

RET Code of Conduct

RIDGEWAY EDUCATION TRUST

Approved by the Trust Board: March 2025

Review date: March 2026

Introduction

What is a Code of Conduct?

A Code of Conduct is designed to give clear guidance on the standards of behaviour all staff are expected to observe across the Ridgeway Trust ("the Trust"). The individual schools should notify staff of this code and the expectations therein. This Code of Conduct aims to protect the reputation of both employees and the Trust. It also aims to protect the rights and interests of children and young people.

This document is not intended to be exhaustive and does not replace the general requirements of the law, common sense and good conduct.

This code does not replace or take priority over the school's child protection procedures which can be found on the school website. All staff must be aware of the action that must be taken by employees when child abuse or neglect is suspected, whether inside the school, at home or elsewhere, or following any disclosure of alleged abuse. Copies of all agreed policies are available from the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead.

School staff are role models and are in a unique position of influence and must adhere to behaviour that sets a good example to all the pupils within the school. As a member of a school community, each employee has an individual responsibility to maintain their reputation and the reputation of the school, whether inside or outside working hours.

This Code of Conduct should be read in conjunction with the following policies and documents relating to conduct and behaviour, with which all individuals working in the Trust schools are expected to comply:

- Guidance for Safer Working Practices (Safer Recruitment Consortium, 2022)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (the latest version)
- Teachers Standards (DfE)
- Use of Reasonable Force Policy in Behaviour Management Policy
- School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document
- Schools' Behaviour Management Policies
- Disciplinary Procedure
- Capability Procedure
- Dealing with Allegations against Staff and Volunteers Policy
- RET and Schools' Safeguarding and Child Protection Policies
- Staff IT Acceptable Use Policy
- Anti-bullying, Harassment and Discrimination policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Gifts And Hospitality Policy
- All policies and external guidance relating to behaviour and/or conduct.
- Educational Visits Policy (school specific)
- First Aid Policy
- Use Of Images Procedure
- Online safety Policy

To whom does it apply?

This Code of Conduct applies to all employees, workers, contractors or supply workers of the Trust. For the purposes of this policy any wider groups are referred to as 'employee'.

What is my responsibility?

You must:

- read this Code along with supporting policies and guidance;
- ensure you understand it, read and comply;
- ask if there are any points that are unclear;
- use this Code of Conduct, alongside other policies and procedures mentioned above, to guide you in your role.

Breach of this Code of Conduct may lead to disciplinary action which could result in dismissal.

What are the main points?

- The public is entitled to expect the highest standards of behaviour from Trust employees.
- Employees represent the Trust and are trusted to act in a way which promotes the Trust's interests and protects its reputation.
- Employees are accountable for their actions and should ask their line manager, Headteacher, School Business Manager or Trust Central HR Team for advice if they are not sure of the appropriate action to take.
- Employees should have due regard to their own conduct and ensure they do not place themselves in a vulnerable position with students where an allegation of inappropriate behaviour could be made.

Staff / Pupil relationships

It is important that all adults working within the Trust understand:

- that the nature of their work and the responsibilities related to it place them in a position of trust. Is an offence under The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO Act) 2012 for a person aged 18 or over to have a sexual relationship with a child under 18 (or those over 18 who remain in education, such as Sixth Form) where that person is in a position of trust in respect of that child, even if the relationship is consensual.
- the term 'low level concern' as described in *KCSIE* and *Dealing With Allegations against staff and volunteers policy*. The term 'low-level' concern does not mean that it is insignificant, it means that the behaviour towards a child does not meet the harm threshold. A low-level concern is any concern – no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt' - that an adult working in or on behalf of the schools or Trust may have acted in a way that is inconsistent with the staff Code of Conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work; and

does not meet the allegations threshold or is otherwise not considered serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO.

Staff /Staff relationships

It is recognised that there will inevitably be close personal relationships at work including those that already exist and those that develop. Whilst not all such close personal relationships raise issues of conflict of interest, this is not always the case.

- Direct line management of an employee by a relative or those in a romantic relationship is to be avoided.
- Employees and Governors and Trustees should not be involved in any decisions relating to grievance, capability, discipline, promotion or pay adjustments for any other employee who is a relative or with whom they have a romantic relationship.
- If this situation arises, the employee must disclose their relationship to their line manager or Headteacher and remove themselves from any discussions relating to that individual
- Where the relationship with a line manager is the Headteacher then the Chair of Governors should be informed by the Headteacher of this personally. Where the relationship is with a member of the Central Trust leadership team the CEO should be informed and where the relationship is with the CEO the Chair of the Trust board should be informed. The Trust HR Services Lead should be consulted on how best to manage such a situation.

Dress Code

Dress should be appropriate for a professional workplace and have due regard to health and safety.

Conduct Outside of Work

Staff must not engage in conduct outside work which could damage the reputation and standing of the Trust, the school or the employee's own reputation or the reputation of other members of the school community.

- In particular, criminal offences that involve violence or possession or use of illegal drugs or sexual misconduct will be regarded as unacceptable.
- Staff must exercise caution when using information technology in general and social media in particular and be aware of the risks to themselves and others. This includes any online activity which may or has the potential to bring themselves, the Trust, the school and or associated persons into disrepute.

- Staff must exercise caution when using social media and or similar when any association implied or direct is made between them as an individual and the Trust and or a school within the Trust
- Staff must be alert to the need for professional boundary management where there is any overlap between their professional employed role at the Trust (e.g. as a teacher or TA) and their friendship or friendship by association circle (e.g. friendship circle of their child or children).
- Staff may undertake work outside school, either paid or voluntary, provided that it does not conflict with the interests of the Trust nor be to a level which may contravene the working time regulations or affect an individual's work performance. All teaching and support staff should inform their line manager or Headteacher before engaging in any other business or accepting additional employment.

Confidentiality

Where staff have access to confidential information about pupils or their parents or carers, staff must not reveal such information except to those colleagues who have a professional role in relation to the pupil. Please refer to the schools' Safeguarding Policies. As an overview:

- All staff are likely at some point to witness actions which need to be confidential. For example, where a pupil is bullied by another pupil (or by a member of staff), this needs to be reported and dealt with in accordance with the appropriate school procedure. It must not be discussed outside the school, including with the pupil's parent or carer, nor with colleagues in the school except with a senior member of staff with the appropriate role and authority to deal with the matter.
- However, staff have an obligation to share with their manager or the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead any information which gives rise to concern about the safety or welfare of a pupil. Staff must never promise a pupil that they will not act on information that they are told by the pupil.
- As part of their whole school approach to safeguarding, schools should ensure that they promote an open and transparent culture in which all concerns about all adults working in or on behalf of the school (including supply teachers, volunteers and contractors) are dealt with promptly and appropriately - see *Dealing With Allegations against staff and volunteers* for more information.
- Employees must not use any information obtained in the course of their employment to cause damage to the Trust or for personal gain or benefit. Nor should they pass information on to others who may use it in such a way.

Outside Commitments & Interests

Conflicts of interest may occur if a decision of the Trust could affect an employee, or close friends and relatives, either positively or negatively. Interests could include involvement with businesses which have existing or proposed contracts with the Trust or any of the individual schools.

Employees should ask themselves the question “Would a member of the public think that they or their family would benefit from the connection between their personal interest and their employment with School or Trust?” If the answer is yes, then they must disclose their interest to their line manager or Headteacher in writing.

Employees may hold their own personal and political views but must act professionally at work and not allow these views to interfere with their work or relationships with pupils and colleagues.

Employees should ensure that their activities outside work do not conflict with their duty to the Trust.