



Staff Code of Conduct

Adoption Arrangements

All statutory policies in the Trust are ultimately the responsibility of the Trust Board. To enable it to discharge this responsibility appropriately and in collaboration with the constituent schools, the Trust Board will either:

1. set a full Trust wide policy which applies in the same way to all schools,
2. require individual schools to set a policy (in most cases with Trust-provided guidance) appropriate to the needs and circumstances of an individual school

Approval Body: Chief Executive Officer

Date Approved: 08/09/2025

Author: HR Director

Next review: On or before September 2028

Review period: This policy will be reviewed as appropriate, and amended where any clarifications or changes are needed, and **at a minimum every 3 years**

Version:

This policy was approved by the Board of Trustees, for implementation in Tenax Schools Trust on the date above and supercedes any previous Staff Code of Conduct.

1. Introduction

Staff have a crucial role to play in educating and shaping the lives of young people, and as such high professional standards are expected of them. All staff, whether paid or voluntary, have a duty to keep children safe and to protect them from physical and emotional harm. This duty is, in part, exercised through the development of respectful, caring and professional relationships between staff and pupils and behaviour by staff that demonstrates integrity, maturity and good judgment. Staff should always act, and be seen to act, in the best interests of the child, avoid **any** conduct which would lead a reasonable person to question their motivation and/or intentions and take responsibility for their own actions and behaviour.

While not exhaustive, this guidance sets a standard for professional conduct and highlights behaviour that is illegal, inappropriate or inadvisable.

***In all instances**, staff should report and record any situation which they feel has potential to compromise the school or their own professional standing. All staff should equally report any behaviour, whether action or inaction by colleagues that raises concern.*

This Code of Conduct (The Code) aims to establish the high standard of conduct expected of all employees. The Code also aims to safeguard children and reduce the risk of adults being falsely accused of improper or unprofessional conduct. The Code should be read in conjunction with Part 1 of the current Keeping Children Safe in Education document, and the policies/guidance listed in Appendix A.

2. Safeguarding

Many aspects of The Code relate to how we safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children and young people. Staff should be aware that they are responsible not only for their own safe behaviour, but for reporting any conduct by a colleague which gives rise to concern. It is important that all staff play their part in ensuring that concerns about adults, including those which don't meet the harms threshold, as set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education, are shared responsibly, promptly and with the right person, then recorded and dealt with quickly.

In some cases, these concerns may not meet the harms threshold but be "low level". A low-level concern is any concern, no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or "nagging doubt" that an adult working in or on behalf of the school or Trust may have acted in a way that:

- is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work; and
- does not meet the allegations threshold or is otherwise not considered serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO.

Examples may include:

- Being over-friendly with children or young people;
- Having favourites;
- Taking photographs of children on their own phone/device contrary to school policies;
- Engaging with a child on a one to one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door; or
- Humiliating pupils.

The process for reporting such concerns is set out in the Trust's policy for Managing Allegations of Abuse Against Staff, available on the Trust website. Safeguarding concerns and any behaviours that fall short of the guiding principles outlined in this document, however reported, will be recorded and investigated

appropriately. All concerns that do not meet the harm threshold will be recorded and addressed appropriately as a “low-level” concern.

3. Power and positions of trust

All adults are in positions of trust in relation to the pupils in their care. A relationship between a member of staff and a pupil cannot be a relationship between equals. Staff must not use that imbalance of power for personal advantage or gratification. Staff should avoid behaviour, which might be misinterpreted by others, and record and report the discussions and actions in any incident with this potential.

Relationships with students must reflect the age, sex, gender and maturity of students. Demeanour, language and attitude of staff should be such that they do not give rise to misunderstandings on the part of students. Ambiguous conduct should be avoided, whether in the physical or online worlds; staff engaging with pupils or parents online have a responsibility to model safe practice at all times.

4. Confidentiality

Staff may have access to confidential information about pupils in order to undertake their everyday responsibilities, which may be highly sensitive or private in nature. Information must be kept in accordance with the Trust Data Protection Policy and the law.

There are circumstances in which staff are expected to share information about a child, for example when abuse is alleged or suspected. In such cases, individuals have a duty to pass information on without delay, but only to those with designated safeguarding responsibilities (the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, or in a case where the headteacher is suspected of abuse, the Director of Education).

Staff should not respond to any questions about pupils, incidents or any matters concerning school life if approached by parents, friends or acquaintances and should refer them to the class teacher, team leader or Headteacher. If there is any doubt about whether to share information or keep it confidential employees should seek guidance from a senior member of staff.

If a student reports any information to a member of staff which is of a serious personal nature, or which indicates that the student may be at risk, either physically or emotionally, the employee may not respect the student’s wish for the information to be kept confidential and must report it to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

5. Propriety and behaviour

Staff must not behave in a way that would lead any reasonable person to question their suitability to work with children, whether that conduct is in, or outside, of work. An individual’s behaviour in their personal lives must not compromise, or bring into disrepute, the School or Trust.

Criminal offences outside of work, particularly those that involve violence, the possession or use of illegal drugs or sexual misconduct are likely to be regarded as unacceptable and, subject to the Trust’s disciplinary procedures, could lead to dismissal. Staff must inform their headteacher if they become subject to any criminal or social services investigation.

All members of the Trust’s communities have the right to be treated with dignity and respect, and staff must ensure their own behaviour reflects and promotes these standards. Language used on school property (whether or not pupils are present) must meet professional standards. Use of foul language or swearing by staff is not appropriate in school or in public.

These principles apply both when working formally in school or when out of school for example on a school trip.

6. Personal views and beliefs

In encouraging diversity and inclusion in our Trust, we recognise that our employees will hold a diverse range of views and beliefs about sensitive topics. Some views are unacceptable and contravene the Equality Act 2010. Such views or beliefs must not be shared with pupils or the school communities, or in publicly available fora that could bring the school or Trust into disrepute, or cause anyone to question the individual's suitability to work with children. Similarly, pupils at the Trust have the right to expect a broad and balanced education. This includes dealing with or teaching about political, religious or other sensitive issues. Teachers are required to ensure, when planning individual lessons or the overall curriculum, that content is balanced and accurate. For example, this may include teachers explaining "the law states that..., but other people or groups in society may hold different views to the legal position". Staff should not be drawn into sharing their own personal views with students and must not impose their own views.

7. Dress and appearance

Staff should consider the manner of dress and appearance appropriate to their professional role. Staff should dress decently, safely and appropriately for the tasks they undertake.

A standard of personal presentation which at least reflects the expectations demanded of students is required. Smart business dress, should be the norm, adapted where appropriate to specific circumstances, for example where staff undertake significant physical activity where formal dress may pose safety risks.

8. Gifts

Staff should be aware of the Trust's policy including arrangements for the declaration of gifts received and given. Staff must not accept any gift that might be construed as a bribe by others or lead the giver to expect preferential treatment. There are occasions when children or parents wish to pass small tokens of appreciation to staff e.g. end of term/school year or as a thank-you and this is acceptable. If there is any doubt, gifts should be declared.

9. Pupil rewards and sanctions

Any rewards and sanctions given to a pupil should only be in accordance with agreed practice within the school, consistent with the school's behaviour policy, recorded and not based on favouritism. Other gifts to pupils may be misinterpreted as an attempt to bribe or groom a child.

Adults should exercise care when selecting children for specific activities, jobs or privileges to avoid perceptions of favouritism or injustice. Similar care should be exercised when pupils are excluded from participating in such activities. Methods of selection or exclusion of pupils should always be subject to clear, fair and agreed criteria.

10. Infatuations

Even in a primary school setting, staff need to be aware that it is not uncommon for pupils to be strongly attracted to a member of staff and/or develop a 'crush'. All situations should be responded to sensitively to maintain the dignity of all concerned.

A member of staff who becomes aware that a pupil has developed a 'crush', must discuss this at the earliest opportunity with a senior colleague so that appropriate action can be taken, as in such circumstances words or actions risk being misinterpreted. At no time should the member of staff speak with the young person concerned about the problem, particularly not alone.

11. Personal living space and social contact

No child should be in or invited into, the home of an adult who works with them, unless the reason for this had been firmly established and agreed with the parents/carers and senior leaders, or the home has been officially designated by the organisation or regulatory body as a work place e.g childminders or foster carers.

Staff are required to maintain professional boundaries and must not establish or seek to establish social contact with pupils for the purpose of securing a friendship or to pursue or strengthen a relationship. Contact with parents must be kept to a professional basis. Parents should be addressed formally (Mr/Mrs/Ms/Mx Surname) and staff should encourage parents to do likewise to maintain the professional tone of the relationship. Parents wishing to discuss their child's needs will do so through an appointment with the class teacher or, in the case of urgent matters, the class teacher will be freed to meet the parent / carer.

Staff should not give their personal details such as home/mobile phone number; home or e-mail address to pupils or parents and should not engage in text message (SMS or other instant messaging services) correspondence with students. Email may be used but the official school email addresses should be used at all times. It is important that email correspondence respects the same norms as all other interactions with students. The receipt of inappropriate or unwarranted calls or messages from students must be reported to the line manager.

12. Social networking

If using personal social media channels, staff should ensure that privacy settings are set at the highest level. This ensures that pupils and parents do not have access to staff personal data or images, including those of family, friends or other staff. Staff should not allow current or recent pupils to access their profile to avoid being put in a vulnerable position. Mention of school events, or pupils at the school are not appropriate in a personal social media channel.

Staff are advised that they leave themselves open to allegations of professional misconduct if inappropriate images are made available on a public profile by anyone, even if they date back to before the member of staff was employed at the school.

Where relationships or friendships exist between staff and those who are also parents at the school, social networking is acceptable, but caution must be exercised so that professional standards, and appropriate boundaries of the roles, are maintained, and staff do not compromise themselves, the school or the Trust.

When engaged in online gaming, should staff become aware that they are in an online game with a pupil of the school, they should withdraw and make senior staff at the school aware of what has happened.

Children should not be chosen or accepted as 'friends' and contact with parents / carers should be appropriate.

Staff should inform senior leadership immediately if a Trust pupil does gain access to their social media, or online gaming ID/profile by fraudulent means (impersonation or hacking)

Employees must not knowingly enter into correspondence with students via internet social networking sites. When using such sites themselves, employees should remember that they can often be identified as associated with the school or Trust and must respect the ethos of these organisations and avoid bringing them or any individual member of staff or student into disrepute.

13. Physical contact

Physical contact with pupils and students should be avoided wherever possible. When physical contact with pupils is necessary, this should be appropriate given their age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity and background. Appropriate physical contact in schools may occur most often with younger pupils. *Staff should be aware that even well-intentioned physical contact may be misconstrued by the child, an observer or by anyone to whom this action is described.*

Necessary physical contact, including the circumstances described below, should be for the minimum time necessary to complete the activity and take place in an open environment (see section 14, one-to-one situations, below). Staff should remain sensitive to any discomfort expressed verbally or non-verbally by the pupil.

Physical punishment of any sort is prohibited by law.

a. Pupils in distress

There may be occasions when a distressed pupil needs comfort and reassurance and in such instances, staff will be required to exercise professional discretion and judgement. This may include age - appropriate physical contact. Staff should remain self-aware at all times to ensure their contact is not threatening, intrusive or subject to misinterpretation, in particular if no other adult is present at the time

b. Physical Education and other activities which require physical contact

Some staff such as those who teach PE and games or provide music tuition may, on occasions, have to initiate physical contact with pupils in order to support them so they can perform a task safely, demonstrate the use of a particular piece of equipment/instrument or assist them with an exercise. This should be done with the pupil's agreement. Alternatives to physical contact should be sought wherever possible.

b. Showers and changing

Children are entitled to respect and privacy when changing clothes or taking a shower. However, there needs to be an appropriate level of supervision in order to safeguard pupils, satisfy health and safety considerations and ensure that bullying or teasing does not occur. This supervision should be appropriate to the needs and age of the children concerned and sensitive to the potential for embarrassment.

Staff must avoid any physical contact when children are in a state of undress and avoid any visually intrusive behavior. Where there are changing rooms, staff should announce their intention of entering and avoid remaining in the room unless pupil needs require it. Staff must not change in the same place as children.

11. Behaviour management

All pupils have a right to be treated with respect and dignity. Corporal punishment in any form is unlawful. This includes direct physical contact or contact with any object whether held or thrown. Staff must not use any form of degrading treatment to punish a pupil. The use of humour can help to defuse a situation, but the use of sarcasm, belittling, embarrassing, demeaning, ridiculing, deliberately sapping the self-esteem of the child or insensitive comments towards pupils is not acceptable in any situation, and may be considered to be emotional abuse.

All employees must be aware of child-on-child abuse and ensure that it is never tolerated or dismissed as “banter”, “just having a laugh”, “part of growing up”, or “boys being boys”, as this can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours and an unsafe environment for children.

12. Care, control and physical intervention

All aspects of this are dealt with in the school’s procedure for the use of positive handling and reasonable force. Only trained staff should use positive handling with pupils and may only be carried out in accordance with the school procedure. The only exception is the use of reasonable force in extreme cases where physical intervention is the only practical way of protecting oneself or another from likely serious injury. Any such physical contact with students must be reported immediately to the line manager or other senior colleague.

Employees must not attempt to search a pupil’s bag, clothing/pockets or personal possessions. Any suspicions which might prompt such a search must be referred to a senior colleague who will decide on appropriate action.

13. Sexual contact with children and young people

Sexual activity does not just involve physical contact, but may include non-contact activities, such as causing children to engage in or watch sexual activity or the production of pornographic material. Where a person aged 18 or over is in a position of trust with a child under 18, it is a criminal offence for that person to engage in sexual activity with or in the presence of that child, or to cause or incite that child to engage in or watch sexual activity.

Staff must not discuss their own sexual relationships with or in the presence of pupils and must avoid comments to students that may be construed as having sexual overtones. Staff must not discuss a pupil’s sexual relationships in inappropriate settings or contexts or pursue sexual relationships with children either in or out of school and must not encourage students to engage in any discussions of a sexual nature. Staff should avoid any form of communication with a child or young person which could be interpreted as sexually suggestive or provocative i.e. verbal comments, letters, notes, electronic mail, phone calls, texts, physical contact.

14. One-to-one situations

Staff working in one-to-one situations with pupils may be more vulnerable to allegations. Staff should ensure there is visual access and/or an open door in one-to-one situations. Staff should avoid the use of “engaged” signs when with pupils to avoid suggestions of secrecy or inappropriate conduct, and glass panels in office and classroom doors must never be covered for this reason

Meetings with students should not be arranged away from the school premises or out of school hours without the explicit permission of a senior leader. Home visits should only be made with such explicit consent, and staff carrying out such visits must familiarise themselves with “Guidance for safer working

practice for those working with children and young people in education settings”, and the Lone Working policy if appropriate.

15. Transporting pupils

In certain situations, e.g. out of school activities, staff or volunteers may agree to transport pupils. Wherever possible and practicable it is advisable that transport is undertaken other than in private vehicles, with at least one adult additional to the driver acting as an escort. Staff should refer to the Trust’s Travel Policy (available on Tenax website) for more information.

16. Educational visits

Staff should take particular care when supervising pupils in the less formal atmosphere of a residential setting or after-school activity where these guidelines may appear more difficult to observe, and situations may appear more blurred. Staff remain in a position of trust at all times whilst accompanying an educational visit. They have a duty of care towards the young people they are with and need to ensure that their behaviour cannot be interpreted as seeking to establish an inappropriate relationship or friendship. Staff must take care that students do not misinterpret or abuse the more relaxed relationships which can arise during a school trip, and that professional boundaries and behaviours remain in place.

17. First aid and the administration of medication

The school has trained first-aiders/ appointed people. Staff should receive appropriate training before administering first aid or medication. First aid will be carried out as appropriate and must be non-invasive. In case of doubt of the severity of an injury a member of the senior leadership team should be consulted and the parents will be called.

If called on to administer first aid, staff should, wherever possible, ensure that another adult is present, restrict physical contact to the minimum necessary, and ensure the incident is reported fully immediately.

No medicine, including non-prescription drugs such as paracetamol, may be given to students by staff (other than the school nurse, where available, or other fully trained staff members, to whom separate arrangements apply). The only exception is the administration of urgent life-saving treatment, such as an EpiPen following a severe allergic reaction.

18. Intimate care

All children have a right to safety, privacy and dignity when contact of an intimate nature is required (for example assisting with toileting or removing wet/soiled clothing). A care plan should be drawn up and agreed with parents for all children who require intimate care on a regular basis. Intimate and personal care should not be carried out by an adult that the child does not know.

19. Photographic, video and other creative arts

Activities involving the recording of moving or still images may be undertaken as part of the curriculum, extra-school activities, for publicity, or to celebrate achievement. Staff should be sensitive to any pupils who appear uncomfortable and should recognise the potential for misinterpretation. Staff taking images must familiarise themselves with the consents for the use of images for each pupil involved in the activity. Where consent is not given, images must not be taken of the pupil.

Images should not be displayed on websites, in publications or in a public place without relevant consent. The definition of a public place includes areas where visitors to the school have access.

Images should only be taken and retained on school/Trust equipment, and must not be stored on personal cameras, devices or home computers. Images must not be shared other than through the school network/website, with the permission of parents/carers and senior leadership team.

20. Internet use

The Trust has a clear policy about access to and the use of the internet. Please refer to the ICT/Internet Acceptable Use policy for further guidance.

Under no circumstances should adults in the Trust access inappropriate images. Accessing child pornography or indecent images of children on the internet and making, storing or disseminating such material is a criminal offence.

Staff must not use school equipment to access inappropriate or indecent material, including pornography of any sort. Should any such use be found, it will be reported to the police.

21. Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing is the mechanism by which staff can voice their concerns, made in good faith, without fear of repercussion. Please refer to the Trust's Whistleblowing Policy.

Staff should acknowledge their individual responsibilities to bring matters of concern to the attention of senior leadership, the Trust Board, and/or relevant external agencies. This is particularly important where the welfare of children may be at risk.

22. Contact with the media

Only those employees with specific permission from the headteacher or the Trust may speak, write or give an interview or information to the media on school property or about any matter to do with pupils, the school or the Trust. Any question from a journalist about the school, the Trust or any pupil or employee must not be answered but referred to the headteacher. Staff should be mindful that even seemingly "off-the-record" comments may be used and taken out of context.

23. Staff duty of loyalty to the school and Trust

It is implied in the employment contracts of all staff that there is a duty to maintain mutual trust and confidence, and a duty of fidelity for all staff, to be loyal to the organisation. Staff must be mindful of these duties in all interactions at or about school and Trust business. Staff should not discuss colleagues with students and should support the school's policies and ethos at all times in discussion with students and parents.

Appendix A

This Staff Code of Conduct should be read in conjunction with the following statutory guidance and Trust policies.

Statutory Guidance:

Keeping Children Safe in Education – latest edition as published

Guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings

Teacher Standards

Associated Policies:

Tenax Whistleblowing Policy

Tenax Data Protection Policy

Tenax Discipline and Conduct Policy

Tenax Health and Safety Policy

School Safeguarding Policy

School Supporting Children with Medical Needs Policy

Procedure for the Administration of Medicines

School Behaviour Policy

ICT and Internet Acceptable Use Policy

Tenax Lone Working Policy

Tenax Staff Travel Policy