



Elements
Diocesan Learning Trust

Flourishing together, in the love of God.

Staff Code of Conduct Policy

Approved September 2024



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1. Vision

Our vision has been developed to enable the coming together of like-minded Primary Schools in Dudley – schools that are separate, discrete *elements* that choose to coalesce as a cohesive whole to speak with one shared voice in education within the Borough of Dudley. Each person in these school communities, children, and adults alike, are also *elements* in bringing to fruition education that enables their own flourishing and that of others. They are unique individuals, each with their own agency and characteristics, but who have an exponential effect when working together with a shared vision and purpose.

This is the vision in which the headteachers, governors and wider stakeholders have placed their trust and it is essential that it is upheld at every stage.

Each school, despite sharing some similarities, has its own unique context, community, culture, ethos, vision, and values. These will be honoured at all times as part of Elements Diocesan Learning Trust.

The vision is deeply rooted in, and is an outworking of, the Church of England’s Vision for Education. Elements Diocesan Learning Trust is committed in being ‘Deeply Christian: Serving the Common Good’, inspired by the particular scripture in John 10:10 where Jesus declares ***‘I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full!’***. These words, combined with the vision’s four main guiding *elements* - educating for Wisdom, Knowledge & Skills; Hope & Aspiration; Community & Living Well Together; and Dignity & Respect form the core vision for Elements Diocesan Learning Trust.

At times, it is expected that interpretation of what the vision means in practice will vary between individuals and that there will be differences of opinion. At such times, discussion around decisions and actions will be respectful, honouring the four strands of the vision itself and remembering the original reasons for this collaboration.

These core *elements* of the Church of England’s Vision for Education have supported the formation of our founding core values.

2. Values

- **Wisdom** – The decisions we take are wise and are based on informed discussions and evidence and aimed at ensuring we achieve the best outcomes for all without forsaking our values

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- **Hope** – we have hope for a positive future and always finding positive outcomes
- **Honesty** – we are honest with all inside and outside our organisation, whilst being sensitive to how we deliver these messages
- **Community and Helpfulness** – we work in co-operation and partnership with all staff and wider stakeholders
- **Dignity and Compassion** – we treat all those within and outside our organisation with dignity, irrespective of the circumstances, and we show everyone compassion for the difficulties that they are experiencing
- **Respect** – we are respectful to all, dedicated to ensuring inclusivity and diversity with those that we work with and for others that meet, and our actions may affect.
- **Integrity** – we have strong principles rooted in our Christian mission that lead our actions and decisions

3. Aims, scope and principles

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 the 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](#).

Staff have an influential position in the school 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, central trust staff, trustees, local governors and volunteers to also act with personal and professional integrity, respecting the safety and wellbeing of others.

Elements Diocesan Learning Trust vision is deeply rooted in, and is an outworking of, the Church of England's Vision for Education. We are committed to being 'Deeply Christian: Serving the Common Good', inspired by the particular scripture in John 10:10 where Jesus declares '***I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full***'. Therefore, every adult in our school communities is expected to work in a manner that enables their own flourishing and the flourishing of others.

Failure to follow the code of conduct may result in disciplinary action being taken, as set out in our staff disciplinary procedures.

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, the school and its pupils.

4. Legislation and guidance

We must have a policy on staff behaviour, as explained in the Department for Education's [governance guide for academy trusts](#).

In line with the statutory safeguarding guidance [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#), we should have a staff behaviour policy/code of conduct, which should cover low-level concerns, allegations against staff and whistle-blowing, as well as acceptable use of technologies (including the use of mobile devices), staff/pupil relationships and communications, including the use of social media.

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

5. General obligations

Staff set an example to pupils. They will:

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- › 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
- › Not express personal beliefs in a way that exploits pupils' vulnerability or might lead them to break the law
- › Understand the statutory frameworks they must act within

6. Safeguarding

Staff have a duty to safeguard pupils from harm, and to report any concerns they have. This includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse, and neglect.

Staff will familiarise themselves with the school's child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures, and the Prevent initiative, and ensure they are aware of the processes to follow if they have concerns about a child.

Our child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures are available in school staff rooms and staff shared areas, as well as in the policies section of our trust and school websites. New staff will also be given copies on arrival.

6.1 Allegations that may meet the harm threshold

This section applies to all cases in which it is alleged that anyone working in the school, including a supply teacher, volunteer or contractor, 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 they 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 – this includes behaviour taking place inside or outside of school

We will deal with any allegation of abuse quickly and in a fair and consistent way that provides effective child protection while also supporting the individual who is the subject of the allegation.

A 'case manager' will lead any investigation. This will be the headteacher, or the chair of the board of trustees where the headteacher is the subject of the allegation.

6.2 Low-level concerns about members of staff

A low-level concern is a behaviour towards a child by a member of staff that does not meet the harm threshold, is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, and may be as simple as causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt'. For example, this may include:

- › Being over-friendly with children
- › Having favourites
- › Taking photographs of children on a personal device
- › Engaging in 1-to-1 activities where they can't easily be seen
- › Humiliating pupils

Low-level concerns can include inappropriate conduct inside and outside of work.

All staff should share any low-level concerns they have using the reporting procedures set out in our child protection and safeguarding policy. We also encourage staff to self-refer if they find themselves in a situation that could be misinterpreted. If staff are not sure whether behaviour would be deemed a low-level concern, we encourage staff to report it.

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All reports will be handled in a responsive, sensitive and proportionate way.

Unprofessional behaviour will be addressed, and the staff member supported to correct it, at an early stage.

This creates and embeds a culture of openness, trust and transparency in which our values and expected behaviour are constantly lived, monitored and reinforced by all staff, while minimising the risk of abuse.

Reporting and responding to low-level concerns is covered in more detail in the child protection and safeguarding policy. This is available in school staff rooms and staff shared areas, as well as in the policies section of our trust and school websites.

Our procedures for dealing with allegations will be applied with common sense and judgement.

6.3 Whistle-blowing

Whistle-blowing reports wrongdoing that it is “in the public interest” to report. Examples linked to safeguarding include:

- Pupils’ or staff members’ health and safety being put in danger
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation or statutory requirement
- Attempts to cover up the above, or any other wrongdoing in the public interest

Staff are encouraged to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible. Their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated, and their confidentiality will be respected.

Staff should consider the examples above when deciding whether their concern is of a whistle-blowing nature. Consider whether the incident(s) was illegal, breached statutory or trust procedures, put people in danger or was an attempt to cover any such activity up.

Staff should report their concern to the headteacher. If the concern is about the headteacher, or it is believed they may be involved in the wrongdoing in some way, the staff member should report their concern to the chair of the governing board.

Concerns should be made in writing wherever possible. They should include names of those committing wrongdoing, dates, places and as much evidence and context as possible. Staff raising a concern should also include details of any personal interest in the matter.

For our trust’s detailed whistle-blowing process, please refer to our whistle-blowing policy.

7. Staff-pupil relationships

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.

If staff members and pupils must spend time on a 1-to-1 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 should avoid contact with pupils outside of school hours if possible.

Personal contact details should not be exchanged between staff and pupils. 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 other than as part of an agreed reward strategy or given to all pupils equally, with the knowledge and permission of the headteacher.

If a staff member is concerned at any point that an interaction between themselves and a pupil may be misinterpreted, or if a staff member is concerned at any point about a fellow staff member and a pupil, this should be reported in line with the procedures set out in the school’s child protection and safeguarding policy.

8. Communication and social media

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School staff's social media profiles should not be available to pupils. If they have a personal profile on social media sites, they should not use their full name, as pupils may be able to find them. Staff should consider using a first and middle name instead, and set public profiles to private.

Staff should not attempt to contact pupils or their parents via social media, or any other means outside of the trust, in order to develop any sort of relationship. They will not make any efforts to find pupils' or parents' social media profiles.

Staff will ensure that they do not post any images online that identify children who are pupils within the trust without their consent.

Staff should be aware of the school's online safety policy.

9. Acceptable use of technology

Staff will not use technology on site or belonging to the school/trust 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.

Staff will not use personal mobile phones and laptops, or school/trust equipment for personal use, in school hours or in front of pupils. They will also not use personal mobile phones or cameras to take pictures of pupils.

We have the right to monitor emails and internet use on the school's IT system.

10. Confidentiality

In the course of their role, members of staff are often privy to sensitive and confidential information about the trust, its schools, staff, pupils and their parents.

This information should never be:

- Disclosed to anyone unless required by law or with consent from the relevant party or parties
- Used to humiliate, embarrass or blackmail others
- Used for a purpose other than what it was collected and intended for

This does not overrule staff's duty to report child protection concerns to the appropriate channel where staff believe a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm, as detailed further in the child protection and safeguarding policy.

11. Honesty and integrity

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

Staff will not accept bribes. Gifts that are worth more than £25 must be declared and recorded on the gifts and hospitality register.

Staff will ensure that all information given to the trust is correct. This should include:

- Background information (including any past or current investigations/cautions related to conduct outside of school)
- Qualifications
- Professional experience

Where there are any updates to the information provided to the trust, the member of staff will advise the trust as such as soon as reasonably practicable. Consideration will then be given to the nature and circumstances of the matter and whether this may have an impact on the member of staff's employment.

12. Dress code

Staff will dress in a professional, appropriate manner.

Outfits will not be overly revealing, and we ask that tattoos are covered up.

Clothes will not display any offensive or political slogans.

13. Conduct outside of work

Staff will not act in a way that would bring the trust, school, or the teaching profession, into disrepute. This covers conduct including but not limited to relevant criminal offences, such as violence or sexual misconduct, as well as negative comments about the trust or school on social media.

14. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually, but can be revised as needed. It will be approved by the full board of directors

Our full board will ensure this code of conduct is implemented effectively, and will ensure appropriate action is taken in a timely manner to safeguard children and deal with any concerns.

15. Links with other policies

This policy links with our policies on:

- Staff disciplinary procedures, 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
- Child protection and safeguarding
- Gifts and hospitality
- Online safety
- Whistle-blowing