

Staff Code of Conduct



Approved by: The Trust Board

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Document Control

Issue No	Date	Amended by	Summary of Changes
2	5 July 2023	Jemma Lynch	Footnote links to referenced accompany documents added
3	7 June 2024	Jemma Lynch	<p>Updated distribution list to add Dave Gooderham</p> <p>Updated USP values</p> <p>Updated the link to the most recent "Guidance for Safer Working Practice for professionals working in education settings"</p> <p>Updated the reference to the Gifts and Hospitality Policy in section 12</p>
4	19 June 2025	Jemma Lynch	<p>Section four, general obligations and self-reporting</p> <p>Section five, increased emphasis on record-keeping and review process</p> <p>Section six, increased emphasis on professional curiosity and cultural competence</p> <p>Section 7, making clear the zero-tolerance approach to breaches of professional boundaries with pupils</p> <p>Section 9, clearer and more robust direction around the use of social media and addition of expectations around political views and neutrality</p> <p>Section 10, emphasis on importance of self-reporting access or exposure to illegal or inappropriate content</p> <p>Section 11, Explicit statement about handing of pupil records and safeguarding logs, and reporting data protection breaches</p> <p>Section 14, clearer detail surrounding reporting of conduct outside of the workplace and associations</p>

Authorisation (Responsible Owner)

Name	Role	Approval Date
Jemma Lynch	Trust Safeguarding Lead	19 June 2025

Approval (Accountable Owner)

Name	Role	Approval Date

Ian Jacobs	Named Trustee for Safeguarding	15 July 2025
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Distribution List – Once authorised (Informed)

Name	
Headteachers	
DSLs	
Dave Gooderham	For uploading to Trust website

Review Period (at least annually or whenever statutory guidance changes)

Date Document Reviewed	By Whom
19 June 2025	Jemma Lynch – Trust Safeguarding Lead

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1. Aims, scope and principles

Our vision: Making remarkable change happen – Unity Schools Partnership transforms lives.

Our values: Kindness, Integrity and Inclusion

[The Seven Principles of Public Life](#) apply to all those appointed to work in education. The Seven Principles are Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty and Leadership.

This code of conduct is designed to give clear guidance regarding the standards of behaviour all staff are expected to observe, and each school should notify staff of this code and the expectations upon them. School staff are in a unique position of influence and must adhere to behaviour that sets a good example, acting as role models to all pupils within the trust. In this document, 'staff' includes both paid and unpaid roles, e.g. volunteers. [Guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings](#)¹ must be read in conjunction with this code of conduct.

All staff are responsible for maintaining public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of pupils. They must adopt high standards of personal conduct to maintain the confidence and respect of their peers, pupils and the public in general. An individual's behaviour, either in or out of the workplace, must not compromise their position within the work setting or bring the school or trust into disrepute. All staff who work in schools provide a role model for behaviour and conduct which can be copied by pupils. All staff must, therefore, demonstrate high standards of conduct to encourage pupils to do the same.

This policy aims to set and maintain standards of conduct that we expect all staff to follow.

By creating this policy, we aim to ensure our trust is an environment where everyone is safe, happy and treated with respect.

Many of the principles in this code of conduct are based on the [Teachers' Standards](#)².

¹ https://www.saferrecruitmentconsortium.org/files/ugd/f576a8_0d079cbe69ea458e9e99fe462e447084.pdf

² [Teachers' Standards guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Staff have an influential position and will act as role models for pupils by consistently demonstrating high standards of behaviour.

We expect that all teachers will act in accordance with the personal and professional behaviours set out in the Teachers' Standards.

We expect all support staff, governors and volunteers to also act with personal and professional integrity, respecting the safety and wellbeing of others.

Failure to follow the code of conduct may result in disciplinary action being taken, as set out in the trust's disciplinary policy and procedure.

Please note that this code of conduct is not exhaustive. If situations arise that are not covered by this code, staff will use their professional judgement and act in the best interests of the trust's pupils.

2. Legislation and guidance

In line with the statutory safeguarding guidance [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) (KCSiE), we should have a staff code of conduct, which should cover acceptable use of technologies, staff/pupil relationships and communications, including the use of social media.

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

3. Equality and diversity

The trust promotes inclusivity and values diversity. We seek to ensure that the work environment for our staff is supportive and one where individual respect is shown to all. All members of staff and pupils, regardless of their age, (dis)ability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, ethnic background, culture, sexual orientation, religion or belief, sex, socio-economic status, or any other factor will be treated equally, supported, and encouraged to perform to their potential.

4. General obligations

Staff set an example to pupils. They will:

- Maintain high standards in their attendance and punctuality
- Never use inappropriate or offensive language in school
- Treat pupils and others with dignity and respect
- Show tolerance and respect for the rights of others
- Not undermine fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs
- Express personal beliefs in a way that will not overly influence pupils, and will not exploit pupils' vulnerability or might lead them to break the law
- Not consume or be under the influence of alcohol or any substance, including the misuse of prescribed medication, when professionally active and responsible for either pupils, parents, other colleagues and/or trust property
- Understand the statutory frameworks they must act within
- Adhere to the Seven Principles of Public Life
- Adhere to the Teachers' Standards (if applicable)

During their employment, staff must inform the school/trust, as their employer, immediately of any personal, family, or household circumstances that may impact their suitability to work with children, including changes in relationships with individuals who may be subject to safeguarding concerns.

Any allegation of inappropriate behaviour made against a member of staff by a pupil, parent or other professional, unless manifestly malicious or vexatious, will be investigated and a record kept of it. HR advice must be sought, and it may be appropriate for some initial fact finding to be undertaken to decide whether a full investigation is necessary and, if so, what form it should take and who should conduct it.

Where the allegation is of a safeguarding nature it will be referred to the local authority designated officer (LADO) in all cases in which it meets the harms threshold, i.e., it is alleged that a current member of staff or volunteer has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child, and/or
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, and/or
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she may pose a risk of harm to children, and/or
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

The Trust Safeguarding Leads and the trust's Director of HR must be informed of any referrals to the LADO. Please refer to the trust's safeguarding policy for more details on handling allegations of abuse made against staff. Please also refer to the trust's whistleblowing policy.

5. Low level concerns

Low level concerns that do not meet the harms threshold set out above should be reported to the Headteacher. If they are about the Headteacher (or a relative of the Headteacher working at the school), they should be reported to the relevant Director of Education. If they are a member of the trust central team, they should be reported to the Chief Executive Officer. All low-level concerns will be recorded in writing by the person to whom they are reported. The record should include details of the concern, the context in which the concern arose, action taken and the rationale for decisions.

The term 'low level' concern does not mean that it is insignificant. 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 school/trust may have acted in a way that is inconsistent with this code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work, but that does not meet the harms threshold for referral to the LADO. Examples of such behaviour could include, but are not limited to:

- being over friendly with children;
- having favorites;
- taking photographs of children on their mobile phone, contrary to school policy;
- engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door; or,
- humiliating pupils.

Such behaviour can exist on a wide spectrum, from the inadvertent or thoughtless, or behaviour that might look inappropriate but might not be in specific circumstances, through to that which is intended to enable abuse. Sharing, recording, and dealing with low level concerns appropriately not only keeps children safe but also protects those working in or on behalf of schools, and enables schools and the trust to continue to create a culture of vigilance.

Staff are encouraged and should feel confident to self-refer where, for example, they have found themselves in a situation which could be misinterpreted, might appear compromising to others, and/or, on reflection, believe they have behaved in a way they consider falls below the expected professional standards.

All low-level concerns must be stored in a central, confidential record and reviewed regularly by the Headteacher or DSL to identify patterns or repeated concerns that may require escalation

6. Safeguarding

All staff are expected to demonstrate professional curiosity when concerns arise and understand how culture, language, and contextual background may affect safeguarding disclosures and responses.

All staff have a duty to safeguard pupils from harm, and to report any concerns they have. This includes physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, neglect, exploitation, or radicalisation.

In addition to this code of conduct, staff who work directly with children must read at least Part one and Annex B of KCSiE. Staff who do not work directly with children must read at least Annex A (a condensed version of Part one). All staff must read the trust's safeguarding policy and their school's child protection procedures and behavior policy, and ensure they are aware of the processes to follow if they have concerns about a child.

The trust's safeguarding policy and your school's child protection procedures are available in the staff room, from the school office and on the school's website. New staff will also be given copies on arrival as part of their induction pack.

7. Staff/pupil relationships

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

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. It is an abuse of trust, and never appropriate, to have an intimate relationship with a pupil who attends the school where you work/volunteer. This remains the case even if the pupil is over the age of 18.

Staff must not engage in sexualised banter, humour, or suggestive comments with pupils at any time, regardless of the pupil's age or perceived maturity. This includes during remote or online interactions.

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

Staff must never groom pupils in preparation for abuse. The responsibility not to groom continues once pupils leave the school and until they reach the age of 18. Staff must avoid contact with pupils and their parents outside of school hours if possible. Any personal relationships between staff and pupils or their parents must be declared to the DSL (Designated Safeguarding Lead) at the school, who will keep a register. Staff not attached to schools, including members of the Central Team, must inform the Trust Safeguarding Leads (01440 333 400) of any personal relationships they have with pupils or their parents, who will maintain a register of these declarations.

Personal contact details must not be exchanged between staff and pupils or their parents. This includes social media profiles.

While we are aware many pupils and their parents may wish to give gifts to staff, for example, at the end of the school year, gifts from staff to pupils are not acceptable, unless sanctioned by the Headteacher.

If a staff member is concerned that an interaction between themselves and a pupil may be misinterpreted, this must be reported to the Headteacher (see section 5, above).

8. Relationships between staff

The trust requires staff to disclose workplace relationships. This will allow the trust to take pre-emptive steps to avoid conflicts of interest. One such example may be changing reporting lines, in the case of an employee reporting to their partner. Failure to disclose a relationship could give rise to disciplinary proceedings.

Disclosures of relationships should be made to the Headteacher for school-based staff, and should it involve the Headteacher the relevant director of education. Disclosures from central team staff should be made to their line manager and should involve their line manager and the relevant director for their departmental area. Directors' disclosures should be made to the Chief Executive and the Chief Executive should make disclosures to the Chair of the Trust Board.

9. Communication and social media

Staff using social media (including but not limited to Facebook, X (twitter), Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn, Blogs, online discussions forums media sharing services for example: YouTube and school or trust related forums or messaging apps) should conduct themselves with professionalism and respect. This applies to any new or emerging technologies or systems which may develop in the future.

Staff should use privacy settings to control who can view their personal content.

Staff should always remain aware of both professional and social boundaries and should not therefore accept or invite 'friend' requests from pupils, or ex-pupils under the age of 18, or from parents on their personal social media accounts. All communication with parents via social media should be through the school/trust's social media accounts.

Staff must not use private social media or any other means to contact pupils or their parents outside school to develop any relationship. They will not make any efforts to find pupils' or parents' social media profiles. Staff will ensure they do not upload any content onto social media sites which is confidential to the school/trust or its staff, amounts to bullying, discrimination, harassment, victimisation or is unlawful. Staff should be aware that their public-facing social media profiles may be viewed by the school or trust leadership if a concern is raised about their conduct or suitability.

All staff will ensure that they do not post any images online that identify children who are pupils at trust schools without their consent. Any message, photos or information must comply with existing policies.

All staff should be aware of their school, and the trust's, online safety policy. Staff must not upload any content which could bring the school/trust, or teaching profession into disrepute, as outlined in the trust's disciplinary policy and the Teachers' Standards.

Posting content that could harm the Trust's reputation, even outside working hours, may still be subject to disciplinary action.

Staff must uphold the trust's values and demonstrate professionalism in all online interactions.

Confidential or sensitive trust-related information must not be shared on social media.

Staff should not post content that is discriminatory, offensive, or damaging to the trust's reputation.

Personal opinions should be clearly stated as such and must not be represented as the views of the trust

Staff who become aware of inappropriate social media activity involving other staff, students, school or the trust must report it to their line manager or the headteacher or trust safeguarding lead.

Political Views and Neutrality

We encourage all staff to carefully consider the content of any posts or articles they plan to re-post or share, particularly those with political connotations. Such posts may inadvertently reflect on our trust, and we aim to maintain a neutral stance on political matters. Your discretion and judgment in these situations are greatly appreciated to uphold the integrity and reputation of our organisation.

- Staff should refrain from sharing political views on social media, particularly concerning school or trust matters.
- Discussions about politics should remain professional and neutral, avoiding any content that may cause division or controversy.
- Avoid endorsing or criticising political parties, policies, or public figures in a way that could reflect on the school or the trust.

10. Acceptable use of technology

All staff will not use technology in school to view material that is illegal, inappropriate, or likely to be deemed offensive. This includes, but is not limited to, sending obscene emails, gambling, and viewing pornography or other inappropriate content. All incidents involving exposure to inappropriate or illegal content (including pornography or obscene material) on school systems and devices, whether accidental or deliberate, must be reported to the Headteacher immediately. If you are a member of the Central Team, you must report immediately to the Trust Safeguarding Leads. If you are a headteacher you must report to your director of education. Failure to do so may lead to disciplinary action. The trust will support staff who report such incidents and investigate in line with the Acceptable Use of ICT policy.

All staff will not use personal electronic devices, e.g. mobile phones and laptops/tablets, or school equipment for personal use, in front of pupils, except in case of emergency.

All staff should, where possible, only use IT equipment provided by the trust. Where this is not possible, advice should be sought from the Trust Safeguarding Leads and Head of IT Operations.

Whenever possible, images of pupils will be recorded on equipment provided by the trust (e.g., a school camera or iPad). However, if, in exceptional circumstances, personal equipment is used to record these images, staff will be mindful that they must be able to justify images of pupils in their possession. Staff will take care when recording images that pupils are appropriately dressed and are not participating in activities that might bring the individuals or the trust into disrepute. Staff will delete such images from both the device and any cloud storage as soon as they have been downloaded to the school's network. Any personal devices used must not be set to automatically upload images to any shared platforms, e.g., Family Sharing. Images of pupils must be downloaded from designated school devices as soon as possible and the images deleted from the device.

All staff must not undertake covert recordings, including audio and video recordings. Any recordings must have the explicit consent of those present and participating in the activity/meeting/discussion. Any breach of this will be considered a misconduct issue and could constitute a breach of data protection regulations.

We have the right to monitor emails and internet use on IT systems used by the trust. Staff must ensure all email communication is appropriate and professional; this includes but is not limited to the language used, tone of emails and how they may be interpreted.

All staff should be aware of the trust's Acceptable use of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) Policy, and Photograph and Video Policy.

11. Confidentiality

In their role, staff members are often privy to sensitive and confidential information about trust, schools, staff, pupils, and their parents/carers. This information will never be:

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

This does not overrule the staff's duty to report child protection and safeguarding concerns through the appropriate channels where staff believe a child is at risk of harm.

All staff must ensure that any written or digital safeguarding records are stored securely and only accessed by authorised personnel. Any suspected data breach must be reported immediately in line with the trust's data protection policy.

12. Honesty and integrity

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

Staff will not accept bribes. For gifts and hospitality, please refer to the Gifts and Hospitality Policy, which is included in the trust's finance policy and procedures.

Staff will ensure that all information given to the trust about their qualifications and professional experience is correct.

13. Dress code

Please refer to the trust's staff dress guidance.

14. Conduct outside of work

Staff will not act in a way that would bring the trust, any of its schools or the teaching profession into disrepute. This covers relevant criminal offences, such as violence or sexual misconduct, and negative comments about Unity School Partnership or any of its schools, staff or pupils on social media.

Staff are expected to maintain high standards of conduct at all times, including outside of the workplace. Staff must not act in a manner that may bring the Trust, any of its schools, or the education profession into disrepute. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Criminal behaviour (including pending charges, cautions, reprimands, warnings and convictions) Any behaviour or association that could call into question their suitability to work with children
- Public conduct (including use of social media) that could damage the professional reputation of the school, Trust or sector.

Mandatory Reporting of Police Involvement or Relevant Conduct

All staff must immediately inform their Headteacher (or relevant Director if they are the Headteacher or central trust staff) if they:

- Are arrested, charged, cautioned, receive a reprimand or warning or are convicted of a criminal offence;
- Are bailed or released pending a police investigation;

- Are subject to police investigation or involvement that may impact their role or the reputation of the trust;
- Are subject to any restraining or non-molestation order, or civil/criminal proceedings that may relate to safeguarding concerns;
- Become aware of any safeguarding allegations made against them inside or outside of work;
- Are subject of a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service, Teaching Regulation Agency or any successor body;
- Are the subject of a referral to, or a sanction, restriction or prohibition issued by the Teaching Regulation Agency, or any predecessor or successor body, or by a regulator of the teaching profession in any other country;
- Are subject to an investigation for any allegation of a disciplinary nature at any other employer or organisation at which you are a volunteer;
- Are associated personally or professionally with individuals who may pose a risk to children or bring the school/trust into disrepute (e.g., living with someone on the sex offenders register).
- This includes matters that occur **outside of work hours, outside of term time, and in the staff member's private life** where these may impact on the safety of pupils or the professional reputation of the school, Trust or sector.

Failure to report such matters may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal. This reporting requirement reflects both the duty of care to pupils and the need to maintain public trust and confidence in education.

Where there is any doubt about whether to report an incident, staff should seek advice from their Headteacher, Director or Trust Safeguarding Lead without delay.

15. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed at least every three years but can be revised as needed. It will be ratified by the board of trustees.

16. Links with other policies

This policy links with the following policies and procedures:

- Disciplinary policy and procedure, which will be used if staff breach this code of conduct. It also sets out examples of what we will deem as misconduct and gross misconduct
- Staff grievance procedures
- Safeguarding policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Child protection procedures
- Acceptable use of ICT policy
- Whistleblowing
- Combined data protection and freedom of information policy

17. Further advice

If any staff, contractor, or visitor requires any further information or support regarding this code of conduct, they should either ask the Headteacher or contact the HR Helpdesk at hrhelpdesk@unitysp.co.uk or telephone 01440 333 401.

All staff are expected to confirm they have read and understood this policy.