

# SAFER CARE CODE OF CONDUCT

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July 2024



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## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Within this policy 'we' and 'us' means the Federation.
- 1.2 For the purposes of this policy, 'adults' and 'staff' are defined as staff, volunteers, contractors, agency staff, directors and governors involved with the Federation.
- 1.3 The directors will foster a culture of the highest professional standards. This code of conduct sets out the standards expected and the duty upon staff, volunteers, contractors, agency staff, governors and directors to abide by it. This policy should also be read in conjunction with:  
[https://www.saferrecruitmentconsortium.org/files/uqd/f576a8\\_0d079cbe69ea458e9e99fe462e447084.pdf](https://www.saferrecruitmentconsortium.org/files/uqd/f576a8_0d079cbe69ea458e9e99fe462e447084.pdf)

- 1.4 All adults involved with us have a duty to keep students safe and to protect them from physical and emotional harm. This duty is, in part, exercised through the development of respectful, caring and professional relationships between adults and students, and by role modelling from adults that demonstrate personal and professional integrity, maturity and good judgement.
- 1.5 This code of conduct will help to safeguard adults from being maliciously, falsely or mistakenly suspected or accused of professional misconduct in relation to students.
- 1.6 Whilst much of the content of this policy is pertinent for students in our age range, it is good practice to note the guidance in daily contact with all young people, regardless of age.
- 1.7 Adults must feel able to raise issues of concern and everyone must fully recognise the duty to do so, particularly in terms of safeguarding. A member of staff who, in good faith, 'whistle-blows' or makes a public interest disclosure will have the protection of the relevant legislation. Further information is in the Federation Whistle-Blowing Policy.
- 1.8 This code of conduct cannot provide a complete checklist of what is, or is not, appropriate behaviour for staff. However, it does highlight behaviour that is illegal, inappropriate or inadvisable in relation to students.
- 1.9 There will be occasions and circumstances in which staff have to make decisions or take action in the best interests of the student where no specific guidance has been given. Adults are expected to make responsible and informed judgements about their own behaviour in order to secure the best interests and welfare of the students in their charge.
- 1.10 Breaches of the standards set out in the code of conduct will be dealt with through the Federation Staff Disciplinary Policy. Breaches of the law and other professional guidelines could also result in criminal action and/or other proceedings including barring by the Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) from working in regulated activity, or, for acts of serious misconduct, prohibition from teaching by the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA).
- 1.11 Where an allegation of abuse is made against a member of staff, director or volunteer, we will follow the guidance set out in the Federation Staff Allegations against Staff Policy.

## 2 PRINCIPLES OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

- 2.1 All adults as appropriate to the role and/or job description of the individual, must:
  - maintain high standards in their attendance and punctuality;
  - never use inappropriate or offensive language in school;
  - show tolerance and respect for the rights of others;
  - not undermine British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
  - place the well-being and learning of students at the centre of their professional practice;

- have high expectations for all students, be committed to addressing underachievement, and work to help students progress regardless of their background and personal circumstances;
- treat students fairly and with respect, take their knowledge, views, opinions and feelings seriously, valuing diversity and individuality;
- model the characteristics they are trying to inspire in students, including enthusiasm for learning, a spirit of enquiry, honesty, tolerance, social responsibility, patience, and a genuine concern for other people;
- respond sensitively to the differences in the home backgrounds and circumstances of students, recognising the key role that parents and guardians play in students' education;
- seek to work in partnership with parents and guardians, respecting their views and promoting understanding and co-operation to support the young person's learning and well-being in and out of the Federation;
- not express personal beliefs in a way that exploits students' vulnerability or might lead them to break the law;
- reflect on their own practice, develop their skills, knowledge and expertise, and adapt appropriately to learn with and from colleagues.
- adhere to the Teachers' Standards.
- safeguard students from harm, and to report any concerns they have, this includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse, and neglect.

### 3 CONFIDENTIALITY

- 3.1 Members of staff and directors may have access to confidential information about students in order to undertake their responsibilities. In some circumstances the information may be highly sensitive. Confidential or personal information about a student or their family must never be disclosed to anyone other than on a need-to-know basis. In circumstances where the student's identity does not need to be disclosed, the information should be used anonymously. Information must never be used to intimidate, humiliate, blackmail or embarrass others.
- 3.2 There are some circumstances in which a member of staff may be expected to share information about a student, for example when abuse is alleged or suspected. In such cases, individuals have a duty to pass information on without delay to those with designated student protection responsibilities.
- 3.3 Confidential information about students must be held securely in line with the Federation Staff ICT Policy. Confidential information about students must not be held off our sites other than on equipment that is appropriately secure. Information must only be stored for the length of time necessary to discharge the task for which it is required. If a member of staff is in any doubt about the storage of sharing of information s/he should seek guidance from a senior leader.
- 3.4 Any media or legal enquiries should be passed to a senior leader.
- 3.5 One-to-one situations and meetings with students:  
Staff will observe proper boundaries with students 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.

- 3.6 Staff working in one-to-one situations are more vulnerable to allegations. Staff must recognise this possibility, planning and conducting such meetings accordingly. Every attempt should be made to ensure that the safety and security needs of both staff and students are met. Where such a meeting is demonstrably unavoidable, staff 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
- 3.7 Pre-arranged meetings with students away from our premises or on the Federation site when the Federation is not in session are not permitted unless approval is obtained from their parent/guardian and the Executive Principal or other senior leader with delegated authority.
- 3.8 Personal contact details should not be exchanged between staff and students. This includes social media profiles.
- 3.9 If a staff member is concerned at any point that an interaction between themselves and a student may be misinterpreted, or if a staff member is concerned at any point about a fellow staff member and a student, this should be reported in line with the procedures set out in our child protection and safeguarding policies.

#### 4 PROPRIETY, BEHAVIOUR AND APPEARANCE

- 4.1 All staff have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of students. They should adopt high standards of personal conduct in order to maintain the confidence and respect of their peers, students and the public in general.
- 4.2 A person's dress and appearance are matters of personal choice and self-expression. However, adults must ensure they are dressed safely and appropriately for the tasks they undertake, and in line with the Federation Staff Dress Code Policy. Those who dress or appear in a manner which could be considered as inappropriate could render themselves vulnerable to criticism or allegations of misconduct.
- 4.3 Personal property of a sexually explicit nature such as books, magazines or videos must not be brought onto or stored on our premises.
- 4.4 Adults should not consume or be under the influence of alcohol or any substance, including prescribed medication, which may affect their ability to care for children.
- 4.5 Staff should be aware that their behaviour either inside or outside of the workplace could compromise their position within the Federation in relation to the protection of children, loss of trust and confidence, or bringing the reputation and standing of the Federation, themselves, or other members of the Federation community into disrepute.

- 4.6 This includes, but is not limited to, relevant criminal offences, such as violence or sexual misconduct, as well as negative comments about the Federation on social media. In particular, criminal offences that involve violence or possession or use of illegal drugs or sexual misconduct are likely to be regarded as unacceptable and could lead to dismissal.

## 5 SEXUAL CONTACT WITH CHILDREN AND ABUSE OF TRUST

- 5.1 Any sexual behaviour, whether homosexual or heterosexual, by a member of staff, volunteer or Governor with or towards a child or young person is illegal. Children and young people are protected by the same laws as adults in relation to non-consensual sexual behaviour. They are additionally protected by specific legal provisions regardless of whether there is consent or not. All adults working in the Federation who have contact with students are in positions of trust. The Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 2000 specifically established a criminal offence of the abuse of trust in relation to teachers and others who are in a relationship of trust with 16-18 year olds.
- 5.2 Sexual behaviour includes non-contact activities, such as causing a child or young person to engage in or watch sexual activity or the production of indecent images of children. 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (HM Government July 2018) defines sexual abuse as 'forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening'.
- 5.3 There are occasions when adults embark on a course of behaviour known as 'grooming' where the sole purpose is to gain the trust of a child or young person and manipulate that relationship so that sexual abuse can take place. Staff and volunteers should be aware that conferring special attention and favour upon a student might be construed as being part of a 'grooming' process, which is a criminal offence, and constitutes gross misconduct.
- 5.4 A relationship between an adult and a student cannot be a relationship between equals. There is potential for exploitation and harm of students, and all adults have a responsibility to ensure that the unequal balance of power is not used for personal advantage or gratification. It is important to recognise that women as well as men may abuse a position of trust.

## 6 INFATUATIONS AND CRUSHES

- 6.1 We must recognise that a student may be strongly attracted to an adult and/or develop a sexual infatuation. An adult who becomes aware that a student may be infatuated with them or a colleague, should report this without delay to a senior leader so that appropriate action can be taken. The situation will be taken seriously and the adult should be careful to ensure that no encouragement of any kind is given to the student. It should also be recognised that careless and insensitive reactions may provoke false accusations. Whilst the risk of infatuation is not limited to younger members of staff, newly qualified teachers and apprentices must recognise their vulnerability to adolescent infatuation.

- 6.2 Examples of situations which must be reported are given below:
- where a member of staff or volunteer is concerned that they might be developing a relationship with a student which could have the potential to represent an abuse of trust;
  - where a member of staff or volunteer is concerned that a student is becoming attracted to them, or that there is a developing attachment or dependency;
  - where a member of staff or volunteer is concerned that actions or words have been misunderstood or misconstrued by a student such that an abuse of trust might be wrongly suspected by others;
  - where a member of staff or volunteer is concerned about the apparent development of a relationship by another adults, or receives information about such a relationship.

## 7 HONESTY, INTEGRITY AND GIFTS

- 7.1 Staff should maintain high standards of honesty and integrity in their role. This includes when dealing with students, handling money, claiming expenses and using Federation property and facilities.
- 7.2 Staff will not accept bribes. Staff need to take care that they do not accept any gift that might be construed by others as a bribe, or lead the giver to expect preferential treatment. Please refer to the Federation Stakeholder Financial Management Policy for further information, including guidance on when gifts must be declared.
- 7.3 Staff will ensure that all information given to the Federation is correct. This should include:
- Background information (including any past or current investigations/cautions related to conduct outside of work)
  - Qualifications
  - Professional experience
- Where there are any updates to the information provided to the Federation, the member of staff will advise the school as such 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 member of staff's employment.
- 7.4 Personal gifts must not be given to students. This could be misinterpreted as a gesture either to bribe, or single out the young person. It might be perceived that a 'favour' of some kind is expected in return. Any reward given to a student should be consistent with the Federation's Behaviour Management Policies, recorded, and not based on favouritism.

## 8 COMMUNICATION, SOCIAL CONTACT AND SOCIAL MEDIA

- 8.1 Adults should not establish or seek to establish social contact with students or their parents via any means outside of school, including social media. They will not make any efforts to find students' or parents' social media profiles.
- 8.2 If a student or parent seeks to establish social contact, or if this occurs coincidentally, the member of staff should exercise their professional judgement in that moment and then inform a senior leader as soon as possible. This applies equally to physical social contact, and electronic social contact, in or outside of the Federation day, including via social media.
- 8.3 Adults must not give their personal details such as home/mobile phone number, home or e-mail address to students unless the need to do so is agreed with a member of senior leadership team (SLT).
- 8.4 We understand that staff whose children are students at the Federation may have social contact with students and their parents if their children become friends. We advise staff in this situation to use their professional judgement to ensure there are boundaries in place between their role as a parent and that of a staff member. Examples of simple actions to consider to protect yourself:
- If your child and their friends arrange to meet at your house, contact their parent/s so they are aware.
  - If giving lifts, again ensure the parents are aware.
  - If, as a parent of a Federation student, you connect with other parents of students on social media, please be mindful of the audience that views your posts or comments. It is important to ensure that your online activity does not undermine or compromise your role within the Federation.
- 8.5 Staff and volunteers' social media profiles should not be made available to students. If they have a personal profile on social media sites, they should consider not using their full name, as students may be able to find them. Staff and volunteers could consider using a first and middle name instead, and set public profiles to private.

## 9 PHYSICAL CONTACT AND PERSONAL PRIVACY

- 9.1 There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for staff to have physical contact with students and children, but it is crucial that they only do so in ways appropriate to their professional role.
- 9.2 When physical contact is made with students or children this should be in response to their needs at the time, of limited duration and appropriate given their age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity and background. It is not possible to be specific about the appropriateness of each physical contact, since an action that is appropriate with one student in one set of circumstances may be inappropriate in another, or with a different student or child.

- 9.3 Physical contact should never be secretive or casual, or for the gratification of the adult, or represent a misuse of authority. If a member of staff or volunteer believes that an action could be misinterpreted, the incident and circumstances should be reported.
- 9.4 Physical contact which occurs regularly with an individual is likely to raise questions unless the justification for this is part of a formally agreed plan (for example in relation to students with SEN or physical disabilities). Any such contact should be the subject of an agreed and open Federation policy and be subject to review. Where feasible, staff should seek the student's permission before initiating contact. Staff should listen, observe and take note of the student's reaction or feelings and – so far as is possible - use a level of contact which is acceptable to the student for the minimum time necessary.
- 9.5 There may be occasions when a distressed student needs comfort and reassurance. This may include age-appropriate physical contact. Staff should remain self-aware at all times in order that their contact is not threatening, intrusive or subject to misinterpretation.
- 9.6 Where a member of staff has a particular concern about the need to provide this type of care and reassurance s/he should seek further advice from a senior leader.
- 9.7 Some staff, for example those who teach PE and games, or who provide music tuition, will on occasions have to initiate physical contact with students in order to support a student so they can perform a task safely, to demonstrate the use of a particular piece of equipment/instrument or assist them with an exercise. This should be done with the student's agreement. Contact under these circumstances should be for the minimum time necessary to complete the activity and take place in an open environment. Staff should remain sensitive to any discomfort expressed verbally or non-verbally by the student.
- 9.8 Students are entitled to respect and privacy when changing clothes or taking a shower. However, there needs to be an appropriate level of supervision in order to safeguard students, satisfy health and safety considerations, and ensure that bullying or teasing does not occur. This supervision should be appropriate to the needs and age of the students concerned and sensitive to the potential for embarrassment.
- 9.9 Staff with a job description which includes intimate care duties will have appropriate training. No other member of staff or volunteer should be involved in intimate care duties except in an emergency. Further information is found within the Federation Student Intimate Care Policy.

## 10 BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT AND PHYSICAL INTERVENTION

- 10.1 All students have a right to be treated with respect and dignity. Corporal punishment is unlawful. Staff and volunteers must not use any form of degrading treatment to punish a student. The use of sarcasm, humiliating, demeaning or insensitive comments towards students is not acceptable in any situation. Shouting aggressively or hectoring is not acceptable in any situation. Deliberately intimidating students by overwhelming physical presence is not acceptable in any situation.



- 10.2 The circumstances in which staff can physically intervene with a student or child are covered by the 1996 Education Act. Staff may legitimately intervene to prevent them from committing a criminal offence, injuring themselves or others, causing damage to property, engaging in behaviour prejudicial to good order and to maintain good order and discipline. Staff should have regard to the health and safety of themselves and others. Under no circumstances should physical force be used as a form of punishment. The use of unwarranted physical force is likely to constitute a criminal offence.
- 10.3 We have trained first aiders/appointed persons. Staff must have had the appropriate training before administering first aid or medication, except in an emergency.

## 11 TRANSPORTING STUDENTS

- 11.1 In certain situations, e.g. out-of-Federation activities, staff, volunteers or Governors may agree to transport students or children. Wherever possible, transport arrangements should be made in advance by a designated member of staff. Wherever possible and practicable, transport should be provided other than in private vehicles, with at least one adult additional to the driver acting as an escort.
- 11.2 If staff offer transport to students outside of their normal working duties, for example in an emergency or where not doing so would mean the child may be at risk, they should first inform their manager and contact the child's parent(s).
- 11.3 Adults should ensure that their behaviour is safe and that the transport arrangements and the vehicle meet all legal requirements. They must ensure that the vehicle is roadworthy and appropriately insured and that the maximum capacity is not exceeded. We have an insurance policy in place to cover use of staff members' own vehicles when driven on our business.
- 11.4 In all instances, it is advisable for students to sit in the back of the vehicle, rather than alongside the driver.

## 12 EDUCATIONAL VISITS AND FEDERATION CLUBS

- 12.1 Staff and volunteers should take particular care when supervising students in the less formal atmosphere of an educational visit, particularly in a residential setting, or extra-curricular activity. Staff and volunteers remain in a position of trust and the same standards of conduct apply. Please refer to the Federation Trips and Visits policy.

## 13 HOME VISITS

- 13.1 All work with pupils and parents should usually be undertaken in the school or setting or other recognised workplace. There are however occasions, in response to an urgent, planned or specific situation or job role, where it is necessary to make one-off or regular home visits; e.g., to undertake a welfare visit.

- 13.2 A risk assessment should be undertaken prior to any planned home visit taking place. The assessment should include an evaluation of any known factors regarding the student, parents/carers and any others living in the household. Consideration should be given to any circumstances which might render the staff member becoming more vulnerable to an allegation being made e.g. hostility, child protection concerns, complaints or grievances.
- 13.3 Specific thought should be given to visits outside of 'office hours' or in remote or secluded locations. Wherever possible, home visits should not be made alone.

## 14 CURRICULUM

- 14.1 Many areas of the curriculum can include or raise a subject matter which is sexually explicit, or of an otherwise sensitive nature. Care should be taken to ensure that resource materials cannot be misinterpreted and clearly relate to the learning outcomes identified by the lesson plan. This plan should highlight particular areas of risk and sensitivity.
- 14.2 The curriculum can sometimes include or lead to unplanned discussion about subject matter of a sexually explicit or otherwise sensitive nature. Responding to questions can require careful judgement and staff must take guidance in these circumstances from a senior member of staff.
- 14.3 The Federation has sex education policies which form part of this code of conduct and should be read in conjunction with it.

## 15 PHOTOGRAPHY, VIDEOS AND OTHER CREATIVE ARTS

- 15.1 We are obliged to comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 when we take or publish photographs of students. We will always try to act in the best interest of students and, as far as we reasonably can, we will take parental preferences into account. For detailed guidance please read the Federation Student Photography Policy and the Primary Staff EYFS under 8 Mobile Phone and Camera Policy.

## 16 ACCEPTABLE USE OF TECHNOLOGY

- 16.1 We have a separate Federation Staff ICT Policy which forms part of this code of conduct and should be read in conjunction with it.
- 16.2 Staff will not use technology in school, or school technology, 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. Deliberately doing so will be treated as gross misconduct and may be a criminal offence.
- 16.3 Inappropriate emails between staff and students are prohibited at any time, and between any email addresses (including either adult or student personal email addresses). Staff should only use their professional email for contact between students or parents.

16.4 There are no circumstances that will justify adults making, downloading, possessing or distributing indecent images or pseudo-images of children (child abuse images). Accessing these images, whether using the Federation's or personal equipment, on or off the premises, or making, storing or disseminating such material is illegal, is likely to lead to criminal prosecution and may result in barring from work with children and young people.

## 17 DUTY TO REPORT CONCERNS ABOUT AN INDIVIDUAL'S SUITABILITY TO WORK WITH CHILDREN

17.1 All staff, volunteers and Directors must be aware of our child protection procedures as described in the Federation Student Safeguarding Policy. Staff, volunteers and Directors must be vigilant and share concerns and report incidents.

17.2 A low-level concern is a behaviour towards a child by a member of staff that does not meet the harm threshold, is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, and may be as simple as causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt'.

17.3 There is a duty to report (including self-reporting) any incident in which an adult has or may have behaved in a way that is inconsistent with the Federation's staff code of conduct, including inappropriate behaviours inside and outside of work or online.

17.4 Staff should recognise their individual responsibility to raise any concerns regarding behaviour or conduct (including low-level concerns) that falls short of the principles outlined in this document and the setting's staff behaviour policy. It is crucial that any such concerns, including those which do not meet the harm threshold (see KCSiE), are shared responsibly and with the right person, and recorded and dealt with appropriately. Failure to report or respond to such concerns would constitute a failure in professional responsibilities to safeguard children and promote welfare.

17.5 Whistle-blowing is the mechanism by which staff can voice their concerns, made in good faith, without fear of repercussion. For further information please read the Federation's Whistle-Blowing Policy. Please also read the Federation Allegations Against Staff policy, which gives details and guidance regarding low-level concerns.

17.6 The following list of 'red flag behaviours' is not exhaustive, but gives indications of the kinds of situations which should be shared with a member of SLT:

An adult who:

- allows a student/young person to be treated badly; pretends not to know it is happening;
- gossips/shares information inappropriately;
- demonstrates inappropriate discriminatory behaviour and/or uses inappropriate language;
- dresses in a way which is inappropriate for the job role;
- does not treat students fairly - demonstrates favouritism;
- demonstrates a lack of understanding about personal and professional boundaries;

- uses their position of trust to intimidate, humiliate, threaten, coerce or undermine;
- appears to have an inappropriate social relationship with a student or students;
- appears to have special or different relationships with a student or students;
- seems to seek out unnecessary opportunities to be alone with a student.

## 18 CHILD SAFEGUARDING COMPETENCES FOR ADULTS WHO WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

18.1 The following competences are necessary:

18.2 Emotional awareness:

- aware of the range of emotions in self and others;
- demonstrates empathy for the concerns of others;
- listens to and understands directly and indirectly expressed feelings;
- encourages others to express themselves openly;
- manages strong emotions and responds constructively to the source of problems;
- listens to personal comments without becoming defensive;
- in highly stressful situations, keeps own feelings in check, takes constructive action and calms others down;
- has a range of mechanisms for dealing with stress, can recognise when to use them and does so;
- shows respect for others' feelings, views and circumstances.

18.3 Working within professional boundaries:

- accepts responsibility and accountability for own work and can define the responsibilities of others;
- recognises the limits of own authority within the role;
- seeks and uses professional support appropriately;
- understands the principle of confidentiality.

Self-awareness:

- has a balanced understanding of self and others;
- has a realistic knowledge of personal strengths and weaknesses;
- can demonstrate flexibility of approach;
- shows a realistic appreciation of the challenges of working with this client group.

18.4 Ability to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people:

- appreciates the significance of safeguarding and interprets this accurately for all individual children and young people whatever their life circumstances;
- has a good understanding of the safeguarding agenda;
- can demonstrate an ability to contribute towards a safe environment;
- is up-to-date with legislation and current events;
- can demonstrate they have promoted 'best practice';
- shows a personal commitment to safeguarding children.

## 19 LINKS TO OTHER POLICIES

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Each academy's Child Protection policy
- Catmose Primary School Child Protection Policy
- Catmose College Child Protection Policy
- Harington School Child Protection Policy
- Federation Student Safeguarding
- Federation Student Intimate Care
- Federation Student Photography
- Primary EYFS & Under 8 Photography
- Federation Staff Allegations about Staff
- Federation Stakeholder Whistle-Blowing
- Federation Staff Disciplinary
- Federation Staff Recruitment
- Federation Staff Dress Code
- Federation Staff ICT
- Federation Stakeholder Financial Management
- Federation Staff Trips and Visits