



# Employee Code of Conduct Policy

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VERSION NO.	DATE OF CHANGE	CHANGE SUMMARY	PAGE NO.
1.0	24.6.20		
2.0	12.09.22	<p>Updated in new brand.</p> <p>Updated in line with the Scheme of Delegation.</p> <p>Updated to include referral to the Low-Level Concerns Policy.</p> <p>Updated following recommendations from employment lawyer.</p>	
3.0	13.02.24	Updated section 9.1 regarding criminal investigation	7
3.0	16.12.24	<p>Following the school safeguarding audits, added references to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings (February 2022)</li> <li>– School’s Child Protection &amp; Safeguarding Policies</li> <li>– Low Level Concerns Policy</li> <li>– Sexual Harassment Policy</li> </ul>	<p>2, 4</p> <p>2</p> <p>4</p> <p>4</p>
4.0	26.02.26	<p>Added section 8.6 regarding communication systems</p> <p>Updated section 10.5 regarding piercings</p> <p>Updated section 16.1 regarding smoking</p>	<p>7</p> <p>9</p> <p>13</p>

**This Code of Conduct applies to all staff including the Headteacher based at each school.**

**This Code of Conduct should be read alongside the following:**

- **The School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy**
- **Guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings (February 2022)**

**This document does not form part of employees' terms and conditions of employment and therefore may be subject to change at the discretion of the Trust.**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

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- 1.1 This Code of Conduct applies to all employees working in all schools within the Trust. For the purposes of this document reference to employees also includes workers and agency workers. It is intended as a guide to assist all those working within this school to understand and comply with the Trust's expectations in terms of their standard of conduct and behaviour. All employees are expected to adhere to the principles contained within this Code during the course of their work and when representing the school/Trust.
- 1.2 We aim to provide a high-quality provision for all pupils, staff and any external companies with whom we may have business with, and promote public confidence in the integrity of the Trust.
- 1.3 All employees are expected to reflect high standards of behaviour both at work and in their private life and set a good example to pupils and others at all times. Employees should be mindful of their behaviour outside of school and the reflection this may have on themselves, the school, the Trust and the profession.
- 1.4 Our Trust's Mission Statement is:  
**OAK Trust is committed to providing an inspirational education which allows all our pupils to realise their full potential as learners and citizens through excellent teaching, learning and development of the whole child. We will meet the needs of our unique schools and communities through collaboration, support and challenge**
- 1.5 All employees of this Trust must ensure that they adhere to the relevant professional standards for their role.
- 1.6 Employees must also safeguard children's wellbeing and maintain public trust in their profession, as part of their professional duties.
- 1.7 This Code complies with the requirements of relevant legislation, and reflects the Trust's Policies and Procedures, as amended.

- 1.8 All employees must read this Code carefully (and alongside the Trust's policies, including the Low Level Concerns Policy) and seek advice and guidance on any matters that they do not fully understand.
- 1.9 Any breaches of this Code may result in a formal investigation being carried out under the Trust's Disciplinary Policy and may result in disciplinary action being taken against the employee.

## **2. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE**

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- 2.1 This code is underpinned by the principles set out in the Trust's Equality and Diversity Statement published on the Trust website.
- 2.2 All employees have a personal responsibility to promote equality and diversity within the Trust in respect of their colleagues, Trustees, governors, pupils, their parents and carers and the local community.
- 2.3 **Equality**  
Employees will ensure that everyone is treated fairly and with respect regardless of their age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion/belief, sex, sexual orientation and marriage/civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity.
- 2.4 **Diversity**  
Employees will recognise and value diversity of others within the workplace and understand how any differences can benefit others, our schools, Trust and the local community.

## **3. DIGNITY & RESPECT**

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- 3.1 All employees are expected to maintain a high standard of behaviour and personal conduct at all times to ensure that everyone is treated with dignity and respect.
- 3.2 A respectful workplace:
- welcomes all;
  - encourages employees to be the very best they can be;
  - promotes equality of opportunity and treatment of others;
  - respects diversity;
  - promotes employee health and wellbeing;
  - communicates expectations around behavior and personal conduct;
  - strives for improvement and transparency;
  - encourages open and honest communication between employees; and

- ensures that all disputes at work are dealt with effectively under the relevant policies and procedures.
- 3.3 All employees are responsible for treating others, including Trustees, colleagues, pupils, parents and carers, with dignity and respect and will not purposely make anyone feel excluded or unaccepted.
- 3.4 All employees must act with personal and professional integrity, respecting others by:
- never using inappropriate or offensive language in school;
  - acting in the best interests of the school, the Trust and its ethos;
  - being honest and acting with integrity;
  - treating pupils and others with dignity and respect;
  - showing tolerance and respect for the rights and beliefs of others;
  - acting as a role model for pupils by consistently demonstrating high standards of behaviour;
  - not undermining fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs;
  - not expressing personal beliefs in a way that will overly influence pupils, exploits pupils' vulnerability or might lead them to break the law;
  - conforming with Equal Opportunities legislation in all aspects of their work.
- 3.5 Where an employee believes that they have been unfairly treated they may refer to the Trust's Grievance Policy and Sexual Harassment Policy.

## **4. SAFEGUARDING**

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- 4.1 All employees, Trustees, governors and volunteers will be given a copy of the following documents:
- The School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy;
  - Low Level Concerns Policy
  - Guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings (February 2022),
  - KCSIE document part 1.
  - KCSIE document Annex B for employees who work directly with children
- 4.2 Please refer to each school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy for relevant DSLs' contact details.

4.3 Local Authority Designated Officer contact details:  
0116 305 4141 (Leicestershire County Council).  
0116 454 2440 (Leicester City Council).

## 5. DATA PROTECTION & CONFIDENTIALITY

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This section should be read in conjunction with the Trust's Data Protection Policy and Information Security Policy.

5.1 Employees are privy to confidential and sensitive information about the school, their colleagues, volunteers, pupils and their parents. The Data Protection Act 2018 states that anyone who is responsible for using personal data must follow strict data protection principles.

5.2 All employees must therefore ensure that any information collected is:

- used fairly, lawfully and transparently;
- used for specified, explicit purposes;
- used in a way that is proportionate, relevant and limited to only what is necessary;
- accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date;
- kept for no longer than is necessary;
- handled in a way that ensures appropriate security, including protection against unlawful or unauthorised processing, access, loss, destruction or damage.

5.3 Employees must:

- not disclose, or use (directly or indirectly) any information (either about school business, employees, pupils, parents, or external agencies) they receive or allow others to do so whether during their employment or after their termination. Any such data must **only** be accessed by authorised users for legitimate purposes;
- not use data held by the school for any purpose other than that for which it is intended;
- ensure that all data is kept secure (i.e. locked away or protected by password) and that data on screens or within documents are not left within view of others;
- not disclose or display information about logins or passwords for automated devices, or keycodes or similar for manual locks;
- ensure that when sharing personal or sensitive data external to the school, that it is done by secure methods taking care to minimise the risk of loss and making sure it reaches the intended recipient.

5.4 When an employee is in doubt about whether to share information or keep it confidential, they must seek guidance from the Headteacher.

- 5.5 Employees must follow and comply with the Trust's Information Security Policy at all times. Failure to do so is considered a serious breach.
- 5.6 Data will be processed to be in line with our requirements and protections set out in the UK General Data Protection Regulation, Data Protection Act as amended by the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025.

## **6. DECLARATION OF INTEREST/CONFLICT**

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- 6.1 The Trust understands and encourages employees to undertake activities outside of work and take an active role in their community. However, employees should avoid any activities that have the potential to cause a practical conflict with their employment, reputational harm or undermine the Trust and confidence in them.
- 6.2 If a conflict arises during an employee's employment this must be declared to their Headteacher. The Headteacher will then consider whether it would be appropriate for the employee to continue with the activity.
- 6.3 It is the responsibility of employees to declare any interests or conflicts. Failure to do so may be considered a disciplinary matter. Any concerns or queries regarding interests or potential interests should be discussed with the Headteacher at the earliest opportunity.

## **7. GIFTS & HOSPITALITY**

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- 7.1 Employees should not accept or give any significant gifts or offers of hospitality as this could be perceived as an act of bribery to influence decisions or be construed as favouritism, which could compromise the individual or the school / Trust. The term "gift" can also include the provision of services at a lower cost than that charged to the general public.
- 7.2 Employees should notify their Headteacher if they receive any gifts of substantial value or significance and, where possible, decline the offer politely and firmly. If in doubt employees should discuss the matter with the Headteacher.
- 7.3 Any provision of hospitality that is seen as necessary to represent the Trust may be accepted with the approval of the Headteacher (or in the case of the Headteacher, CFO).
- 7.4 Gifts of appreciation such as gifts at Christmas or "Thank You" gifts given at the end of a school term, which have no substantial financial value (i.e. less than £25) can be accepted and do not need to be declared to the Headteacher. Any gift received in excess of £25 must be authorised by the CFO.

7.5 Under no circumstances should employees accept cash as a gift, even below £25, unless it is cash for donations to the Trust's charitable funds. Any such donations must be handled in line with the financial procedures.

## **8. MOBILE PHONES & MOBILE TECHNOLOGY**

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8.1 Personal mobile telephones and mobile technology must not be used, except in exceptional circumstances:

- in the classroom during lesson times/when teaching is taking place;
- when supervising pupils outside of the classroom (e.g. at break times/lunch times);
- at any time when responsible for the health and safety of pupils, including whilst off school premises (e.g. on a school trip).

For the purpose of photographing/recording pupils, only school devices should be used.
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8.2 Employees must not:

- use their personal mobile phone or devices to contact pupils or their parent/carers;
- use their personal mobile phone or devices to take photographs of pupils or retain personal information regarding the pupils;
- give out their personal phone numbers or contact details, including personal email addresses to pupils or their parent/guardians;
- keep inappropriate or illegal content on any school owned device.

8.3 Where there is a need to deviate from any of the above (e.g. in an emergency situation) employees must inform their Headteacher immediately or as soon as practically possible and ensure that all information is deleted as appropriate and at the earliest possible opportunity.

8.4 The above points aim not only to protect pupils but also to protect employees from allegations of misconduct or inappropriate behaviour.

8.5 Employees bringing a personal mobile phone or handheld device into school do so at their own risk. The Trust will not be held responsible or accept any liability for personal equipment that is lost or is stolen.

8.6 Employees should use Trust-approved communication systems for work-related communication wherever possible. The use of personal messaging applications (such as WhatsApp and Messenger) for formal work matters, safeguarding concerns, pupil-related communication or decision-making should be avoided. Where such platforms are used for informal or operational purposes, staff must maintain professional boundaries and ensure compliance with data protection, confidentiality and safeguarding requirements

## 9. NOTIFICATIONS OF CONVICTIONS/CAUTIONS

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9.1 Employees **must** disclose **any** cautions or convictions or if they become subject to a criminal investigation:

- prior to or on appointment;
- at any other time during their employment. Where employees receive any new cautions or convictions or become subject to a criminal investigation during their employment this must be disclosed as soon as possible to their Headteacher. Consideration will be given to how any disclosure impacts on an individual's role within school.

9.2 The above also applies to any driving convictions received by prospective and existing employees.

## 10. PERSONAL APPEARANCE & DRESS CODE

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10.1 It is important that all employees ensure that their dress and personal appearance is appropriate at all times. All employees must therefore:

- be responsible for their general presentation and personal appearance;
- be considerate of and promote a positive image of the school / Trust;
- ensure that clothing and any jewellery worn is appropriate to the role being undertaken (N.B. It is recognised that some roles will require employees to wear sports clothes, such as those involved in PE. For these individuals, appropriate sportswear and equipment should be worn and jewellery must be kept to a minimum to avoid injury);
- ensure that clothing and personal appearance is appropriate and will not cause embarrassment or offence to others. Clothes should be non-offensive and contain no provocative logos or remarks;
- ensure that clothing does not over-expose parts of the body (e.g. stomach or chest) or is transparent. Tight or revealing clothes including mini-skirts, low cut tops or low waistlines are not considered appropriate;
- dresses, skirts and tailored shorts should be of a reasonable length;
- ensure that footwear is suitable for the duties undertaken. Strapless sandals or flip-flops which do not provide necessary protection or are considered a health and safety risk should not be worn, unless there is a medical reason for doing so.

### 10.2 **Health & Safety:**

- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) must be worn as directed/instructed/trained or where a risk assessment indicates that it is necessary to control residual risks.

### 10.3 **Religion & Faith:**

- The Trust recognises the diversity of cultures and religions of its employees and will take a sensitive approach when this affects dress requirements.
- Employees of particular faiths or religions, who are required to wear specific types of clothing will be respected subject to where this may pose a hazard to the health and safety of anyone or where this impacts on teaching and learning.

### 10.4 **Hair:**

- Hair (including facial hair) should be neat and tidy at all times and hair should always be worn tied back when handling food or where there may be a health and safety risk.

### 10.5 **Tattoos / piercings:**

- Any visible tattoos should not be offensive to others. Where they are deemed to be offensive or are of an adult nature they should be covered appropriately. You may also be asked to remove or cover up visible body piercings.

10.6 The above list is not exhaustive in defining acceptable and unacceptable standards of dress and appearance and employees should use common sense in adhering to the principles listed above. The school / Trust reserves the right to highlight any inappropriate clothing and may require employees to address this matter if necessary.

10.7 There may be times when employees wish to support different charities, for example, Jeans for Genes Day and Christmas Jumper Day. On these occasions employees must seek permission from the Headteacher prior to participating and must still be mindful of the principles contained within this code.

10.8 Failure to adhere to the Trust's standard of dress and appearance could constitute misconduct and may result in disciplinary action.

## **11. PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS**

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11.1 It is recognised that there may be occasions where personal relationships exist amongst individuals at work. Where such employees are, or may be, working closely with colleagues with whom they have a personal relationship, they must:

- ensure that any such relationships do not adversely affect their employment or ability to carry out their role;
- protect against bias/unfair advantage or prejudice, particularly where they have supervisory or managerial responsibility over another;
- avoid situations where there is potential for conflict of interest;

- ensure that situations do not develop where other employees feel unable to speak openly and honestly, or feel that a relationship is having an adverse impact on their own employment;

11.2 The reason for this is to protect all parties from any accusations of breaches of confidentiality or the abuse of authority or conflict of interest.

11.3 A **personal** relationship is defined as:

- A family relationship (e.g. Grandparents, siblings, children & grandchildren (including in-laws and step children));
- A sexual/romantic relationship (e.g. spouses or partners);
- A business/commercial/financial relationship; or
- Any other close personal friendship or relationship.

NB. This is list not exhaustive.

11.4 An employee involved in any part of the recruitment process who has a personal relationship with an applicant should declare this from the outset. They should also not act as a referee for that person where possible. Such employees must not be involved in the following:

- Recruitment processes;
- Decisions relating to pay in respect of that individual;
- Decisions related to or the management of the employee's performance;
- Any conduct issues that arise that may involve the employee.

11.5 Disclosure of a Personal Relationship

Employees must disclose to their Headteacher any personal relationship which develops or ends during the course of employment. If an employee is in doubt as to whether their relationship should be disclosed, they should speak to the Headteacher. In these circumstances, any disclosure will be treated fairly and confidentially.

## **12. INFORMATION MANAGEMENT**

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12.1 Employees must only take photographs/videos of pupils and their colleagues for school purposes in accordance with the Trust's procedures as outlined in the Trust's Data Protection Policy.

12.2 Employees taking photos for school purposes must only do so using school equipment. Personal devices are not to be used at any time, as per Section 8 of this policy.

- 12.3 Employees who are not clear on the use, collection or handling of data, including photography or recordings, must seek advice either from their Headteacher or the Trust's Data Protection Officer. Ignorance regarding Data Protection regulations cannot be used as an excuse for failing to comply with the requirements and will be treated as a serious issue which could lead to disciplinary action.

### **13. PROTECTION OF SCHOOL PREMISES/PROPERTY & EQUIPMENT**

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- 13.1 Employees are responsible for the safekeeping and the appropriate use of Trust premises, property and any equipment that is under their control or in their possession. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Trust owned documents;
- Books, including text books, reference books etc;
- Laptops/tablets;
- Mobile phones/hand held devices;
- Office equipment;
- Keys;
- Security passes;
- Credit cards;
- Any other property that may be given to individual employees.

- 13.2 Employees must:

- take good care of Trust property and equipment when used both onsite or outside of the premises;
- ensure that all property and equipment is maintained appropriately
- take reasonable steps to ensure the security of property at all times; this includes taking all steps to ensure that the property is not misplaced, lost or stolen, ensuring confidential information cannot be viewed, accessed or copied;
- obtain written permission for use of property or equipment where this is for non-work purposes, setting out the clear use, purpose and duration;
- not use the property or equipment if intoxicated through alcohol consumption or drug taking;
- comply with Health and Safety obligations at all times;
- respect both the premises and equipment;
- on the termination of their employment, return all property.

### **14. SECONDARY EMPLOYMENT**

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- 14.1 Employees may take up additional employment, paid or unpaid, providing it will not create a conflict of interest, cause reputational harm or adversely affect an employee's ability to carry out their duties and responsibilities effectively and efficiently.
- 14.2 Paid or unpaid employment includes, but is not limited to:
- taking up employment with any employer on any type of contractual arrangement;
  - running your own business;
  - private tutoring;
  - holding directorships or trusteeships;
  - participating or having any other interest in organisations that may be a competitor or supplier to the school.
- 14.3 Disclosure must be sought from the Headteacher before taking up any additional employment. Carrying out public duties (e.g. jury service) does not count as additional employment.
- 14.4 Employees must not use any Trust property or facilities to support additional employment without prior permission from their Headteacher and any customer must be informed that the private nature of the work is not connected with the school / Trust.

## **15. SICKNESS ABSENCE: REPORTING PROCEDURES**

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- 15.1 It is essential that all employees comply with the procedure for notifying any absence in accordance with the Trust's arrangements.

### **OAK Trust Employee Sickness Absence Reporting Procedure:**

\* Employees **must** notify the Headteacher or the school's nominated member of staff by 7.00am on the morning of each absence during the first 5 working days of absence (after which a sicknote from a medical professional must be provided).

\* Contact with the school must be made by telephone, or in exceptional circumstances by text.

\* The employee's next of kin may contact the school in exceptional circumstances only.

Failure to follow this notification procedure may lead to formal disciplinary action.

- 15.2 Once an employee has notified the school of their absence, the employee should maintain regular contact with the school.
- 15.3 Employees who are absent for:
- Less than 7 calendar days must complete a self-certification for their absence.

- 7 calendar days or more must provide a valid Fit Note from their GP/Consultant or other relevant medical professional..

15.4 Failure to follow the sickness reporting procedures may result in disciplinary action.

## **16. SMOKING & SUBSTANCE MISUSE**

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### **16.1 SMOKING**

Smoking or vaping is not permitted anywhere on Trust premises or in the immediate vicinity. Appropriate signing out must take place when any employee leaves the premises and lanyards must be removed whilst smoking. This is only permitted during their lunch break.

Breaches of this policy by any employee will be dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure and, in serious cases, may be treated as gross misconduct leading to summary dismissal.

### **16.2 ALCOHOL & SUBSTANCE USE**

Employees:

- Must not be under the influence of alcohol or any substance which affects their ability to perform their duties, including driving, operating machinery and supervising pupils;
- Must never possess alcohol or illegal drugs or substances at work. Non-prescription drugs, such as ibuprofen or paracetamol and prescription drugs must be kept in an appropriate secure location away from pupils;
- Must advise their manager if they are prescribed any medication which may affect their performance or ability to carry out their duties;
- Must alert the school and seek professional help as soon as possible if they have alcohol or substance misuse problems and commit to a programme to achieve a successful recovery;
- Must report to their Headteacher or member of their SLT when they suspect that someone is under the influence of or abusing alcohol or substances.

## **17. SOCIAL MEDIA**

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17.1 Social media is constantly evolving and employees are therefore reminded of their continued responsibility to keep up to date with relevant developments and review their privacy settings on a regular basis when using all social media.

17.2 Employees are personally responsible for the content that they publish on social media sites, including "Likes" (on Facebook)/ "retweets" (on X, formerly Twitter), You Tube, Snapchat, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, WhatsApp, etc.

17.3 It is important when using social media that all employees ensure that they do not bring the school / Trust into disrepute, by making potentially false, derogatory, offensive or defamatory comments, either directly or indirectly, about the school, colleagues, individuals, pupils or parents that could negatively impact on the school/trust's reputation or cause embarrassment. This includes posting images or links to inappropriate content or using inappropriate language.

17.4 Employees must note the following (this list is not exhaustive):

- Assume that everything can be traced back to them personally as well as to their school, their colleagues, pupils and parents;
- Avoid any conflict of interest and ensure that personal social networking sites privacy settings are reviewed on a regular basis and pupils are never listed as approved contacts. An exception to this may be if the child is the employee's own child, relative, or family friend;
- Potentially false, derogatory, offensive or defamatory remarks (direct or indirect) regarding the school, Trust, employees, pupils, pupils' relatives, the school/Trust suppliers and/or partner organisations must not be posted on social media sites;
- Employees must not represent their own views/opinions as being those of the Trust;
- Pupils must not be discussed on social media sites;
- Information must not be posted that would disclose the identity of pupils or could in any way be linked to a pupil. This includes photographs or videos of pupils or their homes;
- Employees must not divulge any information that is confidential to their school or a partner organisation;
- Employees must not post information on sites including photographs and videos that could bring the school, Trust or themselves into disrepute;
- Employees must not upload, post, forward or post a link to any pornographic material (that is, writing, pictures, films and video clips of a sexually explicit or arousing nature);
- When posting on social media sites employees must observe the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998 and must not use any offensive, obscene, derogatory, discriminatory language which may also cause embarrassment to the Trust, school, employees, pupils, pupils' relatives, Council suppliers and partner organisations;
- Employees must never impersonate another person;
- Employees must not upload, forward or post a link which is likely to: create any liability for the school (whether criminal or civil), breach copyright law or other intellectual property rights, or which invades the privacy of any person;
- Employees must not engage or communicate with students or parents regarding any school or Trust matters via their own personal social media accounts. Only the use of school or Trust accounts is permitted for this, and only where there is good reason for doing so;

- Employees must not post content that may breach professional standards or the standard reasonably expected of an employee.

17.5 The Trust will take disciplinary action against employees for inappropriate use of social media, including use of social media conducted outside of working hours.

## **18. DISCIPLINARY MATTERS**

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18.1 Failure to adhere to any of the principles of this Code of Conduct may constitute grounds for disciplinary action in line with the Trust's Disciplinary Policy and could result in summary dismissal. This includes:

- A personal breach of the Code;
- Failing to promptly report a suspected breach of the Code;
- Encouraging others to breach any part of the Code.

18.2 Employees who do not understand any of the principles contained within this Code of Conduct should seek advice and clarification from their Headteacher.