



Cheshire Academies Trust  
*Inspiring hearts and minds*

# **CAT Staff Code of Conduct**

**Next Review Date: Spring 2025**

## **1 Purpose**

- 1.1 The aim of this Code of Conduct for employees is to set out the standards of conduct expected of all staff and volunteers (hereafter referred to as employees) and to provide further information for employees. This should be read in conjunction with our disciplinary procedure and the Teachers' Standards.
- 1.2 This Code should make it clear to employees the expectations Cheshire Academies Trust has of them. Employees should note that this Code is not exhaustive in defining acceptable and unacceptable standards of conduct and employees must use common sense in adhering to the underpinning principles. If any employee is ever unsure what the expectations are in any given circumstance they should speak to their line manager or the Principal/CEO.
- 1.3 This Code does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

## **2 Scope**

- 2.1 The Code applies to all employees regardless of length of service including those in their probationary period. It also applies to agency workers and self-employed contractors although, unlike employees, breaches of the Code will not be managed through the disciplinary procedure.
- 2.2 As recognisable figures in the local community the behaviour and conduct of staff of Cheshire Academies Trust outside of work can impact on their employment. Therefore, conduct outside work may be treated as a disciplinary matter if it is considered that it is relevant to the employee's employment [see Disciplinary Policy].

## **3 Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children**

- 3.1 All employees are responsible for safeguarding children and promoting their welfare. This means that employees are required to take action to protect children from maltreatment, prevent impairment of children's health or development and ensure that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care. This will enable all children to have the best outcomes.
- 3.2 All employees must be aware of the signs of abuse and neglect and know what action to take if these are identified.
- 3.3 To do this, employees must have fully read and understood our child protection / safeguarding policies, be aware of our systems for keeping children safe and must follow the guidance in these policies at all times.
- 3.4 All employees must cooperate with colleagues and with external agencies where necessary.

## **4 Duty of care**

Staff must:

- Understand the responsibilities, which are part of their employment or role, and be aware that sanctions will be applied if these provisions are breached
- Always act, and be seen to act, in our pupils' best interests
- Avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and/or intentions
- Take responsibility for their own actions and behaviour.

## **5 Health & Safety**

### **All employees must ensure that they:**

- Have read and understand the Cheshire Academies Trust's Health and Safety Policy
- Comply with Health and Safety Regulations and use any safety equipment and protective clothing which is supplied to you by the Trust
- Comply with any hygiene requirements
- Comply with any accident reporting requirements
- Never act in a way which might cause risk or damage to any other members of the Cheshire Academies Trust community or visitors.
- Inform their line manager of any paid work undertaken elsewhere. This is to comply with the Working Time Regulations, which are a Health and Safety initiative.

## **6 Honesty and personal integrity**

- 6.1 Employees are expected to demonstrate consistently high standards of personal and professional conduct. The following statements define the behaviour and attitudes which set the required standard for conduct at our Trust.
- 6.2 Employees uphold public trust in Cheshire Academies Trust and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school, by:
- Treating pupils and colleagues with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to their professional position
  - Having regard for the need to safeguard pupils' well-being, in accordance with statutory provisions
  - Showing tolerance of and respect for the rights of others
  - 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
  - Ensuring that personal beliefs are not expressed in ways which exploit pupils' vulnerability or might lead them to break the law.
- 6.3 Employees must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of Cheshire Academies Trust and maintain high standards in their own attendance and punctuality.
- 6.4 Staff must maintain high standards of honesty and integrity in their work. This includes the handling and claiming of money and the use of Cheshire Academies Trust property and facilities.

## **7 Tackling discrimination**

- 7.1 Employees are required to understand the types of discrimination and bullying that pupils and colleagues may be subject to. Employees are required to have read and understood our Equality and Diversity policy and Anti Bullying and Harassment policy.
- 7.2 Employees must not ignore any form of discrimination. This includes inappropriate jokes and banter. Employees must positively promote equality and diversity and inclusion at all times.

## **8 Professional boundaries and relationships**

- 8.1 Employees in Cheshire Academies Trust are in a position of trust in relation to our pupils which means that the relationship between an employee and a pupil is not one of equals.
- 8.2 Employees must ensure that they avoid behaviour which might be misinterpreted by others. This includes any type of communication that they may have with pupils.

- 8.3 Employees must not make sexual remarks to any pupil or discuss their own sexual relationships with, or in the presence of pupils. Employees must not discuss a pupil's sexual relationships in inappropriate settings or contexts. Any sexual behaviour by a member of staff towards any pupil is unacceptable and illegal.
- 8.4 Employees must ensure that professional boundaries are maintained at all times. This means that employees should not show favouritism to any pupil and should not allow pupils to engage in any type of behaviour that could be seen to be inappropriate. Pupils are not employees or friends and should not be treated as such.
- 8.5 Employees should be aware that it is not uncommon for pupils to become strongly attracted to a member of staff or to develop an infatuation. If any member of staff becomes aware of an infatuation they should discuss it with their Principal immediately so that they can receive support on the most appropriate way to manage the situation.
- 8.6 For employees who are in a relationship with a colleague, parent or carer, or any other person associated with Cheshire Academies Trust we expect that they identify this to their Principal/CEO and ensure that this does not create a conflict of interest or affect their professional judgement or responsibilities in any way.

## **9 Confidentiality and protection of data**

- 9.1 Members of staff may have access to confidential information about pupils, colleagues or other matters relating to Cheshire Academies Trust. This could include personal and sensitive data, for example information about a pupil's home life. Employees should never use this information to their own personal advantage, or to humiliate, intimidate or embarrass others. Employees should never disclose this information unless this is in the proper circumstances and with the proper authority.
- 9.2 If an employee is ever in doubt about what information can or can't be disclosed they should speak to their Principal/CEO/Academy GDPR Lead/Trust Data Protection Officer
- 9.3 Cheshire Academies Trust holds and processes data that is protected under the Data Protection Act 2018. Employees are expected to comply with the Trust's systems for collecting, storing and using data. If any employee becomes aware that data is at risk of compromise or loss, or there has been a data breach, they must report it immediately to the GDPR Lead for their Academy or the Trust's Data Protection Officer.
- 9.4 Employees must ensure that they have read and understood all Trust policies that relate to data protection, including our GDPR staff user guide, Trust privacy notices and IT policies.

## **10 Physical contact with pupils**

- 10.1 There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for staff to have physical contact with pupils. Employees must ensure that they only do so in ways that are appropriate to their professional role and in response to the pupil's needs at the time. This should be of limited duration and appropriate to the age, stage of development, gender and background of the pupil. Employees should always be able to explain why they have made physical contact with a pupil.
- 10.2 There may also be occasions where a pupil is in distress and needs comfort and reassurance which may include age appropriate physical contact. If an employee is in this position then they should consider the way in which they offer comfort, ensuring that it is not open to misinterpretation and is always reported to their line manager.
- 10.3 Staff may legally physically intervene with pupils to prevent them from committing a crime, injuring themselves or others, causing damage to property, engaging in behaviour prejudicial to good order and to maintain good order and discipline. Physical force should never be used as a form of punishment.

10.4 Sexual contact, including grooming patterns of behaviour, with pupils is unlawful and unacceptable in all circumstances.

## **11 Social contact with pupils**

11.1 Employees should not establish or seek to establish social contact, via any channels (including social media), with pupils for the purposes of securing a friendship or to pursue or strengthen a relationship. Employees should use their work provided equipment only for communicating electronically with pupils. If there are any circumstances in which an employee has had to provide their personal contact details, including phone numbers, email address etc, to any pupil then they should report this to their Principal.

11.2 Cheshire Academies Trust's advice to staff is not to connect to pupils via social media or other communication channels [see Staff User ICT Policy]. The Trust will make exceptions to this in the case of immediate family members only.

11.3 Our Trust is part of our community and we recognise that, as members of the community, employees will come into contact with pupils outside of the Trust. We expect staff to use their professional judgement in such situations and to report to their line manager any contact that they have had with a pupil, outside of school, that they are concerned about or that could be misinterpreted by others.

## **12 Working one to one with pupils**

12.1 There will be times where an employee is working one to one with a pupil and this is acceptable. Employees need to understand that this means that they may be more vulnerable to allegations being made against them. Therefore, it is important that employees:

- Avoid meeting on a one to one basis in secluded areas of the academy
- Ensure that the door to the room is open or that there is visual access into the room
- Inform a colleague or line manager of the meeting, preferably beforehand
- Reports to their line manager if the pupil becomes distressed or angry.

## **13 Dress and appearance**

13.1 Working in Cheshire Academies Trust employees are role models to our pupils and how they present themselves is important. Our expectation is that staff are decently, appropriately and professionally dressed in work at all times. We do not permit the wearing of clothes that are revealing, allow underwear to be seen, have offensive logos or writing, or are ripped or torn at any times. If an employee is unsure whether any item of clothing is inappropriate, then they should not wear it to work. Employees can always speak to their line manager if they are unsure. Where we identify that an employee is wearing clothing that we do not find acceptable they will be informed.

## **14 Gifts and hospitality**

14.1 For many of our employees there will be a limited opportunity to accept gifts and hospitality, but all staff must be aware that it is not acceptable for staff to accept bribes. Therefore, any gift, promotional offer or hospitality, intended either for the employee or for Cheshire Academies Trust that exceeds a nominal value of £15.00 must be declared to the Principal/CEO and permission must be obtained before accepting. If an employee is ever unsure, then the best course of action is to politely decline the offer.

14.2 It is traditional for pupils and their parents or carers to give gifts as a small token of appreciation or as a thank you to members of staff at certain times throughout the academic year. This Code of Conduct is not designed to stop that practice. Staff may accept gifts from pupils and their parents or carers provided that they meet this definition. Staff should make the Principal aware of any pupil who is giving them gifts on a regular basis, or any pupil or parent or carer who expects something in return for a gift, as this would not be acceptable.

## **AND**

14.3 Staff should not give gifts to pupils unless this is part of a recognised practice in line with the academies behaviour policy.

## **15 Keeping within the law**

15.1 Staff are expected to operate within the law. Unlawful or criminal behaviour, at work or outside work, may lead to disciplinary action, including dismissal, being taken. However, being investigated by the police, receiving a caution or being charged will not automatically mean that an employee's employment is at risk.

15.2 Employees must ensure that they:

- Uphold the law at work
- Never commit a crime away from work which could damage public confidence in them or Cheshire Academies Trust or which makes them unsuitable for the work they do. This includes, for example:
  - submitting false or fraudulent claims to public bodies (for example, income support, housing or other benefit claims)
  - breaching copyright on computer software or published documents
  - sexual offences which will render them unfit to work with children or vulnerable adults
  - crimes of dishonesty which render them unfit to hold a position of trust.
- Write and tell the Principal (or CEO if they are the Principal or a member of central Trust staff) or the Chair of the Board in the case of the CEO, immediately if they are questioned by the police, charged with, or convicted of, any crime whilst they are employed at Cheshire Academies Trust (this includes outside of their working hours). The Principal and/or CEO in conjunction with governors and Board members will then need to consider whether this charge or conviction damages public confidence in Cheshire Academies Trust or makes the employee unsuitable to carry out their duties. If this is deemed to be the case the employee will be dealt with in line with the Trust's disciplinary policy.

## **16 Conduct outside of work**

16.1 Unlike some other forms of employment, working at Cheshire Academies Trust means that an employee's conduct outside of work could have an impact on their role.

16.2 Staff must not engage in conduct outside work which could seriously damage the reputation and standing of the Trust or the employee's own reputation or the reputation of other members of the Trust's community. Employees should be aware that any conduct that we become aware of that could impact on their role within the Trust or affect the Trust's reputation will be addressed under our disciplinary procedure. This includes use of social media even where comments are not publicly available.

16.3 We therefore expect employees to make their line manager aware immediately of any such situations that have happened outside of Cheshire Academies Trust.