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Academies Trust

# Colleague Code of Conduct

## Policy details

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- Policy owner - Chief People Officer

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## 1. Introduction

1.1 This Code of Conduct is based on key principles arising from the work of the Nolan Committee on standards in public life (see Annex 1) It outlines the minimum standards for all colleagues of Co-op Academies Trust ("our Trust) (including Headteachers, teaching staff, support staff, casual workers and members of the central team) and for any other persons working with our children and/or on our academy premises (for example, agency staff, volunteers, and contracted services).

1.2 Individual academies may develop and agree more detailed supplementary codes of practice on topics contained in this Code, with the aim of providing additional guidance and meeting local operational needs, as long as these are not contrary to the minimum standards set out in this document and are appropriately consulted on at a local level with trade unions.

1.3 We expect all colleagues to comply with this Code. In addition, if you are governed by a professional code of conduct then you will be expected to adhere to that code. Failure to do so could be regarded as a breach of this Colleague Code of Conduct.

1.4 Individual colleagues are responsible for their own actions, and it is their responsibility to read this Code. The Headteacher is responsible for making the Code available to colleagues. If any of the provisions contained within this Code of Conduct, related codes of practice or any other policies are not fully understood, colleagues must, in their own interests, seek clarification from their Headteacher (or a member of Trust SLT for central team members).

1.5 This Code does not contain a comprehensive list of acts of misconduct. There may be other acts of commission or omission committed by colleagues that our Trust also views as misconduct and/or gross misconduct.

1.6 Pupils/students, colleagues, parents/carers and Community Council Members expect the highest standards of behaviour from Trust and Academy colleagues. Our Trust reserves the right to monitor colleagues, including surveillance (see [Online Safety Policy](#) and [CCTV Policy](#)), in accordance with relevant legislation.

1.7 Failure to observe this Code of Conduct, failure properly to perform their duties, serious misconduct, or other actions committed during or outside working hours which bring the colleague, an academy, our Trust or the Sponsor into disrepute will be investigated in accordance with our Disciplinary Policy, and the most serious cases may result in dismissal.

1.8 Colleagues who are seconded to work in another academy, school or organisation are expected to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with this Code of Conduct and in a way which meets the requirements of the school or organisation to which they have been seconded.

1.9 The Code is compatible with the conventions contained in the Human Rights Act.

1.10 This Code of Conduct will be applied with due consideration to our Trust's Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy and our co-operative values.

## 2. Public Duty, Private Interest

### 2.1 General

- A colleague's academy duties and private interests must not conflict. Colleagues must declare any private interests relating to their academy duties. This may include, but is not limited to, membership of organisations which would be generally considered to conflict with their academy duties.
- Colleagues must not behave in a way that could place pupils, their colleagues, or themselves at risk, and must have regard to the duty of care described in our Trust and / or an academy's Health and Safety Policies and act in accordance with safe systems of work and codes of practice.

### 2.2 Fraud & theft

- Trust Board members, and Academy Community Council (ACC) Members acknowledge the responsibility they have for the administration of public funds, and emphasise to the public and colleagues the importance placed on probity, financial control, selflessness and honest administration. They are also committed to the fight against fraud, whether perpetrated by colleagues, contractors or the public. Trust and academy colleagues must not use their position to obtain gain for themselves, business associates, friends or family either directly or indirectly. Please refer to separate policies on Fraud & Bribery.
- Colleagues must use public funds responsibly and lawfully. They must work to ensure that our Trust and its academies use their resources prudently and within the law and that the local community gets value for money. Our Trust's Financial Procedures and Regulations and those of the Education & Skills

Funding Agency (ESFA) must be observed.

- Defrauding and stealing (or attempting to do so) from our Trust, an academy or any person / organisation in any way will not be tolerated. This includes deliberate falsification of claims, e.g. time sheets, mileage and travel/subsistence allowances with the intention of obtaining payment.
- Colleagues should report genuine concerns relating to potential fraud, theft or unethical behaviour to the Headteacher, ACC, Regional Director or Trust CEO. Further details are contained in our Trust's [Whistleblowing Policy](#).
- It is acknowledged that colleagues may not find it easy to 'blow the whistle' or report irregularities and our Trust Board / ACC members will give them full support in raising such concerns. Every effort will be made to respect a colleague's request for anonymity. However, colleagues are expected to demonstrate accountability and to cooperate fully with any scrutiny appropriate to their position. There are two sides to every story and our Trust Board / ACCs will undertake to give people a fair hearing. It is possible that some allegations will turn out to be mistaken. If, however, you make malicious or deliberately false allegations, this may be investigated in accordance with our Disciplinary Policy.

### 2.3 Financial inducements; Gifts & hospitality

- On no account must an employee accept a financial payment or other inducement from any person, body or organisation, e.g. contractors, developers, consultants, etc. It is an offence for a colleague to accept any fee, gift, loan or reward whatsoever, other than their proper remuneration.
- Where a fee is paid by an external body for work undertaken by an employee of our Trust in the course of their employment (for example, speaking at a conference) this should be treated as a payment to our Trust, not to the individual colleague (see section 7).
- As a general rule, colleagues must refuse any gift or hospitality offered to them or their family that may be perceived to influence their judgement. Exceptions are gifts of negligible value that are usually given to a wide range of people, e.g. pens, diaries, calendars etc. and small gifts from children. Offers of hospitality must only be accepted when proper written authorisation has been received from the Headteacher or Trust CEO (on behalf of the Chair of our Trust Board). Further details are given in Trust / academy policies.

- There is an expectation that in addition to declaring those gifts received, colleagues will also declare those which have been correctly refused. Each academy, and the central trust team, is expected to maintain a gifts & hospitality register.

#### 2.4 Colleague declarations of financial and other interests

- Colleagues must be aware that a personal or family relationship with another colleague could lead to a potential conflict of interest, particularly where there is an involvement in recruitment or a line management relationship, and/or where a member of an academy Senior Leadership Team or the Central Team is involved. Colleagues should seek advice from their Headteacher (or Regional Director / Chief People Officer / Trust CEO, as applicable) where there is a potential conflict of interest of this nature.
- All colleagues have a statutory duty to declare any financial or other interest in any existing or proposed contract or an interest in, or association with, any organisation, services, activity or person that may cause a direct or indirect conflict of interest with their Trust / academy employment. Private interests preclude colleagues from participation in any such activities. All colleagues must abide by these regulations.
- Where a colleague makes representations, or applies for services in which they have significant influence by virtue of their employment position, on behalf of a relative, colleague, friend or some other person with whom they have a close relationship, they must declare a personal interest.
- Colleagues with such a conflict of interest must tell their Headteacher, Regional Director [if Headteacher making the declaration], Trust CEO [central team members] or Chair of our Trust Board [Trust CEO] in writing. That person will then make alternative arrangements so that a colleague is not involved, or, where the colleague's skills are required, ensure appropriate supervision is provided so that undue influence or bias to their advantage is prevented. They will also review any such declarations annually.
- Headteachers and our Trust CEO are responsible for the monitoring of colleagues' activities in accordance with the provisions/declarations of this Code and any related codes of practice. Any such monitoring will comply with relevant legislation such as the Regulatory and Investigatory Powers Act, the Data Protection Act and the Human Rights Act.
- Colleagues in key roles may be asked to complete a 'declaration of interest

form', even if they have not declared an interest.

- Colleagues are entitled to use all of the services of our Trust and their employing academy as appropriate but in doing so they will receive neither favour nor suffer discrimination or disadvantage. Colleagues must be aware at all times that members of the public expect the highest standards of fairness and equality to be upheld in the administration of services regardless of recipient. They have a responsibility to ensure that they conduct themselves in a manner which does not bring into question either their integrity or their motivation. At no time should they attempt to exert any pressure to obtain services because of their position or to access services other than through those channels available to members of the public. It is for these reasons they should ensure that personal interests are declared.

### 3. Relationships with prospective or current contractors

3.1 If colleagues engage or supervise contractors (anyone providing services), have an official relationship with contractors or a potential contractor, and/or have previously had or currently have a relationship in a private or domestic capacity with a contractor, they must declare that relationship to their Headteacher, Regional Director or our Trust CEO.

3.2 All orders and contracts must be awarded on merit, by fair competition against other tenders in line with our Finance Regulations. Colleagues must exercise impartiality and no favouritism must be shown to businesses run for example by friends, partners, relatives or business associates. No section of the community should be discriminated against in the tendering, evaluation and award processes.

3.3 Colleagues who are privy to confidential information on contracts for tender, or costs for either internal or external contractors, must not disclose that information to any unauthorised party or organisation.

3.4 Colleagues are expected to follow our Trust's [Anti-Slavery & Human Trafficking Policy](#).

### 4. Information technology & data security

4.1 Colleagues are expected to read and follow our Trust's Online Safety Policy and will also be asked to read and sign an Acceptable Use Policy.

4.2 Colleagues must ensure that they follow our Trust's and their academy's security procedures in relation to the use of information technology (including but not limited to computers, tablets, mobile telephones, smart watches and linked devices) and the proper management of computer-held information.

4.3 Particular care must be taken to observe established procedures when using passwords and when logging on and off. Colleagues must never share passwords, which may lead to unauthorised access to our Trust's / academy systems. Where this practice is found, colleagues should be aware it may be investigated in accordance with our Disciplinary Policy.

## 5. Social media

5.1 Our Trust expects colleagues to read and follow its [Social Media Policy](#) and to use social media in a responsible and positive manner. Failure to do so may be investigated in accordance with our Disciplinary Policy.

5.2 It is strongly recommended that social media accounts be set to private. If an account is set to public and anyone can see social media posts and profiles, and the account includes posts relating to work / professional capacity (e.g. posting about what you are doing in your job / blogging as a teacher) then this must be declared to your headteacher. If a colleague is keen to have a professional presence on social media, they are encouraged to speak to a member of the Marketing & Engagement team so that we can support them to do this in a way that works well for them, as well as for the Co-op Academies brand.

Note: for LinkedIn, as long as the account is linked to our Trust through the Experience part of the profile, by listing the Co-op Academies Trust as the employer, there is no need to declare it.

5.3 It is important that colleagues maintain a professional digital footprint, and think very carefully and be cautious about things that they post, their "likes", and material posted by others that they comment on or share via social media - whether this is on accounts that they believe to be private, or on public accounts. In particular, they should take care not to distribute material produced, supported or promoted by radical political groups that are at odds with our co-operative values and principles, and Ways of Being Co-op. It is worth remembering that if you comment on a public

item (e.g. a news article) your comments will generally be public, even if your usual social media settings are private.

5.4 If a colleague sees something on social media posted by a colleague which they are uncomfortable with because it breaches this Code of Conduct, our Trust's Social Media Policy, the Dignity at Work Procedure or any other Trust Policy, they are encouraged to pass evidence of this to their Headteacher, or another member of their senior leadership team.

5.5 Colleagues are advised to conduct all work-related business through work-related technology (e.g. G-Suite functions), and should note that if other systems (such as WhatsApp) are used for work-related purposes these are potentially disclosable e.g. under a Subject Access Request. No personal information, including photos of students should be posted on personal social media accounts, this can put children at risk and is against GDPR guidelines.

5.6 If you have a public social media account and anyone can see your posts and profile, and your account includes posts relating to your work / professional capacity (e.g. you are posting about what you are doing in your job / blogging as a teacher) then you must declare this to your headteacher. We would like to help - if you're keen to have a professional presence on social media, please speak to a member of the Marketing & Engagement team so that we can support you to do this in a way that works well for you, as well as for the Co-op Academies brand.

#### 5.7 "Catfishing"

Catfishing (or impersonating) a colleague or a third party, whether on social media or via other means, is unacceptable and may be investigated in accordance with our Disciplinary Procedure. Should a colleague become a victim of such practice themselves, or of other online abuse, our Trust will support them.

5.7 For additional guidance see further advice which has been published by our recognised trade unions for their members. For example:

<https://neu.org.uk/advice/social-media-and-online-safety>

<https://www.nasuwat.org.uk/advice/health-safety/social-media-the-abuse-of-technology.html>

## 6. Use of systems, property and facilities

6.1 Our Trust expects colleagues to read and follow its Online Safety Policy. Colleagues will also be asked to read and sign an [Acceptable Use Policy](#).

6.2 The property provided within the workplace, or to support the effective operation of a colleague's work such as telephones, mobile phones, the internet, intranet, e-mail, stationery, photocopiers and other machines or tools, materials, offices, car parks and facilities, may only be used for our Trust / academy business unless permission for private use is given by the Headteacher, Regional Director or Trust CEO / member of our Trust SLT .

6.3 Trust / academy / sponsor telephones (mobile and landline) should not be used to make personal telephone calls or send personal texts, except in an emergency or where appropriate permission to make a call has been sought.

6.4 Any communications using Trust, academy or sponsor systems may be monitored. Any such monitoring will be in accordance with the law. Telephone call and e-mail/internet logging systems may be used to identify usage for private purposes.

6.5 Colleagues must adhere to all of our Trust / academy's specific system security measures that are currently in place or introduced in the future (and the sponsor's systems and measures if using equipment provided by the sponsor).

6.6 Personal devices must not be used to take or hold data about or photographs of children.

## 7. Secondary employment and Intellectual Property

### Second Jobs

7.1 Any secondary employment (including voluntary work) undertaken outside of our Trust must not conflict with our Trust / an academy's interests or bring it into disrepute, must not interfere with the proper performance of a colleague's duties, and must only be undertaken outside the colleague's working hours. In such a case it is the responsibility of the individual to ensure that they meet all the appropriate taxation and insurance requirements associated with being self-employed / an employee of another organisation.

7.2 To enable our Trust to be compliant with Working Time Regulations, colleagues are expected to discuss any other paid work (e.g. second jobs) with their Headteacher (or their Line Manager for central / hub team members) prior to taking it up. A written record of this discussion should be retained in their HR file, and a copy provided to the colleague. If the total hours worked is, on average, in excess of 48 hours per week, advice from your Regional HR Manager should be sought.

7.3 Colleague appointments as Governors, Councillors, Trade Union officials, membership of the Territorial Army, as a Justice of the Peace or as a Member of the Employment Tribunal do not constitute secondary employment as described in this Code. Nonetheless the principles of colleagues making their Headteacher or Line Manager [central team members] aware of these duties and seeking appropriate time off in a reasonable and timely manner apply.

7.4 Where voluntary work will take up a substantial amount of time this should also be discussed.

#### Consultancy

7.5 We understand the value and importance to both individuals and their academies of extending professional experience. Where a colleague wishes to provide their services on a self-employed / consultancy basis, they should first obtain approval from their Headteacher. In the case of Headteachers, approval should be sought through the Regional Director, and our Trust CEO for central / hub team members. Approval will be dependent on the needs of our Trust at that time.

7.6 Where the work takes place during normal working hours, any payments should be made to the academy or Trust through an invoicing system. The individual will be entitled to claim reasonable travel expenses for providing the service, though no additional remuneration will be possible.

7.7 Where the external work takes place outside the school day (directed time) – evenings or weekends – this is viewed in the same way as ‘secondary employment’ and payments may be retained by the colleague.

7.8 Approval (as outlined at 7.5) must be obtained for the use of any materials created by the colleague in the course of their employment with an academy / our Trust, or obtained through employment therein. This is particularly important in relation to data protection and child protection.

#### Intellectual property

7.9 While it is appreciated and understood that much good practice within education comes from sharing experiences and expertise, our Trust reserves the right to intellectual copyright over materials, research and innovative practices which have been developed in conjunction with or as a result of employment by Co-op Academies Trust or its academies.

Our Trust gives general permission for resources to be shared externally (e.g. through professional networks), on the understanding that:

- this is not done for personal gain, unless prior permission in writing is given

- it does not contain any personal information e.g. names / images
- Co-op Academies name / branding is removed.

Colleagues should seek advice from their Headteacher if necessary.

## 8. Disclosure of information, confidentiality and references

8.1 Colleagues should be fair and open when dealing with others and ensure that they have access to the information they need unless there is a good reason not to permit this.

8.2 Colleagues must act in accordance with, and observe, the law in handling all personal and other information. Special care must be taken in handling special category data, personal and confidential information, which must in no circumstances be inappropriately used. Colleagues may be personally prosecuted for offences under the Data Protection legislation. If any colleague is in doubt about their responsibilities, they must consult their Headteacher, Regional Director or our Trust CEO.

8.3 Confidential, personal or financial information about any colleague, pupil or parent/carer, must not be disclosed to any organisation person, or normally, to any external organisation/agency, without the express approval of the person concerned. Colleagues seeking clarification about 'authorised' or 'unauthorised' persons should seek the guidance of their Headteacher who will take specialist advice on the matter. Headteachers should refer queries to their Regional Director, or our Trust's Head of Data Protection.

8.4 Colleagues must not abuse their position by disclosing confidential information to any third party, this will include the unauthorised release of confidential information regarding:

- competitive tendering or tendering for work which may be beneficial to a third party
- an employee or service user.

8.5 Colleagues must not use any information obtained in the course of their employment or tenure for personal gain or benefit or to attempt to obtain personal gain, nor pass it on to others who might use it in such a way.

8.6 If during the course of their employment colleagues are dealing with members of their family, partners, friends or business associates this must be declared to their Headteacher, Regional Director or our Trust CEO as set down in sections 2.13 to

2.18 of this Code. Where such contact occurs, colleagues must be impartial and act in a professional manner.

8.7 References in relation to employment by Co-op Academies Trust and its academies should only be given by persons authorised to do so by the Headteacher, Regional Director or Trust CEO.

## 9. Communications with the media

9.1 It is our Trust's Policy that all media liaison relating to Trust and academy activities is handled by our Trust's Marketing & Engagement Team (with support if required from the Sponsor's Communications Service) in conjunction with Headteachers, Regional Director or our Trust CEO. If a colleague has ideas for positive stories about Trust/academy activities or is approached by a journalist they should refer to their Headteacher (Trust SLT member for central / hub colleagues) and/or a member of our Trust's Marketing & Engagement Team before any information is given verbally, via e-mail or in writing. In exceptional circumstances (e.g. field trips) where such reference cannot be made, the colleague in charge may assume authority. Headteachers should alert the Head of Marketing & Engagement, Regional Director, and/or Trust CEO where appropriate.

9.2 Where a colleague is writing material for publication which does not refer specifically to our Trust, Sponsor, or an academy, but does relate to their profession/occupation e.g. articles in professional journals, the colleague should notify their Headteacher, Regional Director or our Trust CEO prior to publication.

9.3 Colleagues should be mindful that placing information into the public domain through social media such as (but not limited to) Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and LinkedIn in relation to our Trust, their academy, or their work in general could constitute communications with the media (see also section 5 above on Social Media).

## 10. Neutrality

10.1 Colleagues must not allow their personal or political beliefs or opinions to interfere with their work, and should work in accordance with the Government's guidance on [political impartiality in schools](#). This means giving a balanced presentation of opposing views on issues when they are brought to the attention of pupils.

10.2 Whilst engaged in Trust/academy business, colleagues must not wear or display items that are contrary to this guidance.

10.3 All academies have a duty to 'actively promote' the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. Colleagues must comply with their academy's policy / guidance on spiritual, moral, social, cultural (SMSC) which should promote fundamental British values. Colleagues should not:

- take actions which undermine fundamental British values
- attempt to inappropriately influence or impose their personal values, attitudes or beliefs on pupils, where these are in contradiction with British values

## 11. The community and service users

11.1 Colleagues must always remember their responsibilities to the users of our Trust and its academies and ensure courteous, efficient and impartial service delivery to all groups and individuals within the community.

11.2 Colleagues are expected to be as open as possible about their actions and the work of our Trust and its academies, notwithstanding the needs of confidentiality.

11.3 Colleagues must always act in a way that preserves public confidence in our Trust and its academies.

11.4 Colleagues have a duty at all times, to uphold the law and relevant guidance bearing in mind the public's trust placed in our Trust / academy colleagues.

11.5 We will not tolerate a colleague's physical or emotional abuse, harassment, discrimination, victimisation or bullying of, or by, other colleagues, pupils, Community Council Members, parents/carers, contractors or other members of the public. Such actions may be investigated in accordance with our Disciplinary Procedure. Colleagues must comply at all times with any additional policies issued by our Trust or individual academies in relation to [Dignity at Work](#) (including harassment, discrimination, victimisation and bullying) and [Violence & Assault Against Colleagues](#).

## 12. Safeguarding and Child Protection

12.1 Colleagues working with children and young people are in a particular position of great trust. Any breach of that trust, or which impacts the safety or welfare of children and young people, including but not limited to assault, sexual misconduct, or breach of the policies and procedures meant to safeguard pupils, may be investigated in accordance with our Disciplinary Procedure.

12.2 Colleagues, agency staff, contract service personnel and volunteers who work with children and young people are subject to the requirements of our Trust's Safer Recruitment policy. They must, in their own interests, read any and all codes of practice and conduct, in conjunction with this Code of Conduct and must observe current legislation including (but not limited to) Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE), the Children's Act 1989 and any other relevant Child Protection Procedures.

12.3 Colleagues are expected to comply with the [Guidance for Safer Working Practice 2022](#), which provides practical guidance about which behaviours constitute safe practice and which behaviours should be avoided.

12.4 All colleagues must adhere to their academy's local operating procedures in relation to safeguarding, child protection and PREVENT. This may include, but is not limited to, arrangements for private meetings with students, and caring for students who require assistance with personal care.

12.5 Any incidents involving assault, sexual offences or harassment, discrimination or victimisation against pupils, must be dealt with under our Trust's [Managing Safeguarding Concerns & Allegations Against Staff Policy](#) and the appropriate Local Safeguarding Children Board's Child Protection Guidance and Procedures, and may be reported to the police.

12.6 Colleagues who witness any behaviour which they consider to be detrimental to the safety and welfare of children and people within our academies have a duty to report it to their Headteacher, to the Regional Director or Chair of their Academy Community Council if it relates to the behaviour of the Headteachers, to our Trust CEO, or to 'blow the whistle' (refer to our Trust's Whistleblowing policy).

12.7 In line with the requirements of KCSiE, colleagues are expected to raise all and any "low level concerns" with their Headteacher. This is part of ensuring that we have an open and transparent culture in which all concerns about all adults working in or on behalf of the academy (including supply teachers, volunteers and contractors) are dealt with promptly and appropriately.

The term "low-level concern" does not mean that it is insignificant, it is any concern – no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a

'nagging doubt' - that an adult working in or on behalf of the school or college may have acted in a way that is inconsistent with this code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work.

Examples of such behaviour could include, but are not limited to:

- being over friendly with children;
- having favourites;
- taking photographs of children on their mobile phone;
- engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door; or,
- using inappropriate sexualised, intimidating or offensive language.

Such behaviour can exist on a wide spectrum, from the inadvertent or thoughtless, or behaviour that may look to be inappropriate, but might not be in specific circumstances, through to that which is ultimately intended to enable abuse. Further details are in our Trust's [Managing Safeguarding Concerns & Allegations Against Staff Policy](#).

12.8 Colleagues working in posts covered by the Disqualification under the Childcare Act 2006 (DFE 2018) ("relevant posts") are required to complete a declaration form prior to commencing employment, and on an annual basis thereafter. They are required to declare immediately anything which could render them disqualified, and are not permitted to work in a relevant post if disqualified unless a waiver is granted by Ofsted. Our Trust expects all colleagues to declare immediately to their Headteacher / Regional Director or Trust CEO (for Central Team members) any criminal charges brought or caution / conviction acquired during their employment with us, and to discuss any relationship or association (in the real world or online) which may have implications for the safeguarding of children in the academy so that an appropriate risk assessment can be carried out. Please seek advice from the Academy Safeguarding Lead and/or Trust HR Manager if appropriate.

12.9 It is acknowledged that colleagues may have genuine friendships and social contact with parents of pupils, independent of the professional relationship. Colleagues should, however, exercise professional judgement and seek advice if necessary, and be aware that behaviour outside of school can impact on suitability to continue in employment with Co-op Academies Trust. Colleagues must not contact pupils (or parents on school-related business) from their private email address or social media accounts: everything must go via agreed work-based communication channels.

## 13. Recruitment and other employment matters

13.1 In accordance with our Trust's [Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy](#), colleagues must take care that they are not open to any charge of discrimination in recruitment or employment practices, by fully adhering to our Trust's [Safer Recruitment Policy](#).

13.2 To avoid any possible accusation of bias or nepotism, colleagues must not be involved in selection and appointment processes where they are related to an applicant or have a close personal, family or business relationship with them. They should declare an interest at the earliest possible opportunity where there is a potential conflict of interest in such cases. Headteachers must seek approval of their Regional Director before appointing any relatives or other close connections (members of Central / Hub Team should seek approval of our Trust's SLT, and Trust SLT members should seek approval of the Chair of the Trust Board).

13.3 Work decisions should be objective and always based on merit. Colleagues must not be involved in decisions relating to discipline, promotion or pay for any colleague who is a relative, or with whom they have a close personal or business relationship.

13.4 If there are exceptional reasons why 13.1 to 13.3 should not be complied with, or any doubt as to how to proceed, advice must be sought from the Regional Director or Trust CEO, who will take professional advice before acting.

## 14. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

14.1 Our Trust values variety and individual differences, and aims to create a culture, environment and practices at all levels which encompass acceptance, respect and inclusion. Colleagues must ensure that they read and adhere to our Trust's [Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy](#) and [Dignity at Work Policy](#), and any related academy policy or guidance, and adhere to all related legal requirements, such as the Equalities Act and the Human Rights Act.

14.2 All colleagues, pupils, Community Council Members, parents/carers contractors, partners, trade union representatives and members of the public must be treated equally and in a way that creates mutual respect, they must not be discriminated against on grounds of ethnicity, gender, pregnancy or maternity, disability, age, religion or belief, marriage or civil partnership status, gender identity or sexual orientation.

## 15. Dress and personal appearance

15.1 All colleagues act as ambassadors for our Trust and its academies, and are role models to pupils/students. They must therefore maintain a professional standard of dress and appearance that is appropriate or required for the workplace and to the work being undertaken. Colleagues must be clean and tidy and ensure good personal hygiene.

15.2 Where particular clothing is provided for health, safety and hygiene and/or uniform purposes it must be worn, this includes name badges.

15.3 Where an academy has adopted local guidelines on dress and personal appearance, this should be adhered to by all colleagues. Any academy guidelines should be subject to consultation with local trade unions.

## 16. Health & Safety

16.1 Colleagues are required at all times to observe and work to Trust and academy Health and Safety Policies and in accordance with safe systems of work, regulations and codes of practice, and relevant Health and Safety law.

## 17. Criminal convictions

17.1 As they involve direct contact with children, all posts within our Trust's academies are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (exceptions 1975) (amended 2020). Colleagues have a responsibility to disclose any unspent cautions, convictions or bind-overs, including any criminal proceedings pending against them, with the exception of any criminal history that is protected or "filtered" (see Annex 2 of our [Trust's Safer Recruitment Policy](#)).

17.2 Colleagues who have access to children or young people as part of their work are absolutely required to report any convictions whatsoever to their Headteacher / Regional Director / Trust CEO. In this respect, colleagues must provide information of any pending criminal proceedings against them and subsequent cautions or convictions. See also section 12.

17.3 Failure to disclose such convictions and to comply with any of the above constitutes possible gross misconduct and may result in investigation under the

Disciplinary Procedure. Having a criminal conviction will not necessarily prevent your continued employment with our Trust. Should a positive disclosure be made, it's expected that the Headteacher will seek advice from the Regional HR Manager and/or Trust Safeguarding Lead to agree on next steps.

17.4 Colleagues whose work involves driving must declare any motoring offences to their Headteacher / Regional Director or Trust CEO.

## 18. Drugs, alcohol & smoking

18.1 Trust colleagues must attend work in a condition to undertake their duties in a safe manner.

18.2 The consumption of alcohol, illegal drugs or Novel Psychoactive Substances (sometimes referred to as "legal highs") impairs performance and may constitute a health and safety risk and interfere with that person's health and/or work performance.

18.3 All colleagues are expected to read and follow our Trust's [Alcohol & Drugs Policy](#), which provides further information in relation to alcohol (including at work events), drugs, and prescription medications, and the support available to colleagues who may have an underlying problem.

18.4 Colleagues who are not complying with an agreed care plan, or who are not substance dependent and yet have attended work unfit to perform their duties may be investigated in accordance with our Disciplinary Procedure.

18.5 Colleagues must not consume alcohol at any time when supervising young people. They should not consume alcohol on school premises unless an exception to this has been agreed in advance and notified to colleagues by the Headteacher / Regional Director / Trust CEO for events such as colleague end of term gatherings and PTA functions.

18.6 Zero alcohol is the expectation when driving on school business.

18.7 The use of illegal substances will not be tolerated and will result in the Headteacher, Regional Director / Trust CEO or Chair of Trust Board / Academy Community Council reporting the matter to the police.

18.8 Smoking by colleagues is prohibited on any site leased to, or operated by, Co-op Academies Trust. If colleagues find it necessary to smoke, they are actively

encouraged to do so away from school boundaries and out of sight of pupils and, wherever possible, parents and the public.

18.9 The use of electronic smoking devices (vaping) on any site leased to, or operated by Co-op Academies Trust is prohibited and deemed to be covered by Section 18.7 of this policy.

## 19. General conduct

19.1 Colleagues must obey reasonable instructions and always act in a way that will not adversely affect our Trust or an academy's legal position. Colleagues are expected to promote the principles contained in this Code of Conduct by self-example and to demonstrate respect for others.

19.2 All colleagues are expected to exercise sound personal judgement, to take account of the views of others and to take individual responsibility to decide a personal view on any issue arising in the course of their employment.

19.3 Colleagues requiring further information or requiring advice concerning the appropriate course of action to adopt in any situation, should contact their Line Manager, Headteacher, Regional Director or our Trust CEO.

19.4 This Code of Conduct should be read in conjunction with its appendix and with any other codes of practice or policies that relate to colleague conduct and/or workplace or system security policies and procedures, including our Trust's Social Media, Online Safety and Acceptable Use Policies.

## 20. Review

The Code of Conduct will be reviewed at least once every three years in consultation with our recognised trade unions, and kept under review in the light of legislation, and recommendations and guidance issued nationally in relation to standards of conduct in public life, and revised as necessary.

### Colleague signature

In signing this document, I am confirming that I have read & understood this Colleague Code of Conduct.

Colleague's name (print):

Signature:

Date:

## Annex A - The Seven Principles of Public Life

The Seven Principles of Public Life (also known as the Nolan Principles) apply to anyone who works as a public office-holder. This includes all those who are elected or appointed to public office, nationally and locally, and all people appointed to work in the Civil Service, local government, the police, courts and probation services, non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs), and in the health, education, social and care services. All public office-holders are both servants of the public and stewards of public resources. The principles also apply to all those in other sectors delivering public services.

### 1 Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

### 2 Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

### 3 Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

### 4 Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

### 5 Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

### 6 Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

### 7 Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour and treat others with respect. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.