

# Discipline and Conduct

(Policy and Procedure)

## **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

1. set a full Trust wide policy,
2. set a 'policy principles' document (a framework within which Headteachers develop a full and appropriately customised policy),
3. or delegate to Headteachers or LGBs the power to develop their own policy.

<b>Approval Body:</b>	<b>Chief Executive Officer</b>
<b>Adopted:</b>	<b>1 May 2018</b>
<b>Leadership Grp Responsibility:</b>	<b>HR Director</b>
<b>Review period:</b>	<b>3 years</b>
<b>Date of next review:</b>	<b>April 2021</b>

**This is a Level 1 Policy against the Trust Governance Plan.**

This procedure was adopted by the Trust Board, for implementation in Tenax Schools Trust on the date above and supercedes any previous policy or policies on the management of Discipline and Conduct.

# Contents

## Part A - Policy

1	Policy Statement	3
2	Scope	4
3	Responsibilities of the Trust	4
4	Responsibilities of the Employee	4
5	Delegated Responsibility	4
6	Timescales	6
7	Right to Representation	6

## Part B - Procedure

8	Informal management action	7
9	Notifying an employee of an allegation(s) against them	7
10	Suspension	8
11	Investigating the allegation	9
12	Investigation outcome	10
13	Notification of a disciplinary hearing	11
14	Disciplinary hearings	12
15	The outcome of the hearing and disciplinary sanctions	12
16	Communicating the decision	14
17	Appeal	15
18	The outcome of the appeal	16
19	Communicating the appeal decision	16
20	Further misconduct	16
21	Absence during the duration of the sanction	17
22	Non-attendance at hearing or appeal meetings	17
23	Minuting hearing and appeal meetings	17
24	Disclosure of formal sanctions in employment references	18
25	Malicious and vexatious allegations	18
26	Advice and support to employees during the process	18
27	Ill health and sickness absence during the process	18
28	Concurrent investigations by other agencies	18
29	Allegations relating to financial irregularities	19
30	Allegations against trade union representatives	19
31	Criminal proceedings	19
32	Other concurrent processes	20
33	Referral to other agencies	20
34	Retention of records	20
35	Confidentiality	21
	<b>Appendix A: Disciplinary Rules</b>	22
	<b>Appendix B: Guidance for hearings and Appeals</b>	26

## Part A – Policy

### 1 Policy Statement

Tenax Schools Trust expects that employees will maintain appropriate standards of conduct and behaviour at all times. The Trust also requires all employees to comply with relevant local academy rules, working practices and conditions of service.

The Disciplinary Policy and Procedure provides a means by which shortcomings in conduct can be addressed and employees encouraged to rectify their behaviour.

Whilst concerns regarding misconduct may be addressed informally by managers, there are occasions when an individual's conduct may warrant formal action.

This policy recognises the principles of natural justice and fair process and is committed to ensuring that confidentiality is maintained for all parties.

Where allegations require formal investigation, this will be undertaken without undue delay. The Trust/academy will undertake as thorough an investigation of the alleged misconduct as is reasonable and appropriate given the circumstances in order to establish the facts relating to the allegation(s).

An employee will be advised of the allegation(s) against them and be given an opportunity to state their case and any mitigating circumstances.

Where a case to answer is found in relation to misconduct this may be addressed by a formal disciplinary hearing and should, on the balance of probabilities, the case be proven, a formal sanction may be imposed.

The nature of the sanction will be determined by the circumstances of the case. The Trust reserves the right to implement the process at any stage, according to the nature and seriousness of the misconduct. However, an employee will not normally be dismissed for the first incident of misconduct other than in the case of gross misconduct where an employee may be dismissed without notice.

An employee is entitled to appeal against any formal sanction.

This procedure has been developed to comply with legal requirements and is in accordance with ACAS guidance.

This procedure explains:

- How the Trust will address matters relating to conduct and behaviour in a fair, consistent and structured manner
- What is expected from managers and employees with regards to the management of such issues.

## **2 Scope**

This policy and procedure applies to all employees of Tenax Schools Trust, including the Chief Executive Officer.

Reference to acts of 'misconduct' in this procedure relates to behaviour which may be reasonably defined as wilful or negligent acts or omissions on the part of the employee. Concerns relating to performance and capability should be addressed under a separate procedure.

This policy does not include misconduct related to allegations against children for which a separate procedure applies.

## **3 Responsibilities of the Trust**

- To make expectations clear regarding conduct and behaviour at work
- To ensure consistency and fairness in the way conduct issues are addressed
- To advise an employee if their conduct or behaviour is unsatisfactory and give the employee the opportunity to state their case.

## **4 Responsibilities of the employee**

- To ensure they maintain appropriate standards of conduct at all times and comply with any relevant Trust or local academy rules, working practices and conditions of service
- To cooperate with any action taken under this procedure

The Trust and the employee share a responsibility to maintain confidentiality in respect of any action taken under this procedure in the interests of all parties involved in the dispute.

## **5 Delegated responsibility**

In schools, the management of conduct and discipline issues may be delegated to staff other than the Headteacher. References to the role of the Headteacher in the policy and procedure include his / her nominee, or Headteacher from any Trust school.

For non-school staff, the management of conduct and discipline issues will normally be carried out through the individual's reporting line.

### **Informal Action**

Informal action may be delegated to line managers, where appropriate.

## Formal Action

Formal hearings to consider matters short of dismissal may be delegated to another manager or the Headteacher. Where matters are to be considered by a Headteacher, this should be taken to include any Headteacher in the Trust who may be co-opted to consider the case.

The following table sets out the provisions which would normally apply.

Informal Action taken by	Formal hearing heard by	Appeal heard by
Line Manager	<p>Another more senior Manager or Headteacher.</p> <p>Where dismissal is a possible outcome, the Trust reserves the right for a case to be heard by governors from the local governing board, or for a member of the Trust Board to be present.</p>	<p>Headteacher or member of Executive Group</p> <p>The Trust reserves the right for a member of the Trust Board to be present.</p>
Headteacher	<p>The Primary/Secondary Lead, or member of the Executive Group.</p> <p>The Trust reserves the right for a member of the LGB or Trust Board to be present.</p>	<p>Member of the Executive Group.</p> <p>The Trust reserves the right for a member of the Trust Board to be present.</p>

## Matters relating to the Headteacher/Executive Group

Action will normally be taken by the individual's line manager.

Formal hearings will be heard by a member of the Executive Group, who may be accompanied by a member of the Board of Trustees, who have had no prior involvement in the matter under consideration.

Appeals will be heard by a further panel of one or more Governors or Trustees who have had no prior involvement in the matter under consideration.

In instances where there are insufficient senior managers to hear the case, or it is of a specialist nature, the academy/Trust may co-opt other individuals suitable to hear the case.

## 6 Timescales

Concerns regarding conduct will be addressed promptly and without undue delay in achieving an outcome.

Timescales stated are for guidance and may vary depending on the circumstances of the case.

<b>Employee notified of investigation outcome</b>	Within 5 working days of the conclusion of the investigation
<b>Hearing</b>	At least 7 working days notice will be given of a hearing date
<b>Written outcome of hearing given</b>	Within 5 working days of the date of the hearing
<b>Appeal to be made</b>	Within 7 working days of receipt of the written outcome of the hearing
<b>Appeal to be heard</b>	Within 10 working days from receipt of written appeal
<b>Written outcome of appeal given</b>	Within 5 working days of the date of the appeal

For the purpose of this procedure ‘working day’ will normally refer to the 195 days of the local academy year for teachers employed under the terms of the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document.

For support staff employed on a term time only basis working days will normally refer to the days worked under their contract or for staff employed on “year round” contracts, working days will mean all days excluding weekend and bank holiday days.

The timescales above may be varied by mutual agreement.

## 7 Right to representation

An employee has the right to be accompanied to a formal hearing or appeal meeting by either a workplace colleague or trade union representative.

A workplace colleague or trade union representative may also attend a disciplinary investigation meeting. However it should be noted that the presence of a representative does not make the meeting formal.

## Part B - Procedure

### 8 Informal management action

Where an allegation of misconduct is made consideration will be given as to whether it is appropriate to address the matter informally by means of 'management action'.

In determining whether an informal approach should be taken the Headteacher or designate will take into account the seriousness of the alleged misconduct and whether previous informal action to address the issue has been unsuccessful.

Where an informal approach is taken the Headteacher or designate will usually meet with the employee to establish the facts, events and / or actions, discuss the concerns, and give the employee the opportunity to state their case. The Headteacher or designate may agree future expectations with the employee – including measures to support an improvement in conduct – and, if appropriate, agree a review period and arrangements for monitoring conduct.

There is no requirement for a workplace colleague or trade union representative to be present at such a meeting although it may be appropriate. The Headteacher may consider inviting the employee to be accompanied when discussing concerns informally, however the presence of a trade union representative / workplace colleague does not in itself make the meeting formal. Any requests from employees to be accompanied will not unreasonably be refused.

It should be noted that if during the discussion it becomes apparent that the matter may be more serious – the meeting may be adjourned and the matter investigated under the formal disciplinary procedure.

The outcome of the discussion will be confirmed in writing and a record placed on the employee's file. This may be termed an 'informal warning'. However it should be made clear to the employee that such informal action will not form part of the employee's disciplinary record.

There is no right of appeal against informal action.

It is expected that informal action will resolve most minor concerns however an employee should be advised that if there is a repetition of such misconduct formal disciplinary action may be taken.

### 9 Notifying an employee of an allegation(s) against them

An employee will be notified of all allegation(s) or complaint(s) made against them at the earliest practical opportunity and advised of the procedure that will be followed.

Prior to investigating an allegation it may not be possible or appropriate to be specific about the precise nature of the complaint at the outset – however the employee will be given a broad indication of the nature of the complaint.

Should the matter be addressed through a formal investigation or formal disciplinary action, the employee will be advised of the nature of the complaint in writing. They will also be advised that, should the complaint be upheld, formal disciplinary action may be taken.

Should further allegations come to light during the course of the investigation which are also to be investigated the employee will be advised of these in writing.

## 10 Suspension

There may be occasions when it is appropriate to suspend an employee on full pay pending the outcome of an investigation and / or conclusion of any disciplinary action.

Suspension should only be initiated after careful consideration and where all other alternatives have been explored – such as arranging a period of authorised absence, a temporary change in duties or place of work. Suspension is not a sanction in itself and does not represent any prejudgement of the outcome of the process.

As a guide suspension **may be** instigated where:

- Children or young people are considered to be at risk
- The employee or other staff members are considered to be at risk
- Where Trust assets are considered to be at risk
- Where there is evidence to suggest that the employer's or employee's reputation may be at risk
- Where the presence of the employee may impede the investigation, through the destruction or tampering with evidence, pressurising of witnesses, or otherwise be a disruptive influence in the workplace
- Where the allegations against the employee may amount to gross misconduct or gross incompetence.

This list is not exhaustive.

Where practicable a meeting will be arranged with the employee and their workplace colleague or trade union representative to explain the reason for the suspension and the conditions that will apply. The details of the suspension will be confirmed in writing with the employee, usually within 5 working days.

In some instances where it is not practicable or possible for the employee's representative to be present, the meeting may still proceed in their absence. In exceptional circumstances where it is not possible or appropriate for the employee to attend a meeting at a Trust site– suspension may be made in writing.

Suspension will not continue for longer than is necessary and will be kept under review. Where possible the employee will be given an indication of how long the suspension is likely to last and will be advised should these timescales change.

An employee should be contactable by telephone or other agreed means during their normal working hours while suspended.

An employee who is suspended must not discuss the details of the allegation(s) with other members of staff (except their workplace colleague or trade union representative), governors, Trustees, pupils or parents in such a way which could compromise their position or integrity of the investigation without the prior permission of the Headteacher or suspending manager. This does not prevent an employee discussing matters with their representative. Clarification should be sought from the Headteacher or suspending manager if required.

A suspended employee will be provided with a named contact in the academy/Trust to keep them informed of matters arising during their absence. This individual will not be able to discuss any aspects of the disciplinary investigation.

Care will be given to ensuring a suspended employee receives information from staff meetings during their absence and consideration will be given to alternative arrangements for events such as inset training and CPD.

Suspensions may be made by the Headteacher, member of the Executive Group or line manager in consultation with Human Resources. An employee may be suspended at any point during the investigation should the circumstances warrant.

Suspension may be lifted at any point should the situation change.

## **11 Investigating the allegation**

Before any formal disciplinary action is taken, allegations of misconduct will be promptly, thoroughly and objectively investigated. The nature and extent of the investigation will be determined by what is reasonable in the circumstances.

The purpose of the investigation is to establish the facts, events and / or actions to determine whether there is a case to answer and not to make any decision about the outcome.

The Headteacher or other appropriate manager will appoint an independent investigating officer who has not had any prior involvement in the case. On occasion it may be appropriate to identify more than one investigating officer.

The employee will be invited to a formal investigation meeting with reasonable notice during working hours. At this meeting the employee will be given an opportunity to respond to the allegation(s), explain his / her conduct and, where the concern is admitted, any mitigating circumstances. Depending on the circumstances it may be necessary to conduct more than one investigation meeting. A workplace colleague or trade union representative may accompany an employee to an investigation meeting.

In addition to attending an investigation meeting, the employee may also make a written statement or present any other relevant written documents that they may wish to be considered as part of the investigation.

The investigating officer may also conduct a formal investigating meeting with other relevant witnesses as soon as possible. The employee will be given the opportunity to identify witnesses they wish to be interviewed as part of the process.

Witnesses providing evidence to an investigation will be advised that their statement may be shared with the employee and they may be called to present this and may be questioned regarding their evidence at a disciplinary hearing.

All witnesses should be aware of the confidential nature of investigations and should not discuss any aspect of the meeting or matters under consideration with anyone outside of investigation meeting.

Interviews with pupils will only be conducted with the parent or guardian's consent. Pupils may be accompanied by a parent/carer or another trusted adult.

The investigating officer may also review documentary and/or other evidence relevant to the allegation.

A written, signed and dated record will be made of all interviews conducted as part of the investigation. The employee will have the opportunity to check the notes / minutes and comment on the accuracy. Where there are discrepancies between the employer and employee that cannot be resolved, both version of the minutes will be held on record.

Audio or video recording of any meeting as part of the Disciplinary Procedure is forbidden, and making covert recordings of such meetings may warrant formal disciplinary action. Exceptions may be made where recording such meetings may constitute a reasonable adjustment under the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.

Any recordings under this provision can only be made with the consent of all those present, and must be kept securely and confidentially. Recordings may not be shared or distributed in any way.

Where agreement is reached to record a meeting, minutes will still be taken and used to summarise the meeting, or be used in the event of technical failure of recording equipment.

## **12 Investigation outcome**

A written report will be produced of the investigation findings and shared with the Headteacher or other commissioning manager.

Based on the findings of the investigation, the Headteacher or member of the Executive Group, will determine which course of action is most appropriate:

- That there is no case to answer and no further action is taken

- That a minor concern is identified which is to be addressed through informal action
- That there is a case to answer on a matter of misconduct which warrants consideration of formal disciplinary action.

The investigation outcome will be communicated to the employee in writing without undue delay and usually within 5 working days of the appropriate course of action being determined.

Where informal action is proposed, a follow up meeting will be arranged without undue delay to discuss any appropriate management action. The outcome of this discussion may be confirmed in writing and a record placed on the employee's file – although such a discussion and letter does not constitute a formal disciplinary record.

The investigation report will only be shared with the employee should formal action be instigated.

### **13 Notification of a Disciplinary Hearing**

Where the matter is to be considered by a formal disciplinary hearing, arrangements for this will be communicated in writing.

This notification should specify:

- The allegation(s) to be considered at the hearing
- The time, date and venue of the hearing
- The possible consequences should the case be upheld and, if appropriate, that dismissal may be an outcome
- The procedure to be followed
- That the employee may be accompanied by their workplace colleague or trade union representative.

The employee will be given reasonable notification of the date of the hearing to allow them sufficient time to prepare their case.

Wherever possible, the academy/Trust will provide the employee with copies of all relevant documents which will be referred to during the hearing, including a copy of the investigation report and statement of case with the notification of the disciplinary hearing. Should this not be possible the academy/Trust will provide the employee with this information no later than 7 working days before the hearing.

The employee is required to provide no later than 3 clear working days before the hearing:

- The name of their trade union representative or workplace colleague

- The name(s) of any witnesses they are calling
- Any relevant documentation they wish to be considered.

If a late submission is received the panel has discretion as to whether to accept this and make provision for an adjournment during the hearing to consider this. However the panel reserves the right to disregard this information.

## **14 Disciplinary hearings**

The purpose of the disciplinary hearing is for the academy/Trust to present the case against the employee and for the employee to be given the opportunity to respond.

The role of the manager hearing the case/panel is to consider the evidence presented and decide whether, on the balance of probabilities:

- The case against the employee has been established, and
- Whether it is appropriate and reasonable to issue a formal sanction against the employee.

The manager hearing the case/panel should also consider whether an appropriate and sufficient investigation has been undertaken and a fair and reasonable procedure followed.

The case for the academy/Trust will usually be presented by the manager who commissioned the investigation, or their nominee. The employee will have an opportunity to present their case. Witnesses may be presented by either party.

A workplace colleague or trade union representative may accompany an employee to the hearing.

*The arrangements for hearings are set out in Appendix B*

## **15 The outcome of the hearing and disciplinary sanctions**

Based on the evidence presented, the panel may determine the following outcomes:

- There is insufficient evidence against the employee and the matter should be concluded with no further action
- The case against the employee is proven on the balance of probabilities and a decision made to give the employee a formal warning
- The case against the employee is proven on the balance of probabilities and a decision made to dismiss the employee with or without notice
- The case is proven on the balance of probabilities and some other formal action is appropriate

If proven and depending on the circumstances of the case, the panel may impose a range of sanctions, including dismissal as follows:

Level of Sanction	Normal Expiry Period
First Level Written Warning	After 6 months
Second Level Written Warning	After 12 months
Final Written Warning	After 18 months
Dismissal with contractual notice	
Summary Dismissal without notice	

An employee will not usually be dismissed for the first incident of misconduct other than in the case of gross misconduct. Where an employee's first incident of misconduct is sufficiently serious – it may be appropriate to issue a final written warning. The duration of other sanctions will be determined by the circumstances of the case.

Should gross misconduct be found, and dismissal is determined, this is usually without notice (summary dismissal). In cases of dismissal arising from misconduct, notice would normally be given. Where notice is given this is the greater of the employee's statutory or contractual notice entitlement.

*A list of actions which may constitute Gross Misconduct and Misconduct is at Appendix A.*

In determining the nature of the sanction consideration will be given to:

- Whether the proposed penalty is reasonable in the circumstances – with reference to the examples of behaviours which constitute gross misconduct and misconduct within this procedure
- The nature, severity and impact of the misconduct
- The circumstances in which the misconduct occurred and any mitigating factors or the explanations given by the employee
- The employee's previous conduct, position, seniority, length of service and their attitude towards the misconduct
- Any relevant employer rules and procedures and whether the employee was aware, or could reasonably be aware, that their conduct contravened these
- The penalty imposed for similar offences in the past

- Whether any other action could be taken to encourage the employee to improve their conduct such as training or additional support

In certain instances, and where appropriate to the concerns, the panel may recommend that other action be considered such as:

- Downgrading
- Transferring the employee to another role
- Withholding pay progression
- Requiring the employee to undertake certain specified training
- Refer the matter for consideration under another procedure, if appropriate

Alternative action such as this would only be taken where it is judged reasonable and viable for the academy/Trust to implement.

## **16 Communicating the Decision**

Where possible the employee will be advised verbally of the outcome following the conclusion of the process and the panel's deliberations. In all circumstances the employee will be advised in writing of the outcome of the hearing, usually within 5 working days of the decision being made.

The notification should specify:

- The outcome
- The reasons for the outcome and the nature of any misconduct that has been found
- The nature of any sanction and how long it will last
- If dismissed – the reason for the dismissal, whether notice will be given and the termination date
- Any period of time given for improvement, a review date if appropriate, and the required improvement expected
- Any support that the employer will provide to assist the employee, if relevant
- The likely consequences of any further misconduct

Should a sanction be imposed employees should be advised of the timescales and procedure for making an appeal.

It will be deemed sufficient for the academy/Trust to issue the written confirmation of the decision to the employee's last known address.

## **17 Appeal**

The employee may register an appeal in writing to the clerk to the local governing board or nominated person, within 7 working days of written receipt of the outcome of the hearing.

The appeal should be on one or more of the following grounds:

- Unfairness of decision
- That the sanction imposed was unreasonable
- That new evidence has come to light
- Significant procedural irregularities

The letter of appeal should include full details of the reasons for the appeal. The employee should also include any supporting information they wish to rely on at the appeal hearing with their letter of appeal. In any case, any supporting information must be submitted by the employee no later than the deadline for receipt of an appeal.

In instances where the grounds for appeal are not stated the academy/Trust will ask the employee to confirm these to enable all parties to give due consideration to the issues prior to the appeal meeting.

If a late submission is received the panel has discretion as to whether to accept this and make provision for an adjournment during the hearing to consider this. However the panel reserves the right to disregard this information.

The academy/Trust will provide the employee with copies of any documents which will be referred to during the appeal, including the notes of the disciplinary hearing and witness statements, in advance and usually no later than 3 working days before the appeal meeting.

A workplace colleague or trade union representative may accompany an employee to an appeal.

The Appeal panel has discretion to consider allowing new evidence and witnesses but only if this is strictly relevant to the grounds of appeal.

The panel will identify a chair who will have responsibility for facilitating the hearing.

*The arrangements for hearings are set out in further detail in Appendix B*

## **18 The outcome of the appeal**

The purpose of the appeal is to review the original decision on the basis of the grounds presented for appeal by the employee. The appeal will only result in a re-hearing in exceptional circumstances, where significant procedural irregularities are identified.

The outcome of the appeal may be:

- To uphold the previous decision in full
- To uphold the previous decision in part – but to reduce the level of the sanction or amend other elements of the decision
- To uphold the employee’s appeal in full and withdraw the sanction in its entirety.

Sanctions will not be increased on appeal. The appeal panel decision is final, even in instances of a full re hearing.

## **19 Communicating the appeal decision**

The employee will be advised in writing of the outcome of the appeal hearing, usually within 5 working days of the decision being made.

The notification should specify:

- The outcome
- The reasons for the outcome reached
- Where the level or nature of the sanction is reduced – the nature of any revised sanction and how long it will last
- That the panel’s decision is final and there is no further right of appeal.

It will be deemed sufficient for the employer to issue the written confirmation of the decision to the employee's last known address.

## **20 Further misconduct**

Where a sanction short of dismissal is imposed and there is further proven misconduct within the period that the sanction is ‘live’, a further panel may extend the warning or issue a higher sanction, including dismissal.

The period of extension will be determined by the circumstances of the case, taking into account the seriousness of the misconduct, and the opportunity for the misconduct to be repeated. As a guide, warnings will not normally be extended by more than the duration of the original warning.

## **21 Absence during the duration of the sanction**

In cases where an employee has been absent for a significant part of the period for which the sanction was imposed – the lifespan of the warning may be extended by the amount of time the employee has been absent. Any decision to extend the lifespan of a warning should be made with reference to the panel/individual who determined the original sanction.

## **22 Non- attendance at hearing or appeal meetings**

Where an employee or their representative is unavailable to attend, they should inform the academy/Trust at the earliest opportunity.

If an employee's representative is unavailable the hearing/appeal may be deferred by up to 5 working days from the date of the original hearing.

Due consideration will be given to any request for postponement taking into account the individual circumstances, reason for non attendance and the seriousness of the allegations.

Other than in exceptional circumstances only one postponement will be granted.

The Headteacher/Panel reserves the right to hold a hearing in the employee's absence where all reasonable efforts to secure attendance have been unsuccessful. In this event the employee will be given the opportunity to make written representations to the hearing or for their representative or workplace colleague to make representations either to the meeting or in writing on their behalf.

If no submissions are received the panel may make a decision based on the available information.

## **23 Minuting hearing and appeal meetings**

Minutes should be taken of all submissions to the hearing – including employer, employee and witness statements, any questioning of the parties and the panel's decision statement. The panel's deliberations should not be minuted.

Minutes should be shared with the employee as soon as practicable. The employee will have the opportunity to check the minutes and comment on their accuracy. Where there are discrepancies between the employer and employee that cannot be resolved, both versions of the minutes will be held on record.

An audio record may also be made with the prior consent of the employee. Where this is the case, the prior agreement of the employee will be sought. In these instances an audio copy or summary transcript will be shared with the employee.

Covert recordings of meetings or hearings are expressly prohibited. Any recording of a meetings or hearing must be with the prior consent of all parties.

## **24 Disclosure of formal sanctions in employment references**

Should an employee have an unexpired formal disciplinary sanction on file – this will be disclosed, upon request, in any reference provided by the employer to a prospective employer.

Expired sanctions will not be disclosed – unless these relate to matters which the employer is required to share in accordance with Child Protection/Safeguarding Procedures.

## **25 Malicious and vexatious allegations**

Where an allegation of misconduct against an employee is found to be vexatious or of malicious intent, this may be examined in accordance with the Trust's disciplinary procedures.

## **26 Advice and support to employees during the process**

Employees are advised to seek support from their trade union or professional association in the first instance. Employees may address questions about the procedure to the Headteacher or other delegated staff member.

In instances where the investigation is prolonged or the employee is suspended, the Academy will, as far as is practicable, make arrangements to keep the employee informed with the progress of the investigation and timescales for conclusion.

## **27 Ill health and sickness absence during the process**

The ill health of an employee will not usually be grounds for ceasing any ongoing investigation or disciplinary process.

Where the absence is likely to be short, the academy/Trust use its discretion to pause the process until the employee recovers. Where the absence is ongoing, the Academy may seek guidance from an occupational health advisor to determine whether or not the employee is sufficiently fit to take part in the process. It is expected that employees will cooperate with such a process.

Upon receipt of occupational health advice, consideration may be given to any measures that can be put in place to enable the process to proceed. This may include giving the employee the opportunity to make written representations to an investigation or hearing or for their trade union representative or workplace colleague to make representations on their behalf.

## **28 Concurrent investigations by other agencies**

Certain allegations of misconduct may initially be investigated under a different procedure or as a part of criminal investigation.

In these circumstances an investigation under the employer's disciplinary procedure may take place concurrently, unless the employer is otherwise instructed by other agencies, or subsequent to legal advice.

Any disciplinary hearing held by the academy/Trust will be independent of the timing or outcome of other procedures, and be based on the academy/Trust's own investigation.

The academy/Trust will always cooperate with other agencies investigating criminal, or safeguarding allegations. This may include sharing of information obtained in the course of the Trust's investigation.

### **29 Allegations relating to financial irregularities**

In instances where an allegation of theft, fraud or other financial irregularity is made – the issue may be referred to the Trust's auditors. Advice may also be sought from the Education Funding Agency.

Where such allegations may amount to a criminal offence, such allegations will always be referred to the police.

### **30 Allegations against Trade Union Representatives**

No formal disciplinary action or formal disciplinary investigation will be taken against a trade union representative until the circumstances of the case have been discussed with a full time official of their union.

### **31 Criminal Proceedings**

A criminal charge or conviction for actions outside of the workplace may result in disciplinary proceedings being taken where it is judged that the employee's action:

- Affects or is likely to affect the suitability of the employee for the post for which s/he is employed, with or without reference to the relevant professional standards for their role;
- Impacts on the operation or reputation of the academy/Trust;
- Seriously undermines the trust and confidence that the academy/Trust has in the employee.

Each case will be considered on its own merits with regards to the circumstances of the case and following such investigation as is appropriate in the circumstances.

### **32 Other concurrent processes**

In the event that an employee raises a grievance or a complaint of harassment or bullying in the course of a disciplinary process, both processes may continue concurrently.

However, each case will be considered on its own merits to ensure that the academy/Trust is acting reasonably.

### **33 Referral to other agencies**

Where a teacher is dismissed for serious misconduct (or may have been dismissed for serious misconduct had they not resigned) the academy/Trust will consider whether to make a referral to the Teaching Regulation Agency (formerly the National College for Teaching and Leadership) in accordance with Education Act 2011 and The Teachers' Disciplinary (England) Regulations 2012.

Under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2007) a referral should be made to the Disclosure and Barring Service where an employee is dismissed (or would have been dismissed had they not resigned) because they have been cautioned or convicted of a relevant offence or behaved in a manner that has put at risk of harm/harmed a child.

The disciplining manager should in the first instance, refer the matter to Human Resources, and a joint case review will be carried out.

Referrals may be made to one or both agencies in respect of the same incident(s).

### **34 Retention of records**

In the event that the matter under consideration is dropped due to insufficient or inconclusive evidence it may be appropriate to keep a basic confidential record of the concern raised, date and the fact the matter was dropped due to insufficient or inconclusive evidence. All other documentation should be destroyed immediately.

If formal disciplinary action is taken, the details of the complaint, investigation findings, hearing and appeal minutes plus a copy of the outcome letter and the details of any sanction, should be retained confidentially on the employee's personnel file.

At the expiry of any sanction, a minimal confidential record may be retained. All other documentation should be removed from the employee's personnel file. This record will only be referred to in future cases of a similar nature for the purpose of evidencing a pattern of misconduct or countering an employee's subsequent assertion that there have been no previous misconduct issues.

When the matter relates to a child protection issue a factual written record of the details of the allegations and outcome will be retained in all instances.

In certain limited instances it may be appropriate to retain records for longer than the retention period for example in cases related to child protection concerns or where the case is awaiting decision from an employment tribunal.

All records will be treated as confidential and processed in accordance with contemporary information governance/Data Protection legislation which provides individuals with the right to request and have access to certain data.

### **35 Confidentiality**

All parties are required to respect the confidentiality of all information relating to the disciplinary process.

All records and information, including those relating to any sanction imposed, are a matter of confidence between the academy/Trust and the employee. In certain limited circumstances this information may be shared by the academy/Trust - for example in accordance with Child Protection/Safeguarding Procedures.

## Appendix A: Disciplinary Rules

The following examples give an indication of the Trust's position as to the types of behaviour which constitute misconduct. It is not possible to specify all forms of behaviour that will result in disciplinary action.

Each case will be judged in the light of the circumstances and context surrounding it. Varying circumstances may well allow different disciplinary actions or no disciplinary action at all to be taken for what are similar offences.

The examples are not exhaustive and omissions from the list are not, in themselves, grounds for appeal.

In addition, employees should, so far as is reasonably practicable, be familiar with Trust and local academy rules, working practices and conditions of service. Teachers should be familiar with Part Two of the Teachers' Standards which set out the expectations with regards to personal and professional conduct. Employees should be familiar with any 'Code of Conduct' in place for Trust or local academy staff.

### **Gross Misconduct**

Gross misconduct is an act which may render it inappropriate for the employee to be allowed to remain in their job. If on the balance of probabilities, this is decided gross misconduct may lead to a summary dismissal without notice for a first offence.

Examples of actions that are likely to be treated as gross misconduct include – but are not limited to:

### **Dishonesty**

- Theft of academy/pupil/employee's property
- Falsification of documents, records, claims – whether or not this is for personal gain
- Fraud or corrupt practices
- Failure to disclose, if asked, criminal convictions not exempt under the terms of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1975 and Amendment 2013
- Withholding significant and relevant information that the Trust could have reasonably required the employee to have disclosed
- Breaking statutory provisions that would render the Trust or its employees/representatives liable to prosecution.

### **Conduct giving rise to a child protection issue**

- Inappropriate or sexual relationship with a pupil
- Contact with a pupil via phone/text/online of an inappropriate nature and/or content
- Act of sexual misconduct by an employee where that misconduct could have a detrimental impact on students or on the employee's position within the Trust/academy
- Misuse of the ICT to view, or distribute, obscene, pornographic, defamatory or otherwise unacceptable material
- Inappropriate physical contact with, or restraint of a pupil
- Willful or negligent failure to exercise proper control or supervision of pupils

### **Conduct placing others at risk**

- Acts of violence
- Malicious or wilful damage to property
- Wilfully or negligently ignoring responsibilities/instructions, thus placing other members of staff/pupils at risk
- Serious breach of health and safety rules
- Attending work or undertaking duties whilst under the influence of alcohol, drugs (whether illegal or prescription) or other substances which may inhibit the ability to keep self or others safe. Please also refer to the Alcohol and Substance Misuse Policy.

### **Conduct in the workplace**

- Deliberate and significant refusal to carry out a reasonable, lawful and safe instruction or the normal agreed defined duties of the post
- Significant gross negligence in failing to attend or carry out the agreed duties of the post
- Persistent and substantial failure to follow procedures, regulations and policies either by deliberate act, or omission
- Serious and / or persistent acts of harassment, bullying or victimisation of other employees
- Acts which amount to wilful discrimination or incitement to discriminate

- Serious and unlawful breach of confidentiality or data protection obligations
- Wilful breach of any relevant code of conduct or professional standards
- Knowingly making a false or vexatious allegation against another member(s) of the Trust community
- Abusive, aggressive, humiliating, profane or perjorative language or behaviour towards a member of the Trust community including pupils/students, parents, staff, volunteers, governors, Trustees and visitors.
- Serious insubordination – undermining the authority of senior staff.

#### **Actions outside of the workplace**

- Criminal offences which are relevant to the post occupied by the employee, whether or not a criminal conviction occurs
- Actions outside of the workplace are so serious as to fundamentally breach the Trust and confidence placed in the employee
- Conduct which brings, or if brought into the public domain, would bring the academy/Trust into disrepute, including criminal offences which make the employee unsuitable for continued employment with the Trust, or conduct towards their own or other children or young people incompatible with continuing employment with the Trust.

#### **Misconduct**

Misconduct is an act of a degree less serious than that which would warrant immediate dismissal for a first offence but which could nevertheless lead to dismissal if persistent.

Acts listed under the heading of gross misconduct where the impact and implications are less serious may also be considered as misconduct.

Occasionally an act of misconduct might be so serious as to justify dismissal. Normally, however, only when it can be shown that the warnings have not been heeded or there is a pattern of misconduct for a variety of reasons will misconduct lead to dismissal.

Dismissal for misconduct will be with notice.

Examples of actions that are likely to be treated as misconduct include – but are not limited to:

- Unauthorised absence from work
- Failure to follow absence notification and/or certification requirements

- Poor time keeping
- Refusal to follow reasonable management instruction
- Breach of one or more Trust or local academy policies or procedures, whether by deliberate act, or omission
- Failure to adopt safe working practices either by a deliberate act, negligence or omission
- Serious neglect of duty
- Negligent use of Trust or local academy property
- Acts of dishonesty such as making unauthorised private phone calls/sending personal mail at the Trust's expense or unauthorised use of the internet
- Insubordination, including deliberate actions that undermine the authority or position of the school/Trust leaders or leadership structure.

## Appendix B: Guidance for Hearings and Appeals

### General

- Hearings and appeals should take place at a reasonable time and place usually during the employee's normal working hours and, in the case of employees who work term time only, during the local academy term dates. These arrangements may be varied by mutual agreement
- Consideration should be given to the venue for the hearing. There should be adequate rooms for the parties and arrangements to ensure that the hearing is conducted with discretion and confidentiality maintained. Use of another Trust site, or venue away from the academy may be appropriate in certain circumstances.

The precise procedure to be followed will vary depending on the particular circumstances of each case, but in general the following will apply:

### Role of the Panel / Manager hearing the case

It is the role of the panel / manager hearing a case to consider the evidence presented and decide whether on the balance of probabilities:

- The case against the employee has been established.
- Whether it is appropriate and reasonable to issue a formal warning or dismiss the employee.

Should an employee appeal the outcome of the hearing it is the role of the panel / manager considering the appeal to review the original decision on the basis of the grounds for appeal presented by the employee and consider whether the original outcome was within a range of reasonable responses given the circumstances.

If the case is to be heard by a panel, a chair will be identified who will have responsibility for facilitating the hearing.

### The role of the representative

The employee has the right to be accompanied to a hearing or appeal meeting by either a workplace colleague or recognised trade union representative.

The representative may address the hearing to put and sum up the employee's case, respond on behalf of the employee at the hearing and confer with the employee during the hearing. The representative does not have the right to answer questions on the employee's behalf, address the hearing if the employee does not wish it or prevent the employer from explaining their case.

### **The role of the HR advisor**

The Academy/Trust may request that an HR advisor attends a hearing or appeal meeting whose role is to advise the panel on the procedure and any points of employment law.

A further HR advisor may also be in attendance to support the Headteacher/manager in the presentation of their case.

The HR advisor may be allowed to ask questions and clarify issues on behalf of the party they are supporting.

### **Witnesses**

Witnesses may be called by either party. Details of the proposed witnesses should be communicated in advance no later than 5 working days before the date of the hearing / appeal. The role of the witness is limited to giving evidence and responding to questions.

The employee is responsible for ensuring that any witnesses they call can attend on the relevant date. In the event that a witness cannot attend they may make a written statement which should be provided to the Academy no later than 5 working days in advance of the hearing / appeal.

All witnesses should be aware of the confidential nature of hearings and should not discuss any aspect of the meeting or matters under consideration with anyone outside of the hearing.

### **Procedure for hearings**

- The manager hearing the case / chair of the panel will introduce those present and their roles, explain the case to be considered, the procedure to be followed and the format of the hearing
- The academy's/Trust's representative presents their case including calling any witnesses and referring to written submissions / evidence. The employee and their representative and panel may ask questions of the academy's representative or any witnesses
- The employee or their representative presents their case, including calling any witnesses, referring to written submissions and presenting any mitigating circumstances. The academy's representative and panel may ask questions of the employee and their representative or any witnesses
- Adjournments may be requested by both parties or by the manager / panel during the hearing
- Both parties have the opportunity to sum up their cases, with the employee or their representative having the final word

- The hearing will then be adjourned whilst the manager / panel deliberates over the evidence. If further clarity is required both parties or witnesses may be recalled and the hearing reconvened so that all parties may hear any additional evidence
- Wherever possible, the hearing is reconvened and the outcome is communicated verbally to the employee. This should also be confirmed in writing. On occasion it may not be possible for the panel to reach a decision on the day of the hearing in which case the hearing may be reconvened or all parties may agree for the outcome to be communicated in writing within 5 working days of the decision being made.

### **Procedure for appeals**

- The manager hearing the case / chair of the panel will introduce those present and their roles, explain the case to be considered, the procedure to be followed and the format of the meeting
- The employee or their representative shall put the case in support of the grounds for appeal, including any mitigating circumstances. This may include referring to written submissions and evidence. Witnesses may be recalled only where this is strictly relevant to the grounds of the appeal. The Academy's/Trust's representative and panel may ask questions of the employee and their representative
- The Academy's/Trust's representative presents the case for upholding the previous committee's decision and refers to written documentation. Witnesses may be called only where this is strictly relevant to the grounds of appeal. The employee and their representative and panel may ask questions of the Academy's/Trust's representative
- The panel will invite both parties to sum up their cases, with the employee or his/her representative having the final word. The hearing will then be adjourned whilst the panel deliberates over the evidence
- Adjournments may be requested by both parties or by the panel during the appeal hearing. If new evidence is presented the appeal may need to be adjourned while this is investigated
- The appeal hearing will then be adjourned whilst the panel deliberates over the evidence. If further clarity is required both parties or witnesses may be recalled and the hearing reconvened so that all parties may hear any additional evidence
- The appeal hearing is reconvened and the outcome is communicated verbally to the employee. This should also be confirmed in writing. On occasion it may not be possible for the panel to reach a decision on the day of the hearing in which case the appeal may be reconvened or all parties may agree for the outcome to be communicated in writing within 5 working days of the decision being made.