

Staff Code of Conduct

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Heart of Mercia Multi-Academy Trust (HoM) is committed to treating all members of its community with respect and courtesy. All staff and others working at HoM and its member academies are expected to maintain and generate confidence in the Trust and to support its good name in the community through the demonstration of high standards of personal conduct.

Learners, staff, and everyone involved in the life of the Trust have the right to expect that they will be protected by the Trust's duty of care to them. This Code of Conduct seeks to provide a framework of acceptable standards that will ensure a working and learning environment where honesty, integrity and respect are constantly reflected in personal behaviour. It also seeks to provide a framework to promote well-being in the workplace and to ensure that staff are supported and enabled to perform their professional duties.

All of those working for HoM are in a special position of influence and trust and are accountable for the way in which they exercise their professional responsibilities as educational workers, and the obligations of this trust are considerable. Staff are expected to exhibit behaviour that models the highest possible standards within the institutions of the Trust and the wider community.

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to help staff to be clear about the acceptable standards of behaviour expected of them while they are working for the Trust. In interpreting this Code, staff should act in a reasonable manner. The Code sets out expected standards of conduct in several areas. Breaches will be taken seriously and may result in disciplinary action.

Further guidance for staff can be found in the Trusts Guidance for Heart of Mercia Multi-Academy Trust Employees on Safer Working Practices

<https://heartofmerciaschools.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Guidance-for-HoM-Staff-on-Safer-Working-Practices.pdf>

1.3 Scope

Whilst the Code of Conduct forms a part of the employment contract, some of the statements have an advisory dimension and should help to reduce the risk of allegations of misconduct, including improper or unprofessional conduct.

Staff should be aware that breaches of the law and other professional guidelines could result in disciplinary action being taken against them, criminal action and/or other

Policy document

proceedings including barring by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) from working in regulated activity or, for acts of serious misconduct, prohibition from teaching by the Teacher Regulation Agency (TRA).

The Code of Conduct is not intended to provide an exhaustive list of dos and don'ts, rather its intention is to indicate the principal areas of appropriate conduct and to illustrate the standards expected. Staff must remember that they are role models and should conduct themselves as such in their interactions with all members of the community at their academy and the wider Trust.

The Code of Conduct applies to all staff and workers employed by HoM and to volunteers who work on its behalf. References to 'staff' are taken to include all workers and volunteers as appropriate.

If staff are unclear about any aspect of it or if they are not certain whether a particular aspect of conduct is acceptable, they should seek guidance from their line manager, a senior member of staff at their academy, the HR officer at their academy, members of the Trust Executive and/or the Trust HR Director.

2 Staff Responsibilities

2.1 Staff must be aware of the standards of behaviour required by the Trust and are responsible for their own conduct and behaviour.

2.2 Staff are expected to understand and abide by all HoM policies and procedures, and those of individual HoM academies as appropriate.

- HoM policies are published on the Trust website <https://heartofmerciamultiacademytrust.org.uk/about-us/policies-reports/#policies>
- Policies of individual HoM academies are available from the relevant academy.

It is the responsibility of individuals to ensure that they are familiar with them.

2.3 All staff will consistently promote appropriate standards of learner behaviour, whether inside or outside of the classroom.

2.4 The welfare of our learners is of paramount importance. Staff must understand their responsibilities for, and be committed to, promoting, and safeguarding the welfare of children, young persons, and vulnerable adults whether responsible for, or in contact with, them.

Staff must not ignore, initiate, or encourage extremism. This includes the requirement to be alert to the risks of how learners can be drawn into extremism and to pass any

Policy document

suspicions or relevant information to the Designated Safeguarding Lead at their Academy, or, in their absence, any member of the academies Safeguarding Team or the HoM Safeguarding Co-ordinator.

Staff are undertaking a regulated activity; it is an offence for anyone to undertake such activity if they are barred from doing so. Should any person during their work with the academy become barred, this will result in disciplinary action up to and including, the termination of their relationship with the Trust.

2.5 Staff have a duty to safeguard learners from abuse (physical, sexual, and emotional), neglect and from contextual safeguarding concerns. The duty to safeguard our learners includes the duty to report concerns about a learner to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) or designated deputies. Staff must be familiar with the academies child protection and safeguarding policy and the latest version of the DfE guidance [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#).

2.6 Staff may only be absent from work where that absence is authorised, or they are ill. Absence would normally be in accordance with their academies policies for sickness and ill health management, leave of absence and/or staff development policies.

Staff should always intend and plan to arrive for work on time and fulfil their work obligations at the times specified.

2.7 Staff should not consume or be under the influence of alcohol or any substance, including prescribed medication, which may affect their ability to perform their duties competently and appropriately supervise and ensure the safety and welfare of learners. Staff must not bring any illegal substance on to their academies site.

2.8 Staff must inform HR at their academy of changes to personal record details.

2.9 Staff should use positive language, statements, and strategies so that learners feel valued, can learn, and understand what we expect of them in any situation. This includes all forms of communication, whether in person or via written or electronic feedback and communication.

2.10 Staff are expected to always wear their academy identity lanyard or agreed alternative openly and visibly.

2.11 Staff must inform the Principal/Head of their academy in the event of a criminal conviction. This will be treated as strictly confidential information and disregarded unless it directly relates to work undertaken for the Trust.

- 2.12** Much of the Trust's work is of a confidential or personal nature. As such, it is bound by Data Protection legislation and the Freedom of Information Act (2000). Employees should not under any circumstances disclose information to anyone whom the Trust and/or its academies may consider has no right to receive it.

Staff must adhere to the Trust's Data Protection and Freedom of Information policies.

These can be found at: <https://heartofmerciamultiacademytrust.org.uk/about-us/policies-reports/#policies>

- 2.13** Trust buildings and grounds are non-smoking sites. Trust staff are expected to refrain from smoking anywhere on a HoM academy site – this includes the use of e-cigarettes or vaping equipment.

3 Working with learners

- 3.1** Staff must ensure that all interaction with learners remain on a professional basis, is conducive to learners' educational success and is not open to misinterpretation. Staff act as role models for young people and should be mindful of the need to maintain positive interactions with learners at all times.

To assure safer working practice staff should refer to the Guidance for HoM Staff on Safer Working Practices and the document Professional and Personnel Relationships (cimpres.io), which is based on the advisory Guidance for Safer Working Practices for Adults Working with Children and Young People.

- 3.2** Staff will treat all learners fairly, regardless of their age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, sex, race, religion or belief or sexual orientation, in accordance with the Equality Act (2010).

- 3.3** Staff should refrain from interaction with current learners which could lead to:
- any form of romantic or sexual relationship with a learner whether they are under 18 or an adult is prohibited. It is an offence under the Sexual Offences Act (2003) for a person over 18 to have a sexual relationship with a child under 18 where that person is in a position of trust in respect of that child, even if the relationship is consensual. Any improper relationship as defined above is a breach of trust and will result in disciplinary action.
 - a personal friendship – it is accepted that colleagues may associate with current learners outside of school/college, for example in clubs, societies, sports teams and through familial contacts. Where this is the case, relationships must always be maintained on a professional basis and not be open to misinterpretation.

Learners must not be 'friends' with staff on personal social media sites. For further details on the use of social media in this regard please refer to the Guidance for HoM Staff on Safer Working Practices (available at <https://heartofmerciamultiacademytrust.org.uk/about-us/policies-reports/#policies>) and the acceptable use policy of the relevant academy of the Trust.

- c. a business, commercial or financial relationship.

Where a close personal relationship already exists with a learner (e.g., a relative), staff have a responsibility to disclose this in confidence to their line manager or a senior member of staff in the relevant academy. Such a relationship should be conducted appropriately to avoid negative perceptions from other members of staff or learners. Any such disclosure may need to be shared, in confidence and this would be discussed with the member of staff prior to any disclosure.

- 3.4** In line with the Trust's child protection and safeguarding policies, and individual academies Acceptable Use policies, staff should not communicate with learners through personal email accounts or personal social networking sites, even on educational matters, but should use official HoM communication networks. Staff must ensure that any communication is both professional and necessary. It is recognised that during trips and visits, it may be necessary to use personal contact details to ensure the safety of learners; however, a school/college mobile phone may be provided for staff accompanying learners on trips.

Staff must maintain strictly professional boundaries, including all communications whether on or off academy premises and during or outside academy hours. Non-educational, private, or off-hours contact with learners—such as sending social media posts or personal messages—is strictly prohibited.

- 3.5** Staff will not use any form of physical intervention unless such action is designed to prevent harm or injury to a learner or others. Staff should not place themselves at risk in such a situation and should always endeavour to call for assistance in such circumstances. All incidents of this nature must be reported to the DSL at their academy and to the Head/Principal.
- 3.6** Staff will promote learners' health, safety and welfare and ensure that any safeguarding concerns are brought to the attention of the DSL or designated deputies at their academy.

4 Standards of Behaviour

- 4.1** HoM has the highest expectations of each member of staff. They act as role models and set an example for our learners and each other. Staff must maintain the highest standards of honesty and integrity in their work.

Policy document

4.2 Staff should always engage in professional contact with learners and forge positive, professional relationships with colleagues.

4.3 Staff should treat learners, each other and all other parties with fairness, respect and courtesy at all times and should not display discrimination, bullying, harassment, or discourteous behaviour of any kind. HoM takes a zero-tolerance stance on all harassment, including sexual harassment. Any breach of this may lead to disciplinary action, including dismissal for gross misconduct.

Allegations concerning the bullying and harassment of other staff will be dealt with under the HoM Anti-Bullying and Harassment policy, or the existing local Bullying and Harassment policy where a college or school has newly joined the Heart of Mercia Multi Academy Trust.

4.4 Political and religious activity at work that could be interpreted as contradictory to the interests of the HoM Trust, or its academies should not be undertaken.

5 Conduct outside of work

5.1 The off-duty hours of staff are not the concern of the Trust, except where private interests, conduct or activities could conflict with duty to the Trust, including bringing the Trust and/or its academies into disrepute. Staff should be mindful that their conduct outside of work is not open to misinterpretation or misrepresentation.

In accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education and the Teachers' Standards, staff must maintain professional boundaries and uphold public trust in all settings and at all times—whether on or off academy premises and during or outside academy hours.

5.2 Staff should be circumspect in their use of social networking sites and must not discuss Trust business or Trust issues, including that of individual academies of the Trust, on their personal social networking sites. The rationale for these stipulations, over and above child protection, is to protect staff themselves from false allegations or reputational damage, as well as to protect the Trust or its academies' reputation.

Staff must be mindful of their online presence so as not to bring themselves, and the Trust and its academies into disrepute or leave themselves open to misrepresentation and misinterpretation.

5.3 In line with the Trust's financial regulations and Anti-Fraud Policy and Procedures, all members of staff must declare any business interests outside of work that may be connected either to the supply of goods or services to the Trusts and/or its academies or be rewarded through association with the Trust and/or its academies.

Policy document

- 5.4** Whilst minor gifts or hospitality may be considered as part of the courtesies of working life, staff should be cautious about all gifts and hospitality. Where a situation arises where staff are uncertain of whether it would be appropriate to accept the offer of a minor gift or hospitality, the offer should be declined, or advice should be sought from their Academy Principal or Head.

In line with the Trusts Anti-Fraud Policy and Procedures, members of staff should not accept any gifts, rewards, or hospitality from any individual or organisation with whom they have contact in the course of their work such that would cause them to reach a position whereby they might be, or might be deemed by others to have been, influenced in making a decision or having treated the person who provided the gift more favourably than others, as a consequence of receiving the gift, reward or hospitality. Similarly, members of an employee's family should not receive such gifts or hospitality from actual or potential contractors or suppliers to the Trust and/or its academies.

5.5 Additional employment or activities

Staff should not enter into any other employment or activity which would interfere with their duties for the Trust.

- i. Teachers have a contractual duty to inform the Trust if they accept employment additional to their work at their academy. Teaching staff are not permitted to provide any form of paid private tuition to learners at their academy of the Trust, either individually or in groups, at any location, to prevent any perceived or real conflict of interest.
- ii. The Trust welcomes its staff undertaking examination marking (where the exam board is one used by the Trust for the relevant subject) as it believes this is of benefit to learners, as well as to staff's understanding and professional development. Staff can therefore mark on academy sites, where this does not interfere with their school or college duties, with notification to their line manager and the express permission of their Head/Principal. Staff who do so are reminded of the need to observe examination board rules regarding confidentiality and discretion when undertaking examination marking.

6 Representing the Trust

- 6.1** To preserve and enhance the reputation of the Trust, staff must:
- a. obtain approval from and consult with their Head/Principal before initiating any contact with the media or giving information to the media.
 - b. ensure that electronic communication and telephone calls are always professional in tone, style, and content.
 - c. maintain a high degree of professionalism in relations with learners, parents, and visitors to academies of the Trust.

Policy document

- d. Dress appropriately for the professional environment of their academy and conduct themselves appropriately when acting in a professional capacity and with due regard for the conclusion's others may draw from their attire and demeanour.
- e. ensure that Trust/Academy notepaper and the Trust/Academy logo and branding are used only by staff or by learners whom they are supervising when representing the Trust/Academy in an official capacity.

7 Trust property

7.1 To protect the environment in academies of the Trust and their physical resources staff must ensure that:

- a. Academy equipment is treated correctly, and damage is reported to the relevant estates or IT support team as appropriate.
- b. Energy and other resources are conserved and used in a sustainable manner.
- c. In the interests of security, equipment is secured or locked away (where possible) when not in use and windows and external doors are closed when a room is vacated.
- d. Any actual or potential health and safety problem is immediately brought to the attention of the Estates Manager in the relevant academy of the Trust.

8 Compliance and Verification

8.1 HoM requires all its employees to adhere to this staff code of conduct. It is unacceptable professional conduct to misrepresent themselves, their colleagues, or learners with regard to qualifications, health, contractual duties, or other behaviour which unfairly detracts from the position of others or confers personal advantage.

The Trust acknowledges it has the responsibility to give praise where due and reserves the right to act when performance or conduct are deemed unsatisfactory. Failure of employees to act in accordance with the principles and requirements set out above will almost inevitably lead to the employee being in breach of this code of conduct, and disciplinary action could result.

The Chief Executive, senior post holders of the Trust and other senior staff in academies of the Trust are responsible for ensuring that the Trust's disciplinary procedures are adhered to when initiating and supervising investigations into alleged breaches of this code of conduct by members of staff. The Trust undertakes that its code of conduct is published and made widely available.

8.2 The Trust has procedures by which staff and learners can express genuinely held concerns about behaviour or decisions they perceive to involve serious impropriety. Such concerns will be investigated with every reasonable assurance of confidentiality as appropriate.

Policy document

- 8.3** The Trust encourages employees to raise genuine concerns about suspected wrongdoing at the earliest practicable stage. Staff should refer to the [HoM Whistleblowing Policy](#) which seeks to balance the need to allow a culture of openness against the need to protect other employees against vexatious allegations or allegations which are not well-founded. This can be found at: [Policies & Key Documents | Heart of Mercia Multi-Academy Trust](#)

9 Equality Impact

The Trust's responsibilities towards promoting equality, diversity and inclusion have been considered when drafting this policy.

Date of review	Date agreed	LGBs	MAT Board	Review date	Comments
September 2025	November 2025	Spring 2026	December 2025	September 2026	