

Viking Academy Trust



Staff Code of Conduct

Approved by the Trust: Term 1 2022

Reviewed at least annually.

Last reviewed – Term 1 2025

Signed

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob', is written over a faint rectangular stamp.

Chair of Trust

Staff Code of Conduct

The Viking Academy Trust

Empowering Children Through Education: One Childhood One Chance

Schools in the Viking Academy Trust (VAT)

Chilton Primary School
Ramsgate Arts Primary School
Upton Junior School

This '**Staff Code of Conduct**' is for all the aforementioned schools

1. Aims, Scope and Principles

This Code of Conduct aims to ensure that there is consistency in what is expected of the employee and employer. It sets out guidance for employees and other adults working with children, with the intention of minimising the risk of being accused of improper conduct, particularly towards the young people with whom they come into contact during the course of their work. This guidance makes clear the conduct considered acceptable, and clearly indicates what action will be taken if Trust / school rules and/or policies are broken.

By creating this policy, we aim to ensure our school 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](#).

School 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, governors and volunteers to also act with personal and professional integrity, respecting the safety and wellbeing of others. Our Trust ethos of 'One Childhood, One Chance' drives us to empower children through education and this requires the highest standards of conduct and professionalism from our staff.

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 school and its pupils.

2. Legislation:

In line with the statutory safeguarding guidance [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#), we should have a staff code of conduct, which should (among other things) 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.



3. Adherence to the Code of Conduct

Our schools require that all staff, including volunteers and governors read (and if necessary seek clarification) and understand this Code of Conduct as everyone is required to comply with it. If they do not, the school may take disciplinary action against them in accordance with the school's disciplinary procedures (see the Disciplinary Policy). This may have serious consequences for staff, including the possibility of dismissal in the most serious cases. The school expects the work, conduct, and integrity of all staff, including volunteers and governors to be of the highest standard, since they directly affect:

- The learning and development of the pupils
- The success of the school
- Public confidence in the school

This Code of Conduct must be covered in Viking schools' induction arrangements for all new staff and volunteers (see the VAT Induction Policy). For most staff, this Code of Conduct will serve only to confirm what has always been their practice. Should they have any doubts about the advice contained in this document they should consult with their Head of School, the Executive Headteacher or the HR Director.

Related material: All staff must also read Part 1 of '[Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)' & the document, '[Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who Work with Children and Young People](#)' which provide clear advice on appropriate and safe behaviours for all adults working with children. The most up to date versions of these documents are available on our VAT website. If you do not have access to the internet, please inform your Head of School who will arrange for a printed version of this document to be provided to you.

4. General Obligations

Staff set an example to pupils. They will:

- Maintain high standards in their attendance and punctuality
- Never use inappropriate or offensive language in school
- Treat pupils with dignity and respect
- Treat colleagues with dignity and respect
- Treat members of the wider school community (e.g. family members, carers) with dignity and respect
- Recognise and respect school leadership and leaders' responsibilities
- Not seek to or act so as to undermine the authority or actions of school leaders
- 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
- Adhere to the Teachers' Standards

4.1 Personal Standards:

The personal standards of behaviour must be high in dealing with other staff, volunteers, governors and children. Public confidence in staff would be undermined if they:



- Take drugs or drink alcohol while at work/on duty, or drink at social events within or outside working hours to the extent that their work could be affected. (See the Drug and Alcohol Policy)
- Threaten, fight or assault anyone on the school premises. It should also be noted that any such action outside the school premises which could potentially bring the school into disrepute.
- Persist in verbal or non-verbal behaviour, which would intimidate anyone.
- Persist in verbal or non-verbal behaviour, which would bully or harass anyone.
- Steal, take without authority, or deliberately damage things that belong to the school.
- Use their position within the school inappropriately to advance the interests of any other person or organisation with which they are associated, or show favour to any friends, family or personal contacts.

4.2 Contact with parents and the general public

There is a general expectation of the school that staff will:

- Be polite to members of the public at all times
- Give/provide their name when speaking or writing to parents/carers and other members of the public or school community when speaking or writing on behalf of the school
- Ensure that any information provided in relation to the school is accurate
- Ensure that any information provided to third parties is in line with the GDPR
- Respect confidential information provided to them in the course of their work
- Avoid doing anything which could make the public doubt the motives, integrity of a member of staff of the school or bring the Viking Academy Trust into disrepute
- Ensure that any significant concerns or complaints expressed to them by parents, carers or the general public are passed on to the senior leadership of the school

4.3 Respect for others

All staff must:

- Treat others with respect
- Not discriminate unlawfully against any person
- Adhere to the Equalities and Diversity Policy and treat others equally regardless of ability, gender, age, race or position in school
- Treat other members of staff and colleagues of the school professionally. Staff must not single out another for treatment whereby they feel threatened, humiliated, undermined or patronised. This type of behaviour could be seen as harassment or, in serious cases, bullying. Please refer to the 'Bullying & Harassment Policy' for guidance on how to deal with such allegations.

4.4 Safe environment

All staff are accountable for the way in which they exercise authority; manage risk; and safeguard children and young people. Whether working in a paid or voluntary capacity, they have a duty to keep children and young people safe and to protect them from sexual, physical and emotional harm. Children and young people have a right to be treated with respect and dignity. It follows that trusted adults are expected to take reasonable steps to ensure the safety and well-being of children and young people. Failure to do so may be regarded as neglect.

4.5 Conduct: general guidance



Staff are responsible for their own actions and behaviour and should avoid any conduct which would lead someone to question their motivation and/or intentions. Everyone expects high standards of behaviour from school staff. They must:

- Adhere to the standards of behaviour outlined at the start of this Code of Conduct document
 - Always consider whether their actions are warranted, proportionate and safe and applied equitably.
 - Take reasonable care of pupils under their supervision with the aim of ensuring their safety and welfare
 - Continually monitor and review their practice and ensure they follow the latest guidance.
 - Comply with relevant statutory provisions which support the well being and development of pupils, including where these require co-operation and collaboration with a range of agencies, as well as teacher colleagues and other adults.
- **They must not:**
- Seriously demean or undermine pupils, their parents, carers or colleagues, or act towards them in a manner which is discriminatory
 - Misuse or misrepresent their professional position, qualifications or experience
 - Bring the reputation and standing of the profession into serious disrepute

5. Safeguarding and Child Protection

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 our child protection and safeguarding policies 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 other safeguarding policies and procedures are available for each school on school and Trust websites (www.vikingacademytrust.com) New staff will also be given copies on arrival. Safeguarding training will be delivered annually with regular updates. Staff starting a role part way through a school year will be trained as part of induction processes.

5.1 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 such allegation 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 Executive Headteacher, or the chair of the Trust where the Executive Headteacher is the subject of the allegation.

5.2 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 in a secluded area or behind a closed door
- 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 policy and low level concern 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.

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 our child protection policy – available for each school at www.vikingacademytrust.com.

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

5.3 Whistle-blowing

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

- Pupils’ or staff’s 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 school procedures, put people in danger or was an attempt to cover any such activity up.

Staff should report their concern to the Head of School / DSL. If the concern is about the Head of School / DSL or it is believed they may be involved in the wrongdoing in some way, the staff member should report their concern to the Executive Headteacher or Chair of Governors.

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

6. Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is any unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature that has a purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. It also includes treating someone less favourably because they've submitted or refused to submit to unwanted conduct of a sexual nature in the past, or harassment related to sex or gender reassignment. When this behaviour is unwanted, it includes (but isn't limited to):

- Unwanted physical conduct or 'horseplay' including touching, pinching, pushing and grabbing
- Continued suggestions for sexual activity after it has been made clear that such suggestions are unwelcome
- Sending or displaying material that is pornographic, or that some people might find offensive
- Unwelcome sexual advances or suggestive behaviour (which the harasser may perceive as harmless)
- Offensive emails, text messages or social media content
- Comments and jokes of a sexual nature
- Sexually suggestive looks and staring
- Sexual propositions and advances
- Promising things in return for sexual favours
- Physical contact such as massaging, hugging or kissing
- Sexual contact on social media

Staff will help create a positive environment that works to prevent sexual harassment. This includes calling out sexual harassment that they witness. All witnesses will be provided with appropriate support and will be protected from victimisation.

If a staff member is concerned at any point about incidents of sexual harassment (either directed at them or someone else), they should report their concern to the Head of School or HR Director. If the concern is about the Head of School or HR Director, 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 LAB. The school will investigate any complaints in a timely, respectful and confidential manner.

All staff will receive training on recognising and responding to incidents of sexual harassment. The school will monitor the treatment and outcomes of any complaints of sexual harassment or victimisation received to make sure that they are properly investigated and resolved, those who report or act as witnesses are not victimised, repeat offenders are dealt with appropriately, cultural clashes are identified and resolved and workforce training is targeted where needed.

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 one-to-one 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.

Staff, volunteers and governors should be made aware of the Trust's policy for accepting gifts including arrangements for the declaration of gifts received and given. It is against the law for public servants to take bribes. There are occasions when children or parents wish to pass small tokens of appreciation to staff, for example, Christmas or as a thank you, and this is acceptable. However, it is unacceptable to receive gifts on a regular basis or of any significant value. Money should never be accepted as a gift. Any reward given to a pupil must be in accordance with agreed practice within the school.

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 our child protection policy.

7. Communication and social media

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 school, 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 at the school without their consent.

Staff should be aware of the school's online safety policy along with the use of social media, smart and mobile technology policies.

8. Acceptable use of technology

Staff will not use technology in school 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 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 IT system.

9. Confidentiality

In the course of their role, members of staff are often privy to sensitive and confidential information about the school, 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 our child protection policy.

10. Honesty and integrity

Staff are subject to national and local terms and conditions of employment, which are tailored to their particular job. All Viking staff will be expected to comply with written or oral instructions, about the way in which they tackle their duties and conduct themselves.



Staff, volunteers and governors should avoid putting themselves in debt to a colleague where this would be likely to or could be seen to influence their work.

10.1 Accountability

All staff are accountable to the school for their actions. They must also respect and adhere to the management structure of the school, ensuring that management roles and decisions are not ignored or undermined. Managers have a responsibility to hold staff accountable for agreed actions and to themselves be accountable to the staff they manage.

10.2 Stewardship

All staff, volunteers and governors must:

- Use any public funds entrusted to or handled by them in a responsible and lawful manner
- Not make personal use of property or facilities of the school unless authorised to do so.

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

Staff will not accept bribes.

10.3 Staff Personal Information

Staff will ensure that all information given to the school 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 school, the member of staff will advise the school 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.

10.4 Personal Interests

An employee must not in their official or personal capacity allow their personal interests to conflict with the Trust's requirements, bring the reputation of the Trust into disrepute, or use their position improperly to confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person.

10.5 Registration of interests

All staff must comply with any requirements of the Viking Academy Trust to register or declare interests and to declare hospitality, benefits or gifts received as a consequence of their employment.

10.6 Openness

Staff must maintain appropriate confidentiality and not disclose information given them in confidence by anyone, or information acquired which they believe is of a confidential nature, without the consent of a person authorised to give it. Unless:

- They are required by law to do so and/or
- Disclosure of the information to the appropriate person is required to adequately safeguard a child or children. See the Whistle blowing Policy for further information

Staff must not prevent another person from gaining access to information to which that person is entitled by law.

10.7 Appointment of staff

Staff must not be involved in the appointment or any other decision relating to the discipline, promotion, pay or conditions of another employee, or prospective employee, who is a relative,



friend or partner. In this paragraph 'Relative' means a spouse, partner, parent, parent-in-law, son, daughter, step-son, step-daughter, child of a partner, brother, sister, grandparent, grandchild, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece, or the spouse of partner of any of the preceding persons. 'Partner' means a member of a couple who live together or who have a close personal relationship.

10.8 Duty of trust

All staff must, at all times, act in accordance with the trust that the school is entitled to place in them. In like manner, the school is expected to act in accordance with the trust that the employee is entitled to place on the school.

10.9 Trade union membership

We support the system of collective bargaining and believe in the principle of solving industrial relations problems by discussion and agreement. It may be advantageous for staff to belong to a trade union that represents them on the appropriate negotiating body. All staff are encouraged to be a member of an appropriate trade union.

11. Dress and Presentation Code

It is the Trust's policy to maintain an image of a professional public service organisation providing high quality services. A person's dress and appearance are matters of personal choice. However, staff should ensure that they dress decently, safely and appropriately for the roles they undertake. Those who dress or appear in a manner that could be considered as inappropriate could render themselves vulnerable to criticism or allegation, and may result in disciplinary action.

- Staff will dress in a professional, appropriate manner.
- Outfits will not be overly revealing, and appropriate for the professional setting our schools provide.
- Clothes will not display any offensive or political slogans.
- Full detail is outlined in our staff dress and presentation code

12. Conduct outside of work

Staff will not act in a way that would bring the 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 school on social media.

13. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually but can be revised as needed.

School Local Advisory Bodies (governing bodies) 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.

14. 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

Other Policy Links:

- Complaints procedures
- Managing Allegations
- Child protection
- Gifts and hospitality
- Online safety

- AUP
- Use of social media
- Use of smart and mobile technology
- Image Use
- Whistle-blowing
- Dress and Presentation Code
- Prevention of Sexual Harassment