RHT Staff and Volunteer Code of Conduct

Trust Executive

Lead reviewer	Chief People Officer
Approving board/ committee	Full Board
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INTRODUCTION

This Code of Conduct is intended as a guide to help all Trust staff and volunteers. It sets out standards of conduct which people are expected to follow when within or representing the Trust. Reference to this Code will be made in all contracts of employment and you are requested to ensure that you are familiar with the basic principles and apply them to your work.

ENQUIRIES

Any enquiries about this document or suggestions on how it can be improved should be addressed to the Chief People Officer.

1. PURPOSE

This Code has been developed to ensure that there are appropriate standards of conduct for the ways in which the Trust expects its staff and volunteers to behave. Trusts exist to promote learning, and it is important that the conduct of our employees and volunteers reflect this so that the learning process is positive and not disrupted. Trusts are also public institutions, which rely on public funding; this demands a high level of accountability and underlines the importance of a good reputation.

2. SCOPE

This Code of Conduct applies to all employees and volunteers of Richard Huish Trust. (Where the policy refers to employees or staff this will also include volunteers)

3. POLICY STATEMENT

3.1 CONDUCT

3.1.1 Responsibility of Employees and Volunteers

- All employees and volunteers have a responsibility to ensure the safe, effective and efficient running of the Trust and should therefore comply with all reasonable requests in order to meet the needs of our service.

3.1.2 Safeguarding of Pupils and students

- All staff must demonstrate that they are able to discharge their roles and responsibilities effectively when safeguarding and promoting the welfare of pupils and students. Staff must, as part of their induction to the Trust, be able to evidence that they have read and understood the current statutory guidance 'Keeping children safe in education' and the Trust's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

- All staff must understand and know how to operate the systems in place at the Trust that support safeguarding. In accordance with the Trust's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, staff members will be prepared to identify pupils and students who may be subject to, or at risk of, abuse and neglect, and will follow the necessary reporting and referral procedures and report concerns to the Designated Lead for Safeguarding and Whistleblowing procedures.

- Staff working in a 1 to 1 situation are more vulnerable to allegations. Staff should consider this possibility and plan and conduct such meetings accordingly. It is recommended that you:
    i. ensure there is visual access and/or an open door,
    ii. inform other staff of the meeting beforehand, assessing the need to have them present or close by,
    iii. always report any situation where a pupil or student becomes distressed or angry to a senior colleague.

  There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for staff to have physical contact with pupils and students, but it is crucial that staff do so in ways appropriate to their professional role. Staff should be aware that even well-intentioned physical contact might be misconstrued by the pupil or student, an observer or by anyone to whom this action is described. Never touch a pupil or student in a way, which may be considered indecent.

- Relationships formed with pupils and students must be based on mutual trust and respect. It is a criminal offence [Sexual Offences Act 2003] for a person in a position of trust in an educational establishment to engage in any sexual activity with a person under 18, with whom a relationship of trust exists, irrespective of the age of consent, even if the basis for their relationship is consensual.

- In the event of a relationship developing with a student 18 years or over, the member of staff concerned is required to declare this and any possible conflict of interest to the Chief People Officer, in confidence.

3.1.3 Social Media

- The growing popularity of personal web logs (blogs) and social networking sites, such as Facebook, X, Instagram and SnapChat may raise issues, particularly where employees choose to write about their work and the Trust in which they are employed. Staff should be aware of the Trust's **Acceptable Use Policy**.

- Staff should ensure that the content of their blogs/social networking sites does not bring the Trust into disrepute or breach their obligations in relation to confidentiality and appropriate behaviour.

- Staff should not be in contact with current pupils and students via that member of staff's personal communication or other social networks – phone, Facebook, email etc. Once pupils and students have left it is advised that staff wait 2 years. Staff should only use pupils and students' contact details for Trust related business. Where staff have family members who are pupils and students or have pre-existing relationships with pupils and students, your line manager must be informed.

3.1.4 Photography and videos

- Photographs and videos should only be taken with the consent of pupils (parents and guardians) and students and should be deleted as soon as practically possible.

- A student or pupil can change their preferences at any time so it is advised to check permissions each time you take/use a photograph.

- Pupils and students who have not provided consent to have their photograph taken or be filmed will have their wishes respected. If a student or pupil changes their consent preferences all references to them should be removed immediately you are aware of the change of consent, wherever possible. With printed publications, the images should be removed when the document is next updated.

3.1.5 Computers and IT

- The Trust wants employees to use computers to the full and to feel competent and comfortable about doing so. However, it is essential that computers are used appropriately.

- Guidance documents exist in relation to the use of computers and information technology. Employees must be familiar with, and abide by the Trust's **Acceptable Use Policy available on SharePoint.**

3.1.6 Alcohol and Drug Misuse

- If an employee has an alcohol or drug related problem, the Trust views this as a serious illness, which should be treated under an Alcohol/Drug Recovery Programme. In these circumstances, the Trust will be sympathetic, but will ensure treatment is sought for the condition.

- Trust policy does not allow the consumption of alcohol by staff or pupils and students at any time during a trip or visit of any kind.

3.1.7 Personal Conduct

- Employees should maintain high standards in terms of language and behaviour in order to avoid giving offence to other employees, pupils and students or visitors to the Trust.

- All Academies sites are non-smoking / non-vaping.

3.1.8 Notification of Criminal Convictions and other Required Disclosures

- If an employee is convicted of a criminal offence, they must inform the Chief People Officer of the nature of the conviction, at the earliest possible opportunity even if it does not directly relate to their work.

- Employees will also be asked to complete an annual self-declaration form confirming that they have not received any criminal convictions during the last 12 months.

3.1.9 Data Protection and Confidentiality

Within the Trust, communication should be open and informative to all. However, all information should be considered confidential to outsiders and academic records of pupils and students should not be divulged unless required by law or expressly authorised to do so. Personal information on anyone is internally confidential unless part of agreed procedures. Any breach of confidence is a serious disciplinary offence. If an employee is in doubt about such a matter, they should consult the Chief People Officer.

- Regarding personal and sensitive data, in accordance with the Trust Data Protection and Security Policy, staff members are required, under the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018, to:

    - Consider the legal basis for collecting the data, ensuring that this is documented.
    - Ensure that the data is stored on a GDPR-compliant server, and that the data is not held for any longer than necessary.
    - Securely dispose of the data when the relevant retention period ends.
    - Report any data protection breach to the Data Protection Lead.

3.1.10   Whistleblowing Policy

- The Whistleblowing Policy is intended to encourage and enable employees to raise serious concerns rather than overlooking a problem or 'blowing the whistle' outside. The Whistleblowing Policy is available on SharePoint and on the external Trust website.

3.1.11   Personal Interests/Conflict of interests

- Should an employee find that their role in the Trust might be prejudiced by a conflict of interest they should report the conflict of interest to their line manager. An example might be that they have been asked to sit on an interview panel and the interviewee is a personal friend or a relative.

- All members of the Senior Management Team (SMT) are required to declare their interest both personal and financial annually, a register of interests of SMT and Governors is maintained by the Clerk to the Local Governing Body and is made available for public inspection if requested.

3.1.12   Other Employment

- Employees should not engage in other employment if doing so will have an adverse effect on the way in which their duties are performed, or which would result in a conflict of interests. If an employee has any doubts they should contact their line manager.

- Private work, or work connected with an outside interest, must not be done in Trust time, or with the use of Trust materials without the consent of the line manager.

3.1.13   Payment of Fees

- If the remunerated activity takes place partly or wholly in Trust time, the employee should expect an appropriate proportion of the fee to be paid to the Trust. Payment to the employee should reflect preparatory and contracted work done out of normal Trust working hours. Only if all the work takes place out of normal working hours should the employee expect to receive the full remuneration themself. The Principal/Headteacher determines how far the Trust would require a portion of any fee.

3.1.14 Gifts and Hospitality

- The Trust is a publicly funded organisation, therefore as a general rule, personal gifts to individual employees should not be accepted. There are limited exceptions to this such as small items of nominal value (free promotional pens, calendars, and similar items) or gifts of £25 or less. Employees may accept such gifts but are advised to declare them to their line manager.

- It is the responsibility of every staff member to declare gifts of £25 and over, and politely decline the gift. If they feel it is inappropriate to decline the gift, it can be accepted, and the gift donated to a

charity/other local cause. This needs to be recorded in the Gifts and Hospitality Register and the line manager informed.

- It is the responsibility of every staff member to declare hospitality of £50 and over, and politely decline the hospitality offer. If they feel it is inappropriate to decline the hospitality, it can be accepted, and donated to a charity/other local cause. This needs to be recorded in the Gifts and Hospitality Register and the line manager informed.

- Staff should never accept lavish hospitality, or any hospitality which could be interpreted as a way of exerting an improper influence over the way they carry out their duties. The timing of hospitality in relation to procurement or purchasing decisions is especially sensitive.

- The Gifts and Hospitality policy is not intended to prohibit appropriate corporate entertainment and/or hospitality undertaken in connection with the Trust's business activities, provided the activity is customary under the circumstances, is proportionate, and is properly disclosed and recorded. Invitations to working meals, a social function to which other employees are invited, a general celebration, or a team sporting event are generally acceptable. However, offers of holidays, hotel accommodation, theatre or match tickets etc. should be refused. If in doubt, employees should seek advice from their line manager.

3.1.15 Private Telephone Calls

- Telephone facilities are adequate for the business they are expected to bear but at certain times of the day, they are likely to be congested. Private local telephone calls should therefore only be made in line with the Acceptable Use Policy [AUP].

- In accordance with the AUP Policy, the Trust reserves the right to monitor or access emails, phone calls, internet activity or document production, principally to avoid offensive or nuisance material and to protect systems from viruses, but also to ensure proper and effective use of systems.

3.1.16 Change of Personal Details

- Employees must inform HR of any change in their personal details; in particular, name, address and contact details.

3.2   ATTENDANCE

Lateness, unauthorised absence and repeated short-term sickness are all instances of poor attendance, which causes serious operational problems to the Trust. It creates difficulties in running efficiently and adds an additional burden to working colleagues which affects the quality of service to our pupils and students.

3.2.1 Sickness / Absence

- In the event of sickness, employees should follow Trust sickness / Absence reporting procedure.

3.2.2   Unauthorised Absence

- This is defined as any absence from work without informing or gaining permission from the line manager. This is regarded as serious misconduct, which could result in disciplinary action. A deduction may be made from an employee's salary for any unauthorised absence.

3.2.3   Other Absence

- The Trust has a comprehensive Absence Policy and Procedure, a copy of which is available from the Chief People Officer. There is also Parental, Maternity, Paternity, Adoption, Foster and Special leave entitlements. Employees should seek agreement with the Headteacher/Principal then the Chief People Officer at the earliest opportunity should they need to benefit from any of these provisions.

- If an employee needs time off to attend to personal business, for example to see a bank manager, solicitor, attend an interview etc., they must arrange the appointment for a non-teaching period or a time of day which causes least disruption.

3.3   HEALTH AND SAFETY

3.3.1   General

- The Trust's aim is to operate at all times in such a manner as to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of all its employees and pupils and students and other people affected by its operations.

- All employees are responsible for ensuring reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and other persons who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work.

- Employees are expected to adhere to the Trust's Health and Safety Policy, available on SharePoint, and co-operate with the instructions of the Headteacher/Principal to enable the Trust to meet its duties imposed by the statutory provisions.

- The Trust actively encourages employees to participate in raising Health and Safety Standards, and is receptive to suggestions.

3.3.2   Accident Reporting

- All accidents or injuries must be reported in the Accident Book. Line Managers should also be notified of 'near miss' incidents.

- For injuries that are more serious, employees should contact a First Aider , who will take action as necessary.

3.3.3   Parking

- Employees should observe the site speed limits at all times and park private vehicles in the allocated car parking areas.

3.3.4   Defect Reporting

- Employees should report any defect in equipment/buildings to either the Estates Manager or IT Manager to prevent potential damage to the equipment or staff/pupils and students.

3.4   GROSS MISCONDUCT

This is misbehaviour or actions that are of such seriousness as to warrant summary dismissal and in some cases may result in referral to the disclosure and barring service or directly to the Police.

It is impossible to provide an exhaustive list of the types of offences, which are regarded as gross misconduct. However, the following provides examples of the offences, which, depending on the circumstances of the particular case, would be considered by the Trust as gross misconduct:

a) refusal to carry out duties or reasonable instructions or to comply with Trust rules

b) theft or unauthorised possession from other employees, the Trust or pupils and students

c) assault, abusive, threatening or intimidating behaviour, in the course of his/her duties as an employee, whether or not on Trust property

d) serious damage deliberately sustained to Trust property

e) falsification and/or irregular practice in respect of cash, expense claims, records or returns, fraud, or attempt to defraud

g) bribery or corruption

h) unauthorised access to information held on computer

i) a serious act of insubordination

j) gross negligence which causes unacceptable risk, loss, damage, injury or damages the public reputation of the Trust

k) a conviction at court for a criminal offence whether or not committed in connection with the Trust which may affect the employee's suitability for continued employment

l) engaging in any sexual activity with a person under 18, with whom a relationship of trust exists, irrespective of the age of consent, even if the basis for their relationship is consensual.

m) Serious breach of safeguarding policies and procedures

n) a serious contravention of the Network Code of Practice

o) attempting to view/purchase/download obscene/pornographic material using Trust property in this connection

p) actions that seriously undermine the values of the Trust and which may bring the organisation into disrepute.

Communication systems may be accessed when the Trust suspects that the employee has been misusing systems or facilities, or for the investigation of suspected fraud or other irregularity. Access will be secured by the systems manager, only with the permission of the Principal/Headteacher.

3.5 **Dress Code**
The Trust requires all staff and volunteers to make good judgements with regard to the appropriateness of what they wear and how they present themselves whilst at work. Staff and volunteers should consider the professional standards expected of people working in education as well as what is appropriate in terms of the demands and the expectations of their specific role which could also include and require them to wear personal and protective equipment. Where staff have further questions relating to Dress Code, they should take advice from their line manager.

4. QUALITY MANAGEMENT

4.1 Any incidences of misconduct will be dealt with according to Disciplinary Procedure and will be reported at the Trust People & Performance Committee

5. RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

This Code operates in conjunction with the following documents:

- Acceptable Use (IT) Policy

- Disciplinary Procedure
- Equality & Diversity Policy including SEND and Accessibility
- Equal Opportunities in Employment Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Privacy Notice for Employees
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) Publications
- Safer Recruitment & Selection Procedure
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Data Protection and Information Security Policy
- Allegations of Abuse against Staff Procedure