

## HORIZONS EDUCATION TRUST

Staff Code of Conduct  
 Horizons Education Trust  
 April 2026

### POLICY ISSUE CONTROL

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This code sets out professional standards expected of all staff across Horizons Education Trust (HEdT). It ensures high standards of behaviour and safeguards children. All staff must create safe, respectful environments where pupils can thrive. This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, governors, trustees and contractors. It applies at all times when representing or identifying as a member of the Trust community, whether on-site, online, or in the wider community.

## **2.0 PRINCIPLES**

- Place the welfare, dignity and rights of all pupils at the heart of every decision and action, recognising our safeguarding responsibilities and commitment to inclusive education.
- Treat pupils, colleagues, families and visitors with fairness, courtesy and respect, promoting a positive, supportive and professional school environment.
- Maintain professional integrity, honesty and openness at all times, modelling the behaviours expected within our school communities.
- Uphold the Seven Principles of Public Life (Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty and Leadership) in all areas of professional conduct.
- Work transparently and responsibly, reporting any concerns promptly through the appropriate safeguarding or whistleblowing channels.
- Exercise sound professional judgement and avoid any behaviour or actions that could compromise the safety of pupils, breach trust, or bring Horizons Education Trust (HEdT) or its academies into disrepute.

## **3.0 PROFESSIONAL ATTITUDE, BEHAVIOUR & CONDUCT**

All members of the Horizons Education Trust community must meet the highest standards of professional conduct and model the behaviours expected across the Trust. The following expectations set out the core behaviours required to maintain a respectful, inclusive and professional environment for pupils, colleagues and families.

- Integrity and honesty: Misrepresentation or dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated.
- Respect and courtesy: Staff must never use disrespectful, aggressive or dismissive behaviour towards pupils, colleagues or families.
- Positive environment: Contribute actively to a collaborative, inclusive and welcoming Trust culture.
- High expectations: Demonstrate high standards of behaviour, language, appearance and professionalism in line with Trust and national standards.
- Commitment to professional development: Engage with professional learning, training and reflective practice to continually improve.
- Accountability: Be punctual, reliable and prepared. Persistent lateness or lack of commitment will be addressed.
- Appropriate communication: Use respectful, constructive and professional language, model resilience and emotional regulation at all times in person and online.

### **3.1 Professional Appearance**

3.1.1 We recognise that dress and appearance are expressions of personal identity, including cultural, religious, and individual preferences. All staff are expected to present themselves in a way that reflects their professional role, promotes confidence and trust in our schools, and supports a safe and inclusive learning environment for all pupils.

#### **3.1.2 Professional Expectations**

Staff should ensure that their dress and appearance:

- Reflect a professional image appropriate to their role and setting.
- Are clean, safe, and practical for the tasks they undertake.
- Distinguish clearly between personal and professional settings (e.g., attire suitable for a social occasion may not be appropriate at work).
- Are suitable for both in-person and online/virtual teaching environments.

#### **3.1.3 Respect & Sensitivity**

Staff should be mindful that their appearance:

- Should be respectful of cultural and religious norms, including those of the communities we serve.
- Must avoid clothing or accessories that could reasonably be considered:
  - Clothing that is overly casual or not suitable for a professional educational setting
  - Offensive, discriminatory, or insensitive
  - Political or controversial in a way that could compromise neutrality or cause discomfort in a school setting
- We expect attire that fosters mutual respect, avoids unnecessary distraction, and supports a safe and inclusive working and learning environment.

#### **3.1.4 Health & Safety**

Where roles involve specific physical tasks (e.g., PE, site management, science labs, food technology), staff must wear suitable clothing and footwear that meet relevant health and safety requirements.

#### **3.1.5 Managing Concerns**

Where a staff member's appearance is considered inappropriate or raises concern:

- The matter will be addressed sensitively and discreetly, in the first instance through informal discussion.
- If necessary, concerns may be escalated in line with the Trust's disciplinary or capability procedures, particularly where repeated concerns arise or professional standards are not maintained.
- Reasonable adjustments will be considered for staff with disabilities, medical conditions, or based on faith-based clothing practices in line with the Equalities Act 2010.

## 4.0 SAFEGUARDING

- 4.1 Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. All staff must adhere to the latest iteration of Keeping Children Safe in Education [KCSIE] and the Trust's [Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy](#). Staff must demonstrate professional curiosity and consider the impact of culture, disability and language on safeguarding disclosures. All concerns about a child, or about an adult's conduct or suitability to work with children, must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

To support a culture of openness and transparency, all adults must share any low level concern they have about a colleague's conduct. All staff must report low-level concerns promptly to the headteacher. If the concern relates to the Headteacher it must be reported to the Director of Safeguarding. If the concern relates to a member of the central team, report to the CEO. If the concern relates to the CEO, report to the chair of trustees. Staff are reminded that they are able to report any concerns to external providers such as the NSPCC.

All concerns must be recorded and reviewed, so that any emerging patterns can be identified.

Examples of low level concerns include: but are not limited to:

- Being overly friendly or having favourites.
  - Taking photographs on a personal device.
  - Working one-to-one with a pupil in a secluded area.
  - Using unprofessional or humiliating language.
- 4.2 Physical care or intervention must only occur in line with agreed care plans, risk assessments, training, and the [Restrictive Physical Intervention Policy](#).
- 4.3 ID badges must be worn at all times while on Academy premises. All visitors must wear an appropriate identification badge, which will be issued at reception before they are permitted to enter the site.
- 4.4 All staff are expected to complete annual safeguarding and Prevent training and maintain awareness of Part 1 of KCSIE.

## 5.0 RELATIONSHIPS & BOUNDARIES

- Maintain professional boundaries, with all stakeholders, at all times.
- It is a criminal offence for any member of staff to engage in a sexual or romantic relationship, or sexualised communication, with a pupil under 18, even if the pupil has left school. Any relationship or contact with a former pupil over 18 may still be considered a serious breach of professional boundaries particularly if it raises concerns about grooming or conduct while the pupil was in education.
- Avoid grooming behaviours, sexualised banter, or favouritism.
- Do not make personal contact outside professional roles; social media friendships with pupils or parents are not permitted.
- Do not communicate with pupils or families via personal email, messaging, or social media accounts.
- Report any infatuations, boundary concerns or interactions which could be misinterpreted.

## 6.0 EQUALITY, DIGNITY & INCLUSION

- Treat all pupils and staff fairly, regardless of ability, background, culture, gender, sexuality or belief.
- Avoid bullying, harassment, victimisation or discrimination in any form. Such behaviour will be addressed under the Bullying & Harassment Policy and Equalities & Diversity Policy.
- We expect all staff to actively challenge discriminatory language or behaviour to maintain a safe, respectful and inclusive environment.
- Ensure pupils with SEMH, SLD and PMLD receive equitable access to education and respect for their dignity and individuality. Reasonable adjustments will be considered to support all pupils and staff.

## 7.0 CONFIDENTIALITY & INFORMATION

- Handle personal data lawfully under the Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR. See the Trust's [GDPR Policies](#).
- Safeguarding logs and pupil records must be accurate, secure, and accessed only by authorised staff.
- Do not share confidential information without consent or lawful authority.
- Confidential information must not be discussed in public spaces or on social media.
- Report suspected data breaches immediately to the school secretary. This information should also be shared with the Director of Operations and the outsourced Data Protection Officer (DPO), depending on the severity.
- All queries regarding SARs, FOIs and severe data breaches must be communicated with the Director of Operations and the outsourced DPO.

## 8.0 USE OF TECHNOLOGY

- Follow the [Acceptable Use of ICT Policy](#) and all other relevant policies.
- Do not access, create or distribute inappropriate or illegal content, including (but not limited to) material that is discriminatory, abusive, sexually explicit, violent, extremist, or otherwise harmful or unsuitable for an educational environment.
- Only use academy or trust-approved devices for photographing or recording pupils, and only with proper consent.
- Covert recording is strictly prohibited.
- Do not post negative or inappropriate content about HEdT, its academies, pupils or colleagues on social media.

## 9.0 HEALTH, SAFETY & WELLBEING

- Follow the [Health & Safety Policy](#), [Risk Management Policy](#) and all other relevant policies.
- Foster safe, orderly classrooms and workplaces conducive to learning.
- Report hazards, incidents or risks immediately to a line manager. Also ensure these are reported on the trusts compliance system iAM Compliant, via the online portal.
- Follow care plans and moving/handling procedures and positive handling plans for pupils with complex needs.
- Staff are encouraged to make use of the Trust's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) provided by Medigold, which offers access to online wellbeing resources as well as confidential support from trained counsellors.

## 10.0 CONDUCT OUTSIDE WORK

All staff and those associated with the Trust are expected to uphold the highest standards of personal and professional conduct, both inside and outside the workplace. Actions in your personal life, online presence and professional practice must reflect the trust placed in you as someone working with children. The following requirements set out the standards needed to protect pupils, maintain public confidence and ensure ongoing suitability for employment within the Trust.

- Staff must not act in ways that could be considered by a reasonable person to bring the Trust or the profession into disrepute, including (but not limited to) inappropriate behaviour in public, misuse of social media, disrespectful or aggressive conduct, unlawful activity, or any actions that undermine confidence in their professionalism or safeguarding responsibilities.
- Report immediately any arrests, charges, cautions, investigations, or personal associations that may impact suitability to work with children. Staff should report these to their Headteacher. Central team should report these to the CEO.
- Refrain from posting inappropriate, offensive or highly polarised content online, and ensure that all online activity reflects the professional standards expected of teachers and all Trust staff. Personal use of social media must demonstrate neutrality, respect and sound judgement, avoiding any conduct that could undermine professional integrity or public confidence.

## 11.0 CHALLENGING & REPORTING MISCONDUCT

Staff must report concerns without delay. Concerns should be raised through the Trust's [Whistleblowing Policy](#), and any failure to report may itself be treated as misconduct. Staff who raise concerns in good faith will be protected from victimisation under the Whistleblowing Policy. All safeguarding-related concerns, including low-level concerns or allegations about staff conduct, must also be reported in line with the Trust's Low-Level Concerns and Allegations Policy, in accordance with KCSIE.

## 12.0 ACCOUNTABILITY

Staff are accountable for their actions, decisions and behaviour inside and outside the Academy. Breaches of this Code will be addressed through the Trust's [Disciplinary Policy](#). Outcomes may range from warnings to dismissal, depending on severity and intent.

Together, we each play a vital role in making Horizons Education Trust a place of excellence, where pupils feel safe, valued and inspired, and where staff are proud to work.

By upholding these standards every day, we create a culture built on trust, professionalism and compassion, enabling our academies to flourish and our pupils to thrive. Let us continue to lead by example and contribute to a community where everyone can achieve their very best.