

# The Auriga Academy Trust

## Code of Conduct

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## 1. Scope

This Code of Conduct ("the Code") applies to all staff employed by The Auriga Academy Trust and should also be observed by agency staff, volunteers, contractors, Trustees and governors.

Under this policy, the Trust CEO and the Headteachers of Capella House School, Clarendon School and Strathmore School will be required to make any declarations or disclosures to the Chair of Trustees.

## 2. Introduction

The Trust is committed to the highest standards of honesty and accountability; and this Code provides the values and framework within which all staff, volunteers, contractors, Trustees and Governors are required to adhere to in their work environment. This Code cannot cover every eventuality and is not an exclusive or exhaustive list of acceptable conduct at work.

All employees have personal and legal responsibilities, including treating others with dignity and respect, acting honestly, using public funds and Trust equipment appropriately, adhering to health and safety guidelines and practising equal opportunities at all times.

Various professional and technical bodies may have their own code of conducts e.g. the Department for Education Teachers' Standards, these should work in tandem with this document, and where any anomalies arise this should be raised with the CEO / Headteacher at the earliest opportunity. Employees should also seek guidance if they are unsure about the contents of this document or if there are any questions as to whether particular conduct or behaviour is acceptable.

## 3. Compliance with the code of conduct

This Code forms part of an employee's contract of employment. As such this Code must be read, understood and adhered to. Any failure to do so will lead to action in line with the Trust's **Disciplinary Policy and Procedures** and if warranted legal action. Ignorance of these guidelines will not be seen as a valid excuse.

Appropriate action will be taken with agency staff, volunteers and contractors as required, where it is considered that the actions of an agency member of staff, volunteer or contractor are in breach of this code, the school will consider not using their services.

## 4. Professional behaviour and conduct

### 4.0 Overview

Employees of the Trust must act in a professional manner at all times. Employees are required to adhere to the following principles:

- Put the wellbeing, development, progress and dignity of children and young people first, including following Trust and School Keeping Children Safe policies and procedures.
- Take responsibility for maintaining and improving the quality of our practice
- Help children and young people to become confident and successful learners and prepare them for adulthood.
- Demonstrate respect for diversity and promote equality
- Strive to establish productive partnerships with parents and carers
- Work as part of a whole Trust / School team
- Co-operate with other professional colleagues
- Demonstrate honesty, integrity, confidentiality and uphold public trust and confidence in the teaching profession

All employees must adhere to these standards at all times and failure to do so may result in formal action being taken.

#### **4.1 Treating other people with dignity and respect**

All employees are expected to treat other colleagues, pupils, and external contacts such as parents, with dignity and respect, in compliance with the Trust's equality policies. Unacceptable behaviour such as discrimination, bullying, harassment or intimidation will not be tolerated. This includes physical and verbal abuse and use of inappropriate language or unprofessional behaviour with colleagues, pupils and parents and extends to all parties within the school work environment.

#### **4.2 Appropriate relationships with children**

All employees must be committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people.

All employees are expected to act in an open and transparent way that would not lead any reasonable person to suspect their actions or intent. Employees within the Trust are in a position of trust and have a duty to protect young people from discrimination and harm and to maintain appropriate professional boundaries. It is equally important for staff to avoid behaviour that might be misinterpreted or perceived to be inappropriate by others in order to protect both young people and themselves. For further guidance employees should refer to Trust and Schools Keeping children Safe Policy 2024, Allegations Against Staff and Low-Level Concerns Policy 2024 Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 and the Trust and Schools' Behaviour Support Policies, which set out appropriate and safe behaviours for all adults working with children in paid or unpaid capacities.

Conduct that may be considered in this way may include

- Personal arrangements to see pupils, service users, their carers or families
- Exchanging personal contact details such as email addresses, mobile phone numbers
- Communicating using social media.

Employees must refrain from conduct of this nature unless there is a sound business reason to do so, and the action is taken with the express approval of the Headteacher, and the decision is officially recorded. (See the Trust's Safeguarding Policy).

Employees who have any concerns (including low-level concerns) about the welfare of a child or young person at the school must be aware of and make themselves familiar with the Trust safeguarding policies and processes and their duty to disclose or share their concerns appropriately. Staff should also refer to the Trust Whistleblowing Policy.

#### **4.3 Associating with people outside work**

Employees who engage in any activity or associate with individuals or people outside work, whose current or past conduct could raise doubts or concerns about an employee's own integrity or ability to be in a 'position of trust' with regard to children or vulnerable adults, could have a direct consequence on their employment via the disciplinary procedures.

Staff who are covered by The Childcare (Disqualification) and Childcare (Early Years Provision Free of Charge) (Extended Entitlement) (Amendment) Regulations 2018 must make an accurate disclosure and notify the school if their circumstances change. The Regulations prohibit anyone who is disqualified under the Regulations, from working in a relevant setting, including in schools.

#### **4.4 Misuse of position**

Employees must not misuse or misrepresent their position, qualifications or experience or bring the reputation of the Trust into disrepute. Such behaviour may lead to disciplinary action and where appropriate, referral to the relevant professional body e.g. Teaching Regulation Agency.

Similarly, employees should not put themselves in a position where their job and personal interests conflict.

#### **4.5 Dealing with media enquiries**

Employees must not deal directly with the press or the media on anything related to Trust / school business unless required to do so as part of their duty or authorised by the CEO / Headteacher.

Employees who speak as a private individual directly to the press or at a public meeting or other situation where remarks may be reported to the press must ensure that reasonable steps are taken to ensure nothing is said that might lead the public to think they are acting in the capacity as an employee of the Trust / school.

#### **4.6 Criminal actions**

Employees must inform their Headteacher and Trust HR if they are arrested / cautioned / convicted of a crime and, if arrested, must notify their Headteacher and Trust HR of the development and outcome of the case as soon as it happens.

Employees do not need to disclose fixed penalty notices for minor driving offences, such as speeding tickets, defective light etc. unless driving is a requirement of an employee's role or the conviction results in disqualification from driving.

The Headteacher will discuss this with the employee in the context of their role and responsibilities and also to ensure the safeguarding of children, young people and other employees at the school.

Disclosing a conviction does not necessarily mean disciplinary action against an employee. The extent to which a criminal offence may affect employment depends on whether the conduct

- makes the employee unsuitable for their type of work; and/or
- may reflect adversely on the school's / Trust's reputation or ability to perform its function.

Employees should always notify Trust HR if there is any doubt as to whether or not they need to share information about an arrest or conviction. Failure to disclose such information may lead to disciplinary action.

### **5. Declarations & conflicts of interest**

An employee is required to declare this where the situation (e.g. membership of group or organisation) would be considered to be in conflict with the interests and/or ethos of the Trust / school. Membership of a trade union or staff representative group would not need to be declared.

Employees should also consider carefully whether they need to declare to the Trust their relationship with any individual(s) where this might cause a conflict with Trust activities. For example, a relationship with a Trustee, Governor, another staff member or a contractor who provides services to the Trust / school.

Failure to make a relevant declaration of interest is a serious breach of trust and therefore, if employees are in doubt about a declaration, they are advised to take advice from Trust HR or their union. All declarations should be submitted in writing on a Register of Business Interests Form using the following link <https://forms.office.com/e/NqdFyH0qfw>.

Any declaration will be reviewed by Trust HR and the relevant Headteacher and / or CEO. Where relevant a declaration will be included on the Trust Register of Interests and published on the Trust website.

#### **5.1 Transparency**

Employees must declare in writing to Trust HR any relatives, partners or friends who are engaged in a business, which either currently provides services within the Trust or may do so in

the future. This is in order to minimise the risk of suspicion that some influence may be exerted over a particular customer as to the choice of provider, or that the provider gained advantage in terms of information received.

## **5.2 Conflicts of interest**

Employees who have a connection in a private, social or domestic capacity with someone who also sits on the Board of Trustees, is a member of the Trust or sits on any schools' Governing Body, that may potentially create, or be thought to create, a conflict of interest will need to declare this to Trust HR, for them to consider. All declarations should be submitted in writing on a Register of Business Interests Form using the following link <https://forms.office.com/e/NqdFyH0qfw>.

Employees must not work privately for personal gain unless written consent from the CEO / Headteacher has been obtained.

## **5.3 Intellectual Property**

The Trust / school is entitled to ownership of intellectual property e.g. copyright of material created by the employee in the course of duties carried out by an employee of the Trust.

Employees must not use any information obtained in the course of employment for personal gain nor pass it on to others who might use it in such a way or for any purpose for which it was not originally intended.

## **6. Confidentiality**

Employees at the Trust, Trustees and the Governing Bodies come into contact with a significant volume of data and information in relation to pupils, staff, school activities and many other matters. There is an obligation to read and to observe the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018.

No confidential information, politically or commercially sensitive information, or personal information protected by the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018 should be released to anyone, including Trustees, Members of the Trust and Governors, without authorisation from the CEO / Headteacher. If there is any doubt about disclosing information, then guidance must be sought from the school Data Lead (Headteacher) and/ or the Data Protection Officer.

## **7. Appointment, pay & conditions and other employment matters**

Employees responsible for the appointment, pay and conditions or any other employment matters, must ensure that decisions are fair, open and based on merit and not on anything other than an individual's ability to do the job and in accordance with the Trust's related policies and procedures.

If an employee is put in a position of being the line manager to a relative, close friend or partner this must also be immediately disclosed to the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, as appropriate.

Employees must not be involved in the recruitment and selection for anyone with whom they are in a close personal relationship with either inside or outside of work. See **Recruitment and Selection Policy**.

### **7.1 Investigations by professional bodies**

Employees must inform their Headteacher and Trust HR if they are being investigated by any professional body and any sanction imposed.

If employees are in doubt about any of the above, advice from Trust HR must be sought, in the first instance.

## **7.2 Financial conduct**

Employees must inform the CEO / Headteacher if they are declared bankrupt or are involved as a Director of a company which is wound up or put into voluntary liquidation if it may impact upon their role and duties at the school / Trust. Bankruptcy may impact on the duties of employees who have a financial responsibility.

Such information will be treated in the strictest confidence. The purpose of this is to ensure that a proper framework of support is in place.

## **7.3 Tendering for business**

Employees who wish to tender for a contract from the Trust must declare such an intention to the CEO / Headteacher as soon as intent has been formed; and at the earliest possible opportunity.

## **7.4 Holding multiple positions**

All staff employed by the Trust in any capacity must be mindful of the local conditions of service and requirements placed upon them in holding multiple positions.

Employees must ensure that any additional posts held do not interfere with employment at the Trust or have any conflict of interest with the Trust or bring it into disrepute.

Employees must be mindful of their responsibility under the Working Time Regulations 1998. Employees cannot lawfully be required to work more than an average of 48 hours per week. Where employees work in excess of an average of 48 hours per week they will be required to write to the Trust, confirming that they agree to opt out of the Working Time Regulations.

Employees who are permitted to engage in any other business or take up any additional employment must not undertake any work in connection with their additional employment during the time in which they are scheduled to be in school (at work). It is the responsibility of each individual employee to declare any additional personal income to His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC).

Employees who have any doubt whatsoever should make a declaration to Trust HR, so that the CEO can make a judgement as to whether a conflict exists.

## **7.5 Dress and appearance**

The Trust recognises the diversity of cultures and religions of its employees and will take a sensitive approach when this affects dress and uniform requirements. However, priority will be given to health and safety, security and other similar considerations.

All employees must present a positive image of the Trust / school and are therefore required to present a professional appearance and dress appropriately for the role that they perform. The term 'dress' extends to footwear, jewellery, tattoos and hairstyles. All decisions on suitability of dress and appearance will be taken in consultation with the CEO / Headteacher. Examples of inappropriate / unsuitable clothing and appearance can include:

- ripped/scruffy/torn trousers
- short miniskirts
- low cut tops, blouses and transparent clothing;
- sweatshirts or t-shirts with slogans or symbols that could cause offence;
- Excessive or unconventional jewellery
- Extreme hairstyles
- Long nails
- Flip flops

Class based staff should wear comfortable, practical clothing that is appropriate for working with children and young adults, including flat shoes. Jewellery should be minimal, necklaces, earrings and scarves should not be worn when working with pupils, unless for cultural reasons.

It should be considered that what class based staff wear could put themselves and others at risk. This links in with our use of Team Teach to support behaviour.

The Trust and its schools take great pride in being a community of communities, home to many nationalities, faiths, and personal experiences. The role of the Trust and its school is to cultivate a safe and respectful environment for all members, free from political tensions. The Department for Education's guidance on Political Impartiality in Schools (2022) makes clear that schools should not promote partisan views or create environments where political expressions could be seen as institutional stances. On this basis staff should not wear clothing or display symbols that could be divisive or cause discomfort within the Trust / school community.

## **8. Probity of records and other documents**

Where an employee falsifies records or other documents, including those held electronically, this will be regarded as a serious disciplinary matter and potentially a criminal offence.

## **9. Financial Inducements**

All school employees must comply with the Trust's Financial Regulations. Employees should familiarise themselves with the regulations; some of the principal employee requirements are summarised below.

### **9.1 Business Contacts**

Business contact refers to any person, body or organisation with which the Trust / school is involved on a financial or charitable basis (including contractors; developers; consultants; regional or national charities). This also includes business contacts who are potential suppliers (e.g. they are tendering for future business).

### **9.2 Declaration of gifts**

Trust employees must not receive hospitality or benefits of any kind from a third party which might be seen to compromise their personal judgement or integrity. Staff should also avoid accepting gifts as it can be construed as a bribe by others or may lead the giver to expect preferential treatment. Exceptions to this rule are specifically identified in **Section 9.3**.

Staff are asked to immediately report any offer or receipt of such gifts to Trust HR so it can be recorded in the Register of Gifts and Hospitality. Any gifts that are received should be declared in writing to Trust HR using the following link <https://forms.office.com/e/bY0hEiBhVq>.

If there is any uncertainty Trust HR should be contacted ([HR@aurigaacademytrust.org.uk](mailto:HR@aurigaacademytrust.org.uk)) so that a decision can be made to safeguard the interests of all parties.

Definitions:

- A gift is any item, goods or benefit in kind given or offered for which no payment or service was given or received in return.
- Hospitality can be defined as any food, drink, accommodation or entertainment provided free of charge or heavily discounted.

**For avoidance of doubt all employees must always refuse gifts of money and all other gifts (with a value over £50) that are received should be declared.**

### **9.3 Gifts of hospitality to an employee**

Where a business contact offers a personal gift, personal payment, or other incentive such as secondary employment to an employee, these should not be accepted and should be returned with a suitable official letter. Such offers should be declared and recorded in the Register of Gifts and Hospitality using the following link <https://forms.office.com/e/bY0hEiBhVq>.



If it is not possible to return a gift, then the employee who deals with that supplier must declare the gift to Trust HR using the following link <https://forms.office.com/e/bY0hEiBhVq>. Such gifts remain the property of the Trust / school and the CEO / Headteacher will decide how it is to be used. The gift will be included in the Register of Gifts and Hospitality by Trust HR.

The only exception to the above is

- low cost, functional items suitable for business use rather than personal use and displaying the supplier's logo e.g. diaries, calendars and pens. These items may be accepted and do not have to be included in the Register of Gifts and Hospitality.
- Gifts offered by parents or students to school staff to express their thanks, such as boxes of chocolates should only be of token value. Such gifts do not have to be included in the Register of Gifts and Hospitality. For the avoidance of doubt employees must always refuse gifts of money. All other gifts that are received, with an estimated value over £50, should be declared using the following link <https://forms.office.com/e/bY0hEiBhVq>. The gift will be included in the Register of Gifts and Hospitality by Trust HR.
- Where hospitality in the form of meals and drinks is offered by a business contact, this is only acceptable where it forms part of a normal business meeting (for example, refreshments at training events or meals at evening meetings). Offers of hospitality to specific events, such as a dinner or sporting event, should only be accepted having received authorisation from the COE / Headteacher. These would normally only be approved where there is a clear and demonstrable benefit to the Trust and the hospitality would not expose the Trust to criticism that the business contact was exerting undue influence. These should be recorded in the Register of Gifts and Hospitality Form using the following link <https://forms.office.com/e/bY0hEiBhVq>.

All other gifts that are received must be declared on the Register of Gifts and Hospitality Form using the following link <https://forms.office.com/e/bY0hEiBhVq>.

#### **9.4 Gifts to children**

Under no circumstance must staff offer or give gifts to children and young people at the school. This could be misinterpreted as a gesture either to bribe, or single out the child or young person. It might be perceived that a "favour" of some kind is expected in return. Any reward given to a child or young person should be in accordance with agreed practice within the school.

#### **10. Use of Trust / school contacts**

Apart from participating in concessionary schemes arranged by Trade Unions or other such groups for their members, employees shall not use the Trust's / school's business contacts for acquiring materials or services at trade/ discount prices for non-school activities unless authorised by the CEO / Headteacher.

#### **11. Health and safety**

Employees must adhere to their school's Health and Safety policy, procedure and guidance and must ensure that they take every action to keep themselves and everyone in the school environment safe and well. This includes taking immediate safety action in a potentially harmful situation (either at school or offsite) by complying with statutory and school guidelines and collaborating with colleagues, agencies and the local authority where required.

#### **12. Use of alcohol and drugs**

The taking of drugs (other than prescribed medication or that purchased at licensed UK pharmacies) and 'legal highs' is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. All employees are expected to attend work without being under the influence of alcohol or drugs and without their performance being adversely impacted by the consumption of alcohol or drugs, including prescribed or over the counter medication. If alcohol or drug usage impacts on an employee's working life, the Trust has the right to discuss the matter with the employee and

take appropriate action, having considered factors such as the Trust's reputation and public confidence.

### **13. Use of school premises, equipment & communication systems**

Trust / school equipment and systems (telephone, email, computers etc.) are available only for school-related activities and should not be used for the fulfilment of another job or for personal use, unless authorised by the CEO / Headteacher.

This includes photocopy facilities, stationery and premises. It also applies to access provided for remote use (e.g. hand held portable devices etc.) and to staff working outside of school premises and using their own IT equipment. Illegal, inappropriate or unacceptable use of Trust / school equipment or communication systems may result in disciplinary action and in serious cases could lead to an employee's dismissal.

The following list sets out some examples but is not an exhaustive list:

- Creating, sending or forwarding any message that would reasonably be considered inappropriate or unacceptable
- Accessing, publication or circulation of illegal, offensive, unacceptable or inappropriate material
- Any illegal activities
- Posting confidential information about the Trust and/or other employees, children or parents etc.
- Gambling or gaming
- Unauthorised use of Trust facilities
- Use of social media on Trust / school owned devices unless it is in accordance with Trust policies and procedures.

Employees receiving inappropriate communication or material, or who are unsure about whether something they propose to do might breach this Code, the Trust's IT Security & Acceptable Usage Policy EDH23, Social Media Compliance Policy or other related policy should refer to these policies for guidance or seek advice from the CEO / Headteacher.

The Trust / school has the right to monitor e-mails, telephone calls, internet activity or document production, principally in order to avoid offensive or nuisance material and to protect systems from viruses, but also to ensure proper and effective use of systems and equipment.

Communication systems may be accessed when the Trust / school suspects that the employee has been misusing systems or facilities, or for the investigation of suspected fraud or other irregularity. Passwords should not be shared and access to computer systems must be kept confidential. Breach of this confidentiality may be subject to disciplinary action. Where appropriate the Trust / school will consider a system of proxy access. The Trust / school will deal with breaches in line with the appropriate policy.

Any Trust / school equipment that is used outside of school premises, for example laptops, should be returned to the Trust / school when the employee leaves employment or upon the CEO / Headteacher's request.

### **14. Social networking websites, personal websites and blogs**

Only official Trust sites must be used for communicating with pupils or to enable pupils to communicate with one another. There must be a strong pedagogical or business reason for creating official Trust sites to communicate with pupils or others, and written consent from the Headteacher must be obtained. Sites created must not breach the terms and conditions of social media service providers, particularly with regard to minimum age requirements. Staff must not create sites for trivial reasons which could expose the Trust to unwelcome publicity or cause reputational damage.

Access to some journals, blogs and social networking sites is permitted during work time for the purposes of undertaking job related duties only. Trust / school employees must act in the best interests of the school and not disclose personal data or information about any individual including pupils, members of staff, pupils, parents and professionals from external organisations. This includes images. Access may be withdrawn and disciplinary action taken if there is a breach of confidentiality or defamatory remarks are made about the school, pupils, staff, parents or professionals from external organisations.

Employees who wish to set up personal web forums, weblogs or 'blogs' must do so outside of work and not use school equipment for the purpose.

The school respects employees' and volunteers' rights to a private life. However, it must also ensure that confidentiality and its reputation are protected. Employees using social networking websites, web forums, weblogs or 'blogs' in their private life

- Must refrain from identifying themselves as working for the school in a way which has, or may have, the effect of bringing the school into disrepute.
- Must not identify other school employees, children or young people.
- Must not make any defamatory remarks about the school, pupils/students, staff or volunteers, parents/carers, associated professionals or contractors or conduct themselves in way that is detrimental to the school.
- Must not disclose personal data or information about the school, pupils/students, staff or volunteers, parents/carers, associated professionals or contractors that could breach the Data Protection Act 1998, for example, posting photographs or images of pupils/students or colleagues.
- Must not allow pupils/students or their parents/carers to access their personal social networking accounts and where they are contacted by a pupil or parent/carer, bring it to the attention of the Head teacher.

## **15. Obligations under the Data Protection Act**

### **15.1 Managing data**

Where staff are required to collect, maintain and dispose of sensitive or personal data it is done so in in line with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018.

### **15.2 Disclosing data**

Staff should not disclose sensitive information about the Trust, its employees or pupils to other parties, for example, parents or colleagues. There are particular exceptions to this; for example disclosure of suspected or alleged abuse of a pupil to Child Protection officers; discussion with a person accompanying or representing an employee in a formal meeting or disclosure under the Whistleblowing Procedure. All communication with the media must be directed through the Headteacher or their nominee, who will have sought advice from the appropriate source e.g., the Local Authority's communication department. There are circumstances in which staff are obliged to release pupil data, for example, parents seeking information about their child.

Staff should be aware that, from time to time, information about employees' salaries is matched with other public sector information in order to prevent fraudulent claims.

## **16. Declaration**

All employees are required to confirm that they have read and understood the Code of Conduct and they undertake to read the required policies and guidance documents referred to within this Code.

The declaration must be completed on EveryHR. Employees are required to sign into EveryHR and under My Training > Code of Conduct – Confirmation as Read confirm that they have read the Code. Please note CPD hours = 1 / Score = 1.