





Staff Code of Conduct September 2024

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Linked policies and guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance for Safer Working Practices for those working with children and young people in education settings, • Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024) • The Teacher Standards, • BTC Trust Leadership Qualities Framework, • BTC Trust values • Positive Handling Policy • Disciplinary Procedure • BTC Trust Financial Regulations • Health & Safety Policy • Managing Allegations Against Staff Policy • Personal and Intimate Care Policy • Relationships and Sex Education Policy • Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy • Recruitment and Selection Policy • Staff Acceptable Use Policy • Whistleblowing Policy 	
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Contents

Guiding Principle	3
Introduction	3
Purpose and Intended Impact	3
Expected Professional Standards	4
Part 1: Working with Children and Young Adults	4
Safeguarding and Child Protection	4
Maintaining Professional Boundaries	5
Student wellbeing and inclusion	6
Social Networking	6
Integrity in Assessment and Reporting	6
Part 2: Professionalism	7
Professional Integrity and Responsibility	7
Respect and Courtesy	7
Promotion of Equity and Inclusion	7
Professionalism in the Workplace	8
Behaviour Outside of Work	8
Working with the Community and Partners	9
Commitment to Professional Development	9
Commitment to the Trust’s Values and Ethos	9
Ethical Use of Resources	9
Data Protection and Confidentiality	10
Appendix 1	11
– Underpinning Principles of Safer Working Practice	11

Guiding Principle

It is a fundamental expectation of all staff employed by the Bridgwater and Taunton College Trust (BTC Trust) that they will execute sound professional decision making at all times.

Introduction

This Code of Conduct outlines the standards of professional behaviour expected from all staff at the BTC Trust. It is based the principles and expectations set out in the:

- Guidance for Safer Working Practices for those working with children and young people in education settings,
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023),
- The Teacher Standards,
- the BTC Trust Leadership Qualities Framework,
- and the BTC Trust values of Ambition, Collaboration and Inclusion

and should be read in conjunction with these documents. Adherence to this Code is essential to maintaining a safe, supportive, and effective educational environment for our students and staff. This Code applies to all staff and other individuals who work or volunteer in our Trust settings. For most staff, this Code of Conduct will only serve to confirm their current daily working practice.

Purpose and Intended Impact

By adhering to this Code, staff will contribute to a positive Trust climate that supports both student achievement and staff wellbeing. Our Staff Code of Conduct is designed to:

- **Promote a Safe and Inclusive Environment:** Ensure the safety, wellbeing, and inclusion of all students, staff and the wider community by setting clear expectations for staff behaviour and interactions. This supports a Trust culture where every student and staff member feels secure, valued, and respected, in line with our commitment to Inclusion.
- **Uphold Professional Standards and Ambition:** Setting expectations of high standards of professionalism among staff, reinforcing the importance of integrity, accountability, and ethical conduct. This reflects our Ambition to be a leading educational institution that fosters excellence and inspires students to achieve their best.
- **Foster Positive Relationships and Collaboration:** Guiding staff in establishing and maintaining appropriate, respectful relationships with students, colleagues, parents and our communities. This encourages a collaborative environment where mutual respect and understanding are key, supporting our value of Collaboration.
- **Ensure Consistency:** Provide a consistent framework for staff behaviour across the Trust, helping to ensure that all students receive fair and equitable treatment. This contributes to a cohesive Trust environment where expectations are clear and uniformly applied.
- **Support Professional Development:** Encourage reflective practice among staff, promoting continuous professional development and the adoption of best practices in

education. This supports our overall goal of fostering Ambition and providing high-quality education and care to all students.

This Code of Conduct is not an exhaustive checklist of appropriate behaviour, but it highlights actions that are illegal, unsafe, unprofessional, or unwise in relation to children as well as expected standards and behaviours. There will be times when staff need to make decisions in the best interests of children, without specific guidance. Staff are therefore expected to exercise sound professional judgement, act openly and transparently, and make responsible choices to protect the welfare of the children in their care and the wellbeing of themselves and others.

This Code of Conduct will be included in every colleague's induction, and staff should be aware that breaches of this Code, the law, or other professional guidelines could result in disciplinary action, including dismissal.

Where it is alleged that a member of staff has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child;
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he/she would pose a risk of harm to children;
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

and/or behaved in a way that has harmed or may harm a colleague within the Trust community then the Trust and individual academies will follow the BTCT Managing Allegations Against Staff Policy, The BTCT Whistleblowing Policy (available on the Trust website) and the guidance set out in the current version of Keeping Children Safe in Education.

Expected Professional Standards

The following behaviour standards are established to ensure that all staff at the BTC Trust conduct themselves in a manner that aligns with the Trust's values, promotes a positive learning environment, and safeguards the wellbeing of students and adults. Adherence to these standards is essential for maintaining professionalism and trust within the Trust community and promoting the BTC Trust in a positive manner.

These standards are grouped into two key areas; those expectations which are paramount for working with children and young people and standards of professionalism.

Part 1: Working with Children and Young Adults

When working with children and young adults it is essential to establish clear behavioural expectations, to ensure safety and professionalism, and support legal and ethical standards. It fosters trust, guides decision-making, and promotes a positive and respectful environment for both staff and students. Staff must observe the following:

Safeguarding and Child Protection

- **Duty of Care:** All staff have a duty of care to ensure the safety and welfare of students. Any concerns about a student's wellbeing must be reported immediately to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) in accordance with the Trust's safeguarding

- policy.
- **Vigilance:** Staff must remain vigilant and proactive in identifying any signs of abuse, neglect, or other safeguarding concerns, and must act in accordance with Trust procedures to protect students.
 - **Exposure to inappropriate materials:** Staff, supply staff and volunteers must ensure that students are not exposed to any inappropriate materials. Staff and volunteers must ensure that children have appropriate controls with regard to access and personal passwords should be kept confidential.
 - **Sensitive or sexually explicit content in the curriculum:** Curriculum materials may include sensitive or sexually explicit content. Ensure resources are clearly linked to lesson objectives and address potential risks. Unplanned discussions on sensitive topics should be handled with care, and staff should seek guidance from a senior member if needed. Staff, including supply staff and volunteers, must avoid encouraging or participating in inappropriate discussions about sexual activity or behaviour.
 - **Reporting:** All staff must report concerns and incidents (including self-reporting) in accordance with the guidance set out in the current version of Keeping Children Safe in Education, the Whistleblowing Policy and/or the Managing Allegations Against Staff Policy. All concerns must be taken as genuinely held concerns and reported, whether or not they are believed to meet the KCSiE harms threshold. All staff must take personal responsibility for ensuring that they are aware of local reporting procedures.
 - **Principles of Safer Working Practices:** All staff must perform their role in a way that reflects the principles underlying Safer Working Practices at all times. These principles can be found at Appendix 1.

Maintaining Professional Boundaries

- **Appropriate Relationships:** Staff must maintain appropriate professional boundaries with students and parents at all times. Any actions or behaviour that could be perceived as favouritism, over-familiarity, or that could lead to allegations of inappropriate conduct should be avoided. Any sexual behaviour by a member of staff with or towards a pupil is unacceptable.
- **Use of Technology:** Communication with students via digital platforms should be limited to Trust-approved methods and used only for educational purposes. Personal contact with students through social media or other non-Trust-related channels is not permitted.
- **Physical Contact:** Physical contact with students should be avoided unless necessary for their safety, wellbeing, or to provide appropriate care. Any physical contact should be conducted with the utmost respect for the student's comfort and dignity and in alignment with the Trust's Positive Handling and/or Personal and Intimate Care Policy (available on the Trust website). Sexual or romantic contact of any kind with a student is against the law.
- **Professional Boundaries During Interactions:** Personal details should not be disclosed to students or parents, and staff should avoid engaging in personal discussions that could lead to misunderstandings or compromise professional integrity.
- **Relationships and associations:** Disclosing all known relationships or associations with students to the Headteacher or relevant member of the Executive Leadership Team.
- **Responding to Safeguarding Concerns:** Believing in the validity of all safeguarding concerns raised by students, parents, partners or the community and acting upon them promptly and appropriately.

Student wellbeing and inclusion

- **Unconditional Positive Regard:** Demonstrating an unconditional positive regard for all children, ensuring that each child feels valued, supported, and cared for.
- **Placing Students' Wellbeing and Learning at the Core:** Staff should place the wellbeing and learning of students at the heart of their professional practice. Where appropriate staff should adopt practice aligned with a trauma informed approach. Staff should always consider whether their actions are warranted, proportionate, safe and applied equitably.
- **High Expectations:** Maintaining high expectations for all children, being committed to addressing underachievement, and working to help all children progress regardless of their background or personal circumstances.
- **Fairness and Respect:** Treating all children fairly and with respect, taking their knowledge, views, opinions, and feelings seriously, and valuing diversity and individuality. All students are entitled to respect and privacy at all times.
- **Role Modelling:** Modelling the characteristics they aim to inspire in children, including good attendance, punctuality, enthusiasm for learning, a spirit of enquiry, honesty, tolerance, social responsibility, patience, and a genuine concern for others.

Social Networking

- **Professional Conduct:** Staff should avoid having students or ex-students as friends or contacts on personal social media accounts. Any online interaction with students or their families should be professional and limited to official Trust channels.
- **Privacy Settings:** Ensure that privacy settings on personal social media profiles are set to restrict access from students and their families. Staff should be mindful of the content they share online, avoiding posts that could be deemed inappropriate or unprofessional.
- **Online Interactions:** If staff interact with students or parents online, they should ensure that communication is transparent and open to scrutiny. Avoid engaging in private conversations or sharing personal information via social media.
- **Reporting Concerns:** Any inappropriate online behaviour or breaches of professional boundaries should be reported to the Headteacher, Executive Leadership Team or a senior member of staff. Staff should also report any incidents where they feel their personal information may have been misused or compromised.

Integrity in Assessment and Reporting

- **Fair Assessment:** Staff must ensure that all assessments of student work are conducted fairly, accurately, and without bias. This ensures that students are evaluated on their merit and that the assessment process is transparent.
- **Accurate Reporting:** When reporting on student progress or behaviour, staff should provide accurate and honest information. This helps in identifying areas for student support and ensuring that parents and colleagues have a clear understanding of the student's development.

Part 2: Professionalism

Professionalism is crucial for students, staff, and the public because it ensures a respectful, effective, and trustworthy environment. For students, it ensures that staff are positive role models and promotes a supportive learning atmosphere. For staff, it upholds ethical standards and enhances collaboration and job satisfaction. For the public, it builds confidence in the Trust's reliability and commitment to high standards.

As a public-sector employer, the efficient, effective and ethical use of resources and data management is crucial because it ensures accountability and transparency in the use of taxpayer-funded resources, which builds public trust.

Professional Integrity and Responsibility

- **Honesty and Integrity:** Staff must always act with honesty and integrity, ensuring that their actions and decisions are fair, transparent, and in the best interests of students and the Trust community.
- **Confidentiality:** Staff must respect the confidentiality of students, colleagues, and Trust-related information. This includes ensuring that sensitive information is shared only with those who need to know, in accordance with data protection laws and Trust policies. Staff must never use any confidential or personal information for their own or others advantage.
- **Compliance with Trust Policies:** Staff are expected to be familiar with and adhere to all Trust policies, especially those related to safeguarding, health and safety, equal opportunities, and professional conduct.
- **Criminal records:** Staff must disclose any cautions, convictions or relevant orders imposed upon them during their employment along with any arrest or criminal charges to the Headteacher or relevant member of the Executive Leadership Team as soon as possible after the event.

Respect and Courtesy

- **Respectful Interaction:** Staff should treat all students, colleagues, and members of the Trust community with respect and courtesy, regardless of their background, beliefs, or abilities. This fosters a positive and inclusive environment for everyone.
- **Positive Communication:** Staff should communicate in a clear, professional, and positive manner, whether interacting with students, parents, colleagues, or external partners. This includes using language that is respectful and appropriate for the educational setting.
- **Constructive Feedback:** When providing feedback to students, parents, colleagues, or community partners, staff should be constructive, supportive, and focused on improvement and development.

Promotion of Equity and Inclusion

- **Commitment to Diversity:** Staff must actively promote equity and inclusion, ensuring that all students, regardless of their race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, or socioeconomic status, have equal access to educational opportunities and support.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Staff should be aware of and sensitive to the diverse cultural backgrounds of students, colleagues, and community members. This includes adapting teaching methods and communication styles to meet the needs of all

learners.

- **Challenging Discrimination:** Staff have a responsibility to challenge any form of discrimination or prejudice within the Trust. This includes addressing discriminatory language or behaviour and fostering an environment where diversity is celebrated.
- **Inclusive Curriculum:** Staff should strive to deliver a curriculum that is inclusive, representing diverse perspectives and experiences. This helps all students feel seen and valued and supports a more comprehensive understanding of the world.

Professionalism in the Workplace

- **Punctuality and Attendance:** Staff are expected to be punctual and reliable, attending work regularly and fulfilling all scheduled duties. Consistent attendance contributes to the smooth operation of the Trust and demonstrates professionalism.
- **Dress Code:** Staff are expected to dress and present themselves at all times in a way that reflects the professional nature of the working environment, is aligned with the expectations placed on students by the local uniform policy (unless the nature of their role dictates otherwise) and is compliant with all local health and safety requirements and risk assessments. Where uniform is provided, this must be worn at all times whilst at work. This reflects respect for the role and the setting in which staff work.
- **Work Ethic:** Staff should demonstrate a strong work ethic, taking responsibility for their tasks and duties, and contributing positively to the Trust's mission and goals.
- **Decision Making:** Staff must not be involved in the appointment of, 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.
- **Smoking and other substances:** All BTC Trust settings are smoke and vape-free. Staff must not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs while on duty, including standby arrangements. Those taking medication that might impact their ability to care for children should seek medical advice on its suitability and notify their line manager.
- **Gifts:** Staff should avoid accepting any gifts that might be seen as bribes or lead to expectations of special treatment. Small tokens of appreciation, like gifts during the holidays, are acceptable, but regular or valuable gifts (over £20) and cash are not. Decision-makers in procurement must not accept gifts. Personal gifts to students are not allowed, as they can be misinterpreted as favouritism or bribery and any rewards for students should align with the academy's Behaviour Policy.
- **Health and Safety:** All staff must adhere to all health and safety regulations and protocols to ensure a safe working environment for staff, students, and the public. Staff must follow safety procedures, report hazards, and participate in training to prevent accidents and protect overall well-being. All staff have a responsibility for their own well-being and should report any hazards or practices that could compromise it.

Behaviour Outside of Work

- **Public Conduct:** Staff should be aware that their conduct outside of work can impact their professional standing. Behaviour that could bring the Trust into disrepute, even outside of working hours, should be avoided.
- **Social Media:** Staff should use social media responsibly, ensuring that their online presence is consistent with the professional standards expected by the Trust. This includes not posting content that could be seen as inappropriate or that could undermine their role within the Trust.

Working with the Community and Partners

- **Community Engagement:** Staff should actively engage with the wider community, including parents, local organisations, and external partners, to support and enhance the educational experience of students. This helps to build strong, positive relationships that benefit the entire Trust community.
- **Collaboration with Partners:** Staff should work collaboratively with external partners, such as other Trusts, educational bodies, and community organisations, to share knowledge, resources, and best practices. This collaboration contributes to the overall development and success of students and the Trust.
- **Respect for Community Values:** When working with the community, staff should be respectful of local values, traditions, and expectations. This ensures that the Trust's activities are aligned with the community's needs and that the Trust is seen as a positive and contributing member of the local area.
- **Partnership Communication:** Communication with community partners should be clear, professional, and consistent with the Trust's values. This helps to ensure that partnerships are effective and that mutual goals are achieved.
- **Complaint Handling:** Any concerns or complaints from parents/carers or the public should be promptly forwarded to the appropriate person.

Commitment to Professional Development

- **Continuous Learning:** Staff are encouraged to engage in ongoing professional development to enhance their skills and knowledge. This commitment to learning helps staff remain effective in their roles and supports the Trust's commitment to providing high-quality education.
- **Reflective Practice:** Staff should regularly reflect on their practice, seeking feedback and opportunities for improvement. This reflective approach supports personal and professional growth and contributes to a culture of excellence within the Trust.

Commitment to the Trust's Values and Ethos

- **Alignment with Trust Values:** Staff should actively support and promote the values, ethos, and mission of the Trust (and its academies) in their daily work. This includes demonstrating commitment to the educational, social, and emotional development of all students so that every child achieves.
- **Collaboration and Teamwork:** Staff should work collaboratively with colleagues, sharing knowledge, resources, and support to achieve the best outcomes for students and the Trust community.

Ethical Use of Resources

- **Use of Trust Resources:** Staff must use Trust resources responsibly and ethically, ensuring that equipment, materials, and facilities are used appropriately and only for their intended purposes.
- **Financial Integrity:** Staff must manage Trust funds and resources with integrity, following Trust policies for budgeting, spending, and financial reporting. This ensures that resources are used effectively and for the benefit of the Trust community.

Data Protection and Confidentiality

- **Data Security:** All personal and sensitive data must be stored securely and only accessed by authorised individuals. Staff must follow the Trust's procedures for data handling, including secure storage and transmission.
- **Disclosure:** Confidential information about students, families, or staff must not be disclosed to unauthorised persons. Any sharing of information with third parties must be compliant with data protection legislation and require appropriate consent.
- **Professional Conduct:** Avoid discussing confidential matters in public areas or with individuals not involved in the relevant case. Ensure that any concerns or issues related to confidentiality are reported to a senior member of staff. Any communications with students or their families must be open and transparent and not request personal information which is irrelevant to performance of their role.
- **Reporting and Breaches:** Any breaches of confidentiality or data protection must be reported immediately to the Trust's Data Protection Officer (DPO) or designated safeguarding lead (where a breach may jeopardise the safety of a student). Staff should also report any suspicious activity that could compromise data security.

Appendix 1 – Underpinning Principles of Safer Working Practice

Taken from: Guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings (2023)

- The welfare of the child is paramount.
- Staff should understand their responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils.
- Staff are responsible for their own actions and behaviour and should avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions.
- Staff should work, and be seen to work, in an open and transparent way including self-reporting if their conduct or behaviour falls short of these guiding principles.
- Staff should acknowledge that deliberately invented/malicious allegations are extremely rare and that all concerns should be reported and recorded.
- Staff should discuss and/or take advice promptly from their line manager if they have acted in a way which may give rise to concern.
- Staff should apply the same professional standards regardless of culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and sexual orientation.
- Staff should not consume or be under the influence of alcohol or any substance, including prescribed medication, which may affect their ability to care for children.
- 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 proceedings including barring by the Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) from working in regulated activity, or for acts of serious misconduct prohibition from teaching by the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA).
- Staff and managers should continually monitor and review practice to ensure this guidance is followed.
- Staff should be aware of and understand their establishment's child protection policy, arrangements for managing allegations against staff, staff behaviour policy, whistle blowing procedure and the procedures of the relevant Multi-agency Partnership (MAP).