arising in the course of their employment.

19.3 Colleagues requiring further information or requiring advice concerning the appropriate course of action to adopt in any situation, should contact their Line Manager, Headteacher/Principal, Chief Education Officer or the Trust CEO.

19.4 This Code of Conduct should be read in conjunction with its appendices and with any other codes of practice or policies that relate to colleague conduct and/or workplace or system security policies and procedures.

## **20. Review**

The Code of Conduct will be viewed at least bi-annually, and kept under review in the light of legislation, and recommendations and guidance issued nationally in relation to standards of conduct in public life, and revised as necessary.

# Electronic Communications Policy

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Trust and its academies have a range of e-communication systems in place (including e-mail, Internet, intranet, mobile and landline telephones). These enable us to provide:
- Effective and efficient services to children, parents and other stakeholders
  - Effective communication between colleagues, parents, children and other stakeholders
  - Flexible and reliable communication channels to allow convenient and far-reaching access to services
- 1.2 It is important that these systems are used and managed effectively in order to maximise their benefits. However, we also recognise that people lead complex and busy lives and greater flexibility around the use of the communication systems at work, e.g. to address personal matters, will help to support colleagues' work-life balance needs.
- 1.3 This document sets out the Trust's expectations of you when using any form of electronic communication, including but not limited to telephone, e-mail, Internet and Intranet.
- 1.4 This policy sets out:
- Who is covered by the policy and the circumstances when the policy applies (the scope);
  - Our expectations of you when using the Trust's e-communications systems;
  - Monitoring arrangements;
  - The law surrounding electronic communications;
  - Good practice guidance.

## 2.0 AIMS

- 2.1 This policy aims to:
- Set out the Trust's expectations of all users of the Trust / academy's electronic communication systems, including e-mail, Internet, Intranet and telephones;
  - Provide a mechanism that maintains and promotes effective, consistent and legal use of electronic communications across the Trust;
  - Establish and support a balance between protecting the Trust's interests and respecting your right to carry out your duties with regard for privacy;
  - While supporting your development and work life balance by allowing reasonable and appropriate personal use of the Trust's e-communications systems.

## 3.0 SCOPE

- 3.1 The policy applies to the use of equipment, systems and/or networks belonging to, accessed or leased by the Trust or its academies, and also the use of wireless networks, and covers;
- Colleagues of Co-op Academies Trust and of any academy which forms part of the Trust
  - All other people acting for, or on behalf of, any of the above, including those undertaking activities on an unpaid or voluntary basis e.g. work experience or shadowing.
- 3.2 The policy applies to the use of the Trust and / or academy systems, equipment which is owned or leased and/or networks at any time during and outside work hours whether on the Trust or academy premises or working at remote locations including home.
- 3.3 Where equipment is provided by the Sponsor, the Sponsor's policies should be referred to with

respect to use of that equipment.

#### 4.0 PROTOCOL

- 4.1 This protocol sets out the minimum expectations when using the Trust and / or academy e-communication systems however it is not exclusive or exhaustive. Failure to comply with these requirements may be considered to be abuse or misuse of e-communications systems.
- 4.2 Passwords and login details must remain confidential.
- 4.3 Access privileges to the Trust and academy electronic systems are granted where appropriate to allow you to perform effectively. Administrative privileges are restricted and you must not use or attempt to use these to:
- Install software unless specifically authorised to do so;
  - Introduce viruses or other malicious software.
- 4.4 The Trust and its academies' e-communications systems must not be used to:
- Store, send or distribute messages or material which may be perceived by the recipient as:
    - Aggression, threats, abuse or obscenities;
    - Sexually suggestive;
    - Defamatory;
    - Sexually explicit;
    - Discriminatory – whether it be comments, remarks or jokes;
    - Material which the sender knows, or ought to have known, would cause offence to others.
  - Act in a way which contravenes the Code of Conduct, other policies or the law or is likely to bring the Sponsor, Trust or an academy into disrepute;
  - Disclose sensitive information or personal data to unapproved persons or organisations;
  - Intentionally access or download any material containing sexual, discriminatory, offensive or illegal material;
  - Participate in on-line gambling including lotteries;
  - Participate in on-line auctions unless authorised to do for work-related matters;
  - Originate or participate in e-mail chain letters or similar types of communication;
  - Participate in chat rooms / forums unless this is work related / for professional development purposes.
- 4.5 If you accidentally access inappropriate material on the intranet or by e-mail disconnect immediately and inform your manager.
- 4.6 Occasional appropriate and reasonable personal use of e-mail and the Internet, and IT equipment, is permitted provided such use of the Trust / academy systems:
- Is restricted to your own time and outside core hours;
  - Doesn't interfere with the performance of duties including staffing receptions;
  - Doesn't adversely impact on the performance of the Trust or an academy's e-communication systems or the network;
  - Does not involve storing private information or information/data not connected to normal duties;
  - Is not for the purpose of furthering outside business interests;
  - Doesn't contravene the requirements of the Trust's Code of Conduct, other Trust policies or the law.

***Remember that misuse of the e-communication systems belonging to, or associated with, Co-op Academies Trust or any of its academies may breach the Staff Code of Conduct, other Trust policies and/or the law and may lead to civil, criminal or disciplinary action including dismissal.***

## **5.0 MONITORING AND RECORDING OF THE E-COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS**

- 5.1 Authorised officers or colleagues of the Trust's/ academy's ICT providers may at any time monitor the use of the Trust's / an academy's e-communications systems.
- 5.2 The use of all e-communications systems particularly e-mail and the Internet is subject to recording in order to detect and deal with abuse of the systems, fault detection and so on. In some cases, monitoring (i.e. real-time observation etc.) of systems may also take place where this is necessary. Neither the Trust nor any of its academies will, without reasonable cause, examine any private material that is discovered.
- 5.3 Personal data should not be stored on the network and you should not expect 'privacy' in relation to accessing websites, personal e-mail correspondence, personal documents stored on the Trust or academy computers or networks or messages sent via the Internet, as these, in principle, are subject to the same checking procedures applied to business related access and e-mail correspondence.

## **6.0 E-COMMUNICATIONS AND THE LAW**

- 6.1 As well as being bound by the requirements of this policy, you are bound by restrictions under the law. Listed below are the key current legislative regulations that relate to electronic communications.
- Data Protection Act 2018
  - Human Rights Act 1998
  - Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA)
  - Section 160 Criminal Justice Act 1988
  - Computer Misuse Act 1990

## **7.0 COMMUNICATION OF THE POLICY**

- 7.1 Academy leaders will be responsible for ensuring that current colleagues and any new colleagues are aware of and understand this policy. They should therefore discuss the policy with teams during team brief and with new starters during induction.
- 7.2 New starters will be asked to sign to confirm that they have read and understood the E-Communications Policy.
- 7.3 Particular emphasis will be placed on ensuring that all e-communication users are aware of:
- What e-communication systems may/may not be used for;
  - What is considered to be misuse or abuse;
  - What constitutes offensive or inappropriate material as set out at paragraph 4.4;
  - The type of action that is likely to bring the Trust / the academy into disrepute;
  - Individuals' responsibilities relating to the use of their own user login and password.
- 7.4 Temporary staff, including those on temporary contracts, agency workers, unpaid workers or volunteers and consultants who use e-communications systems will be asked to confirm that they have read and understood the Trust's / academy's E-Communications Policy before their IT account is activated.
- 7.5 The policy will be reviewed regularly.

## 8.0 GOOD PRACTICE GUIDANCE

### 8.1 Internet

The Internet is a source of a great deal of useful information however it also contains material that is offensive and/or illegal. The Trust and academy systems have a 'Firewall' and other systems that help to protect against viruses and hackers, as well as software which blocks access to inappropriate websites. The content of the Internet changes rapidly so the software will not detect all inappropriate sites.

#### **Do**

- ✓ limit personal use of the Internet to reasonable levels and own time
- ✓ take advice from line managers before downloading large files or sending large amounts of data via a web-link – to avoid adverse impact on the performance of the systems these transactions can be scheduled for off-peak times
- ✓ represent yourself honestly and accurately, including your role in the Trust / the academy when using the Internet to participate in social networking
- ✓ if you accidentally access inappropriate material including unexpected 'pop-ups' disconnect immediately and inform your line manager

#### **Don't**

- ☒ access or download material which is offensive, sexually explicit, discriminatory or illegal
- ☒ use the Internet for personal use during core work time even if minimised on the screen
- ☒ use systems to participate in on-line gambling or on-line auctions
- ☒ download music or video files unless for the Trust / academy purposes
- ☒ use 'peer to peer' or other file sharing services except where authorised to do so

### 8.2 E-Mail

Take care when using e-mail to ensure that the language and tone cannot be misinterpreted and that the content is appropriate and accurate. Wherever possible, take steps to reduce the risk of introducing virus infection via e-mail by permanently deleting without opening any of the following:

- Messages or e-mail attachments from unknown sources;
- Unsolicited e-mails;
- E-mails without a subject heading or with a subject heading which looks suspicious.

Concerns that a virus may have entered an academy's system should be reported to the academy's IT Technician.

#### **Do**

- ✓ Use work email address for work-related business
- ✓ limit personal use of e-mail to reasonable levels and your own time
- ✓ ensure that your messages are relevant and appropriate to targeted recipients – do not use 'blanket' or 'all-user' e-mails
- ✓ delete messages that are no longer needed as soon as possible
- ✓ save important e-mails e.g. as text documents in Word
- ✓ try to answer e-mails quickly, politely and professionally

#### **Don't**

- ☒ use personal email address to contact parents or pupils/students
- ☒ use e-mail to circulate material which is offensive, illegal, discriminatory or sexually explicit
- ☒ use e-mail as a substitute for good verbal communication
- ☒ use words in CAPITAL letters; this can be seen as 'shouting' in e-mail
- ☒ send personal information or confidential or sensitive material using external e-mail – it may be accessed unlawfully. This may include bulk forwarding of e-mails to your own external account.



- ✓ beware of ‘e-mail rage’ - e-mail is quick and easy to use and can encourage ill-considered and even offensive messages
  - ✓ include a subject heading in every e-mail so that the person receiving it knows what it is about
  - ✓ type e-mails carefully making sure that grammar and spelling are correct - an e-mail is just like a letter and you can expect it to have the same effect
  - ✓ remember that e-mails have the same legal status as letters and need wording with care
  - ✓ include a disclaimer on all non-work related e-mails that ‘this e-mail represents the personal view of the sender and is not sent on behalf of Co-op Academies trust or any of its academies.’
  - ✓ use plain text e-mail messages - this means smaller electronic message sizes and reduces some virus risks
  - ✓ inform management immediately if you receive or see any offensive or sexually explicit material on the intranet or in e-mail messages at work.
- ☒ originate or participate in e-mail chain letters or messages including seasonal greetings etc.
  - ☒ use the Trust / academy e-mail system to distribute material of a party political nature.
  - ☒ expect to receive a response to emails outside of normal working hours.

### 8.3 Social media guidelines

Most of us will use social media in our personal lives, and increasingly our professional ones too. In fact, social media is a great tool for connecting with our community, parents and fellow colleagues to share the great things we’re doing and our own successes. We’ve also got a set of [social media principles](#) that we ask everyone engaging with us on social media to use - including parents and members of the community.

#### Crucial bits

We all need to be responsible for what we put on social media. Even on our personal accounts, and in our private time. Whatever your privacy settings, what you post on social media is never really private. This is particularly important if your profile includes that you work for the Co-op Academies, or people you’re connected with would know that.

It might go without saying, but if you post comments or images on social media that brings the Trust into disrepute we’ll deal with it as we would if you’d done it at work. This means we may follow the disciplinary process. This is also true if you’ve ‘liked’ or shared something someone else has posted that could be deemed offensive, discriminatory, bullying or threatening. If you wouldn’t say it or behave like that in work, don’t do it online. We may ask you to remove online content that’s not in line with this policy.

You also need to be careful not to share sensitive information about the Co-op Academies online. At the extreme end, this includes sharing anything that compromises the safety of any student/colleague, personal data or confidential information or making comments/posts that could damage our Co-op’s brand or reputation.

Just remember that you still need to follow our other policies when you’re posting things online. They can all be found [here](#), it is your responsibility to make sure your social media posts are in line with what’s acceptable at the Co-op Academies Trust.

Whilst we all accept working in education as a vocation, we can sometimes forget it's also a lifestyle that carries with it lifestyle choices. It is important to remember that we are always representing our academies, Trust and even wider education. Even 'off duty', out of academy hours.

We may wish to use social media in the same way as our friends and family but we have to accept that we have to, always, have self-imposed limitations when presenting ourselves publicly. Things they may do freely, we cannot as images and comments will be judged in the context of your role.

Stating variants of 'my opinions are my own' does not give licence to speak in a way that could be offensive, discriminatory or threatening in nature. You are still representing the academy and Trust. That said, if you're commenting on something that the Trust has an interest in, then just make it clear that your opinion is your own and you're not speaking on behalf of your employer.

That's not to say you can't express your personal views online, just do so respectfully.

Just so everyone's clear, any breach of this policy may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including summary dismissal.

### **Brand/identity**

When you're using social media you should always do so as yourself, whether it is personal or professional - unless you're managing the official academy account. There should be only one official account, we want you to avoid departmental accounts, house/team accounts or anything that uses the Co-op identity or name.

The Co-op identity, for which the Trust has a legal agreement to use as part of our academy logos, is heavily managed and you shouldn't use it as part of your social media profile or personal branding.

### **Things to think about**

If you're using social media as part of your job, or you're responsible for an official academy social media account, the policy still remains the same and the rules apply.

It's worth going through your social media profiles to ensure you didn't do anything silly in the past that remains in the public domain. If you think you've posted something you shouldn't have, let us know as soon as possible so we can get it sorted.

If you've got a concern or complaint about work, we want you to tell us and you must not put it on social media. Speak to your line-manager or follow the Whistleblowing Policy or Grievance Process.

### **If you need further support**

If you've seen posts that contain inappropriate comments or images, contact Joe Dundas [joe.dundas@coop.co.uk](mailto:joe.dundas@coop.co.uk) or if it's a safeguarding concern, you need to speak to your Designated Safeguarding Lead.

If managers need advice about dealing with HR issues involving social media they should contact their regional HR support team.

## Colleague Information Systems Declaration

To ensure that colleagues are fully aware of their professional responsibilities when using information systems, they are asked to sign this declaration. Colleagues should consult the Trust's Code of Conduct and Electronic Communication Policy for further information and clarification.

- The information systems are the property of Co-op Academies Trust and its academies and I understand that it may be a criminal offence to use a computer for a purpose not permitted by its owner.
- I will ensure that my information systems use will always be compatible with my professional role.
- I understand that academy information systems may only be used for private purposes as outlined in the Code of Conduct (including e-communications policy).
- I understand that the Trust / academy may monitor my information systems and Internet use to ensure policy compliance.
- I will respect system security and I will not disclose any password or security information to anyone other than an appropriate system manager.
- I will not install any software or hardware without permission.
- I will ensure that personal data is kept secure and is used appropriately, whether in the premises in which I usually work, taken off those premises or accessed remotely.
- I will respect copyright and intellectual property rights.
- I will report any incidents of concern regarding children's safety to the academy's e-Safety Co-ordinator or the Designated Child Protection Co-ordinator.
- I will ensure that any electronic communications with pupils are compatible with my professional role, and in line with any guidance issued on e-communications and the use of social media.
- I will promote e-safety with pupils in my care and will help them to develop a responsible attitude to system use and to the content they access or create.

The Trust / the academy may exercise its right to monitor the use of the Trust's / academy's information systems, including Internet access, the interception of e-mail and the deletion of inappropriate materials where it believes unauthorised use of the Trust's / academy's information system may be taking place, or the system may be being used for criminal purposes or for storing unauthorised or unlawful text, imagery or sound.

**In signing this document, I am confirming that I have read & understood:**

- **The Code of Conduct (Issue 3)**
- **The Electronic Communications Policy (Appendix A of the Code of Conduct)**
- **The Colleague Information Systems Declaration (see above - Appendix B of the Code of Conduct)**

**Colleague's name (print):**

**Signature:**

**Date:**