

## EMPLOYEE CODE OF CONDUCT

**Summary:** This policy outlines the professional standards expected of anyone working with or representing Eastern Multi-Academy Trust. It covers conduct, safeguarding, relationships, use of technology, and how concerns will be managed, helping to create a safe and respectful environment for all.



If you are unsure about the validity of the content of this policy, please refer to the Policy Owner

**Please Note: This policy is applicable to All Employees within the Group.**

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### Approved by

Consultation Group	People Team, Principals, Safeguarding Lead, JCC
Approval Committee	Human Resources and Wellbeing Committee
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### Version Control

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V2	Content revised and simplified to improve clarity, with adjustments to language, tone, and overall voice to ensure consistency and accessibility. Inclusion of use of new clause on AI in education and administration	HRBP's, Principals, ELT	01/09/2025
V2.01	Added Our Commitment - statement to link to mission, values and PSED, referenced separate Code of Conduct for Governors and Trustees added Governor monitoring, and strengthened rigour around political impartiality	HRWC 20/06/25	01/09/2025

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## 1. Our Commitment

This policy supports the Trust's mission to ensure all our children and young people are prepared to learn for life by empowering, motivating, and enabling all staff to be the best they can be. It reflects our commitment to the Nolan Principles of public life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership. It also aligns with our duties under the Public Sector Equality Duty by advancing equality, eliminating discrimination, and fostering positive relationships.

Through our people policies, we aim to create a culture where every colleague is supported to thrive, so that every child can achieve their full potential and be prepared for the future.

## 2. Purpose Statement

At Eastern Multi-Academy Trust (EMAT), we are committed to transforming lives and communities. This Code of Conduct provides a clear and shared understanding of the standards of professional behaviour expected of all our colleagues. It promotes a culture of respect, safety, and integrity across our Trust and ensures that all who work within it understand their role in modelling these values in everything they do.

As a publicly funded organisation, the Trust is committed to maintaining political impartiality in all its activities. Staff must ensure that personal political views are not promoted in the classroom, during school activities, or through communications with pupils, colleagues, or the wider school community. We have a legal obligation to offer a balanced presentation of opposing views when political issues are discussed, in line with our duties under the Education Act 1996 and statutory guidance.

## 3. Scope and Application

This Code of Conduct applies to all individuals employed by Eastern Multi-Academy Trust under a contract of employment or service agreement, whether full-time, part-time, fixed term, or casual. It also applies to those who represent EMAT in the community or on our premises, including, but not limited to:

- Supply and agency staff,
- Contractors and consultants, and
- Volunteers.

While Trustees and Academy Committee members are not subject to this staff Code, they are expected to uphold the Trust's values and professional standards through their own aligned Code of Conduct and to support the implementation of this Code within their governance role.

Everyone covered by this policy is expected to uphold high standards of conduct and reflect the Trust's values in their work and behaviour.

## 4. Policy Statement

We all play a vital role in creating a positive, respectful and safe environment for our pupils and colleagues. The standards set out below are grounded in professional expectations, legal requirements, and public trust principles. These include the Teachers' Standards and the Seven Nolan Principles of Public Life:

- **Selflessness** - Colleagues should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so to gain financial or other benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.
- **Integrity** - Colleagues should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.
- **Objectivity** - In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, Colleagues should make choices on merit.
- **Accountability** - Colleagues should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take.
- **Openness** - They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.
- **Honesty** - Colleagues have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.
- **Leadership** - Colleagues should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

We expect everyone working within the Trust to follow this Code of Conduct. Where behaviour falls short of these expectations for employees, we will respond in line with our Disciplinary Policy.

While this Code sets out key standards, it isn't exhaustive. If you find yourself in a situation not covered here, we trust you to use your professional judgement and act in the best interests of our pupils, colleagues and the wider Trust community.

## 5. Legislation and guidance

This Code of Conduct has been developed in line with the statutory safeguarding guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE). The guidance outlines the importance of having a staff code of conduct that covers:

- Low-level concerns,
- Allegations against staff,
- Whistleblowing,
- Staff/pupil relationships and communication, and
- Acceptable use of technology, including mobile devices and social media.

This Code should be read alongside the Trust's Acceptable Use of ICT Policy, which provides further detail on responsible use of digital platforms and communication tools.

The policy also reflects our obligations under the Trust's funding agreement and articles of association.

## 6. Roles, Responsibilities & Delegations

- **Trustees** – Approve this policy through the Human Resources and Wellbeing Committee (HRWC) and model the Trust’s values through their own aligned Code of Conduct.
- **Academy Committee Members** – Uphold the Trust’s values through their local governance role and aligned Code of Conduct, support implementation of this Code within their academy.
- **Executive** – Lead policy development and review; ensure alignment with legal duties and Trust values
- **Principals & Leadership** – Ensure awareness, implementation, and local compliance with the Code
- **People Team** – Provide advice, guidance, and access to supporting policies
- **All Colleagues** – Understand and uphold the Code of Conduct; report concerns as appropriate

## 7. Professional Conduct

We are committed to creating a workplace culture where everyone feels valued, respected and safe, and where we consistently model the behaviour we expect from our pupils. As such, we expect you to:

- Uphold the highest standards of attendance and punctuality.
- Always use respectful, inclusive and appropriate language.
- Treat others - pupils, colleagues, parents, and the wider community - with dignity and respect.
- Promote fundamental British values including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of different beliefs and backgrounds.
- Avoid expressing personal beliefs, including religious, political, or ideological views, in ways that exploit pupils’ vulnerabilities or could be perceived as promoting a particular viewpoint. When discussing political issues, ensure that content is age-appropriate, relevant, and presents a fair and balanced view.
- Act within statutory frameworks and adhere to Trust policies, including the Teachers’ Standards, where applicable.

All colleagues must maintain political neutrality in their professional roles. When political issues are discussed in school, whether in lessons, assemblies, or external visits, they must be handled in a way that:

- Presents balanced, factual information.
- Ensures a range of views are acknowledged, particularly where topics are controversial.
- Avoids presenting personal views as fact.

Staff should not use their position to promote political parties, ideologies or campaigns. Where pupils raise political issues, responses should be thoughtful, balanced, and sensitive to the school context. If in doubt, colleagues are encouraged to seek guidance from their line manager or the Trust’s People Team.

## 8. Safeguarding and Duty of Care

Safeguarding children is everyone’s responsibility. You are expected to:

- Be familiar with, and follow, the Trust’s Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, including the Prevent Duty.
- Report any concern, however minor it may seem, through the appropriate safeguarding channels.
- Prioritise the safety, wellbeing and dignity of all pupils at all times.

Safeguarding concerns can include physical, emotional or sexual abuse, neglect, and risks posed by others (inside or outside of school). More information is available in our Safeguarding Policy.

## **9. Responding to Allegations and Concerns**

We are committed to handling any concern or allegation involving children with care, fairness and clarity. This includes:

### **9.1 Allegations that meet the harm threshold**

If it is alleged that someone working within the Trust has:

- Harmed or may have harmed a child,
- Committed a criminal offence against or related to a child,
- Behaved in a way that indicates they may pose a risk to children, or
- Behaved in a way that suggests they may not be suitable to work with children

We will follow our established safeguarding procedures with urgency and fairness. A designated case manager will lead any investigation.

### **9.2 Low level concerns**

Low-level concerns are behaviours that fall short of the harm threshold but are inconsistent with the Trust's Code of Conduct and can include inappropriate conduct inside and outside of the workplace.

Examples may include, but are not limited to:

- Being overly familiar with pupils
- Favouritism
- Using personal devices to take photographs of children
- Inappropriate jokes or language
- Engaging in 1 to 1 activity that is not visible to others
- Humiliating pupils

Concerns should be reported through the process outlined in our Safeguarding Policy. We encourage openness and self-referral, as early conversations can prevent issues from escalating and help protect our whole community. All reports will be handled sensitively, proportionately and with sound judgement. Where behaviour falls below expectations, we aim to address it promptly and support colleagues to make improvements.

## **10. Public Interest Disclosures (Whistleblowing)**

If you witness wrongdoing that is in the public interest, such as breaches of law, safeguarding risks, or deliberate cover-ups, you are encouraged to report it. We take such concerns seriously and will respect your confidentiality. See our Whistleblowing Policy for more information.

## 11. Employee-pupil Relationships

Professional boundaries between staff and pupils must always be maintained. To support this, we ask that you:

- Ensure any 1:1 contact with pupils happens in spaces that are visible and accessible to others.
- Keep line managers informed of any planned 1:1 interaction.
- Avoid private or out-of-hours contact with pupils unless agreed for safeguarding or educational purposes.
- Refrain from exchanging personal contact details with pupils.
- Do not accept or give gifts that could be seen as favouritism or inappropriate.

If you are ever unsure about the appropriateness of an interaction or have concerns about a colleague's conduct with a pupil, please report this in line with the Safeguarding Policy.

## 12. Communication and Use of Social Media

Your professional conduct online is just as important as in person. We expect you to:

- Set personal social media accounts to private and avoid using full names to limit pupil access.
- Avoid engaging with pupils or their families through personal social media accounts or messaging platforms.
- Never post images or information that identify pupils unless consent has been given and it aligns with the Trust's Acceptable Use of ICT Policy.
- Refrain from posting or sharing content that could bring the Trust into disrepute.

Colleagues must not use personal or professional platforms to promote political views in ways that may be associated with the Trust. This includes public endorsements of political parties or candidates where the Trust is named or identifiable, or where posts could be reasonably linked to a staff member's professional role.

Please refer to the Acceptable Use of ICT Policy for further guidance.

## 13. Acceptable Use of Technology

We expect all colleagues to use technology in a way that reflects our values and professional standards.

This includes:

- Not using Trust or Academy devices to access or share material that is illegal, inappropriate or offensive (e.g. obscene content, gambling or hate-related material).
- Avoiding personal use of mobile phones, laptops or other devices during working hours, particularly in front of pupils.
- Never using personal devices (e.g. phones or cameras) to take images or videos of pupils.
- Using school-based systems (email, platforms, apps) professionally and in line with our safeguarding responsibilities.

We also recognise the growing use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in education and administration. Any use of AI, whether for lesson planning, administrative support, or communication should:

- Align with the Trust's values, safeguarding duties, and data protection obligations.

- Avoid processing or uploading confidential, personal or pupil data to external AI platforms.
- Be transparent and appropriate for an educational setting.
- Never replace professional judgement, particularly in matters relating to pupil wellbeing or safeguarding.

Please refer to the Acceptable Use of ICT Policy for further guidance on appropriate use of digital tools, internet access, email, social media, and AI. We reserve the right to monitor use of Trust systems to ensure compliance.

## 14. Confidentiality

In your role, you may have access to sensitive or confidential information. We expect you to:

- Share such information only where legally required or with appropriate authorisation.
- Never use information to embarrass, harm or gain an unfair advantage.
- Ensure any personal information about pupils or colleagues is protected in line with data protection legislation.

These expectations do not override your duty to report safeguarding concerns where a child may be at risk.

## 15. Honesty, Integrity and Conflicts of Interest

We expect all colleagues to act with honesty, integrity and professionalism in everything they do. This includes upholding the Trust's values, maintaining public confidence, and complying with relevant UK legislation, such as the Bribery Act 2010. You are expected to:

- Be truthful in your dealings with colleagues, pupils, families and the wider school community.
- Handle money, resources and equipment responsibly and only for their intended purpose.
- Avoid offering or accepting gifts or hospitality that could be perceived as a bribe or conflict of interest.
- Declare any gifts or hospitality valued over £30 and seek advice from your Principal or line manager if unsure.

Please refer to the Gifts and Hospitality Policy for further guidance.

### 15.1 Personal relationships and external interests

Integrity is especially important where personal relationships could influence professional judgement or decision-making. If you are related to or have a close personal relationship with someone who works with or for the Trust (for example, another colleague, contractor or supplier), you should inform your line manager to ensure transparency and avoid potential conflicts of interest.

If you are considering taking on additional or secondary employment, you should discuss this with your Principal or line manager to ensure it does not:

- Conflict with the interests of the Trust.
- Impact your ability to carry out your primary role.
- Involve the use of Trust time, resources or equipment.

We support colleagues pursuing additional opportunities, provided they are compatible with your role and responsibilities at EMAT.

## **15.2 Accurate and up-to-date information**

It is important that the information you provide to the Trust is accurate and kept up to date. This includes:

- Background details (such as any prior or ongoing investigations, cautions or convictions).
- Qualifications and professional experience.
- Any other relevant personal information, where appropriate.

If there is a change to any of the information previously shared with the Trust, please inform your line manager and/or the People Team as soon as reasonably possible. We will always consider the nature and circumstances of any update and assess whether it may have an impact on your role or employment.

## **16. Dress code**

Our appearance reflects our professional role and helps set the tone for a respectful learning environment. You are encouraged to:

- Dress appropriately for your role and the activities you're engaged in.
- Avoid clothing that is overly revealing or displays slogans or symbols that could be interpreted as offensive, political, or ideological, to ensure neutrality and uphold public trust.
- Cover tattoos that may cause offence or discomfort.

## **17. Conduct Inside and Outside of Work**

Your conduct, both within and outside of the workplace, should reflect the values and standards of Eastern Multi-Academy Trust. As role models for children and representatives of the Trust, it is important that your actions do not bring the Trust, its Academies, or the wider school community into disrepute.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- Engaging in any behaviour that constitutes a criminal offence, particularly those involving violence, sexual misconduct, dishonesty, or offences involving children.
- Making public or social media comments that are disrespectful, offensive or damaging to the reputation of the Trust or its schools.
- Behaving in a way, in or outside of work, that could reasonably lead others to question your suitability to work with children or your ability to uphold the values of the Trust.
- Promoting partisan political views while acting in a professional capacity or during Trust-related activities, which may undermine the Trust's obligation to remain politically impartial.

### **17.1 Alcohol, drugs and medication**

To maintain a safe, professional and supportive environment, colleagues are expected to:

- Never consume alcohol, illicit drugs, or other illegal substances while at work, on school premises, or during work-related activities (e.g. trips, training events, or social functions with pupils).
- Ensure that the effects of any substance, legal or illegal, do not impair your judgement, conduct, or ability to perform your role safely.

- Take personal responsibility for managing the effects of prescribed or over-the-counter medication, and speak with a manager if there is a risk this could affect your performance or safety at work.

If there is ever uncertainty about the potential impact of any substance, we encourage you to seek advice from your line manager or occupational health provider.

### **17.2 Maintaining professional boundaries and language**

All employees are expected to model respectful, inclusive behaviour and language in all interactions with pupils and others. This includes:

- Never making, or encouraging others to make, sexual or inappropriate comments to or about a pupil.
- Avoiding discussions of a personal or sexual nature in front of pupils.
- Using language that is professional and age-appropriate, and does not demean, embarrass or humiliate.

Ultimately, your conduct should support a culture where pupils feel safe, respected and inspired and where your actions consistently reflect your position of trust and responsibility.

## **18. Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed every three years, or earlier if needed. We are committed to upholding this Code and creating a culture where concerns are addressed early, and support is provided where needed.

## **19. Related Documents and Further Guidance**

- Acceptable Use of ICT Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Gifts and Hospitality Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Respect and Resolution Policy
- Supporting Your Attendance at Work Policy
- Violence and Abuse to staff Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- DfE Guidance: Political impartiality in schools (2022)

Please speak with your line manager or the People Team if you have any questions.