



Code of Conduct

For

School-Based Employees

EXCELLENCE
— THROUGH —
ENDEAVOUR

September 2020

Code of Conduct

Introduction

This code of conduct outlines the existing regulations and conditions of service which apply to you and provides guidance to assist you in your day to day work within Brighter Academy Trust.

The code sets out the minimum standards which are expected of you and provides a framework which will help you to prevent misunderstandings or criticisms. All employees of the Trust are required to observe and uphold the standards of the code. Failure to do so is a serious matter which could result in disciplinary action.

You should therefore read the document carefully, please contact your immediate supervisor/Headteacher.

1. Standards

- 1.1 All employees of the Trust are expected to give the highest possible standard of service and conduct to all staff and pupils.
- 1.2 All employees are expected to report to the Headteacher or Chair of Governors any impropriety, breach of procedure or any serious deficiency in the provision of service.
- 1.3 In all cases, it is not enough to avoid actual impropriety. Employees should at all times avoid any occasion for suspicion and any appearance of improper conduct.

2. Disclosure of Information

- 2.1 The law requires that certain types of information must be available to auditors, government departments, service users and the public. If you are in any doubt as to whether you can release any particular information, always check with your Headteacher first.
- 2.2 Employees must not use any information obtained in the course of their employment for personal gain or benefit, nor should they knowingly pass it on to others who might use it in such a way.
- 2.3 Employees must not communicate confidential information or documents to others who do not have a legitimate right to know. Furthermore, such information which is stored on computer systems must also only be disclosed in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection act, 1984 and GDPR.

3. Political Neutrality

- 3.1 Employees serve the Trust as a whole and must serve all areas equally and respectfully.
- 3.2 All employees, whether holding politically restricted posts or not, must not allow their own personal or political opinions to interfere with their work.

4. Relationships

4.1 Governors

Mutual respect between employees and Governors is essential to good school management. Some employees work closely with the Trust and members of the Governing Body. Close personal familiarity between employees and individual Governors can damage the relationship and should therefore be avoided.

4.2 The Local Community

Employees should always remember their responsibilities to the community they serve and ensure courteous, efficient and impartial service delivery to all groups and individuals within that community as defined by the policies of the School.

4.3 Contractors and Suppliers

All Relationships of a business or personal nature with external contractors or suppliers must be declared to your Headteacher at the earliest opportunity. Orders and contractors must be awarded in accordance with the Purchasing Procedures and no special favour should be shown to businesses run by, for example, friends and relatives.

5. Recruitment and Other Employment Matters

5.1 Employees involved in appointments should ensure that these are made on merit and in accordance with the School's Code of Practice on Recruitment and Selection.

5.2 In order to avoid any possible accusation of bias, employees must not be involved in any appointment where they are related to an applicant or have a close personal relationship.

5.3 Senior management shall disclose the Headteacher/Chair of Governors any relationship known to exist between them and any person who they know is a candidate for an appointment.

5.4 Employees should not be involved in decisions relating to discipline, promotion or pay adjustments for a person who is a relative or with whom they have a close personal relationship nor should they attempt to influence such decisions.

6. Outside Commitments

- 6.1 Employees should not subordinate their duties to other private interests or allow official duties and private interests to conflict.
- 6.2 Employees must not engage in any other business or take up any additional appointments without the agreement of the Governing Body. Employees requesting such agreement should do so with the Head Teacher. The Governing Body will not unreasonably stop employees from undertaking additional employment but such employment must not in the view of the Governing Body conflict or react detrimentally to the School's or Trust's interest or in any way weaken public confidence in the conduct of its business.

7. Personal Interests

- 7.1 Employees must declare to the Headteacher/Chair of Governors any financial or non-financial interests which they consider could bring about conflict with The School or Trust's interests.
- 7.2 You must make a formal declaration about contracts with the Trust in which you have a pecuniary interest. Such declarations should be made and sent to the Headteacher/Chair of Governors.
- 7.3 Employees must not make official professional decisions about matters in which they have a personal involvement.
- 7.4 Employees must declare to the Headteacher/Chair of Governors, membership of any organisation not open to the public without formal membership and commitment of allegiance, and which has secrecy about rules, membership or conduct.

8. Equality

- 8.1 All members of the Local community and other employees of the Trust have a right to be treated with fairness and equality.

9. Tendering Procedures

- 9.1 Employees involved in the tendering process and dealing with contractors should be clear on the separation of client and contractor rules within the authority. Senior employees who have both a client and contractor responsibility must be aware of the need for accountability and openness.

9.2 Employees in contractor or clients units must exercise fairness and impartially when dealing with all customers, suppliers, other contractors and sub-contractors.

9.3 Employees who are privy to confidential information on tenders or costs relating to either internal or external contractors should not disclose that information to an unauthorised party or organisation.

10. Corruption

10.1 Employees must be aware that it is a serious criminal offence under the prevention of Corruption Acts for them corruptly to receive or give any gift, loan, fee, reward or advantage for doing, or not doing, anything or showing favour, or disfavour, to any person in their official capacity. If an allegation is made it is for the employee to demonstrate that any such rewards have not been corruptly obtained.

11. Financial Regulations

11.1 All employees involved in financial activities and transactions on behalf of the Trust, including budgetary control, payment of accounts, payment of salaries and wages, petty cash, and orders for works, goods or services, must follow the Financial Regulations as approved by the Management Committee.

11.2 They must that they use public funds in a responsible and lawful manner. They should strive to ensure value for money to the local community and to avoid legal challenge to the authority.

12. Gifts

12.1 A potential source of conflict between private and public interests is the offer of gifts, hospitality or benefits in kind to employees in connection with their official duties.

12.2 With the exceptions listed below, an employee should refuse any personal gift offered to him or her, or to any family member, by any person or organisation who has dealings with the School. Any such offer should be reported to the Headteacher, or to the Chair of Governors.

12.3 When a gift has to be refused, this should be done with tact and courtesy because the offering of gifts is common practice in the commercial world, particularly Christmas time. If the gift is simply delivered to an employee's place of work there may be a problem returning it, in which case it should be reported to the Headteacher or Chair of Governors immediately.

12.4 Gifts etc. to Employees who have a caring role
There are special problems encountered by employees who have a "caring" role or provide a direct personal service.

It is not unusual for individuals or their relatives to wish to express their thanks and gratitude to staff by offering gifts, money or even by making an employee a beneficiary of their will.

It is most important in such situations to protect the employee from any suggestion of improper motives or conduct. This is obviously an area however, which needs to be handled with great tact and sensitivity to avoid needless offence to the individual. The general principle must be that gifts or money should be politely and tactfully refused with a proper explanation given as to the reason why. Where it has not been possible to return a gift to someone, this fact must be reported immediately to your Headteacher who will give you further guidance.

On being made aware that he or she has been made a beneficiary in an individual's Will, the employee should immediately report the matter to his or her Headteacher. The Headteacher will then visit the client to ensure that the bequest represents the genuine wishes for the individual and has not been improperly influenced by the employee. Following this visit, the Headteacher will notify the Chair of Governors, who will determine that course of action to take.

In some cases an employee may not know that he or she is a beneficiary until after the death of the client concerned. As soon as an employee is made aware of such a bequest he or she should notify their Headteacher who will advise him or her whether or not the bequest should be accepted.

Exceptions

12.5 Gifts of a promotional nature on the conclusion of any courtesy visit to a factory or firm of a sort normally given by that firm.

- 12.6 Gifts of a token value, often given at Christmas time such as diaries, calendars, pens etc.
- 12.7 Gifts offered by parents/carers or students to school staff to express their thanks, however, staff members should always refuse gifts of money. Such gifts do not have to be declared in writing or included on the register.

13. Hospitality

- 13.1 A reasonable amount of entertainment is a normal part of the courtesies of public life, but it is important not to create an appearance of improper influence thus undermining public confidence.
- 13.2 Hospitality is sometimes offered to representatives of the school and is accepted at official, i.e. Governing Body level because that is reasonable in all the circumstances. In these cases, only the Headteacher should attend.
- 13.3 Where hospitality is offered to individual employees, special caution is needed where the host is seeking to do business with the school or to obtain a decision from it. It is important to avoid any suggestion of improper influence. The question is one of judgement, and the following check list of questions should help staff to decide whether a gift of an offer of hospitality should be accepted or tactfully rejected.
- (i) Is the donor, or event, significant in the community or in your schools area?
 - (ii) Are you expected to attend because of your position in the community?
 - (iii) Will the event be attended by others of a similar standing in the community or in other communities?
 - (iv) What is the motivation behind the invitation?
 - (v) Would acceptance of the invitation be, in any way, inappropriate or place you under pressure in relation to any current or future issue involving your school?
 - (vi) Could you justify the decision to your school?
 - (vii) Is the extent of the hospitality or the nature of the gift reasonable and appropriate?
 - (viii) How will you respond to the hospitality?
 - (ix) Are you comfortable with the decisions?
- 13.4 Employees should also be careful in attending exhibitions, seminars or visiting manufactures, etc. There is an increasing trend towards linking such visits to a

major sporting event, show, concert etc. such devices are clearly an attempt to legitimise offers of hospitality in the guise of business activities.

- 13.5 In general terms, it will often be more acceptable to join in hospitality offered to a group, than to accept something unique to yourself. When a particular person or body has a matter currently in issue with the School e.g. an arbitration arising from a contract, then clearly common sense dictates that offers of hospitality be refused even if in normal times they would be regarded as acceptable.
- 13.6 All offers made of hospitality should be reported to the Headteacher, or if the offer is made to the Headteacher, or the Chair of Governors.

14. **Safeguarding**

- 14.1 All employees receive and sign for safeguarding documents and must follow policies. These include Keeping Children Safe in Education (Sept. 2018); Behaviour policy; Safeguarding Young People policy; Guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings Keeping Children Safe Whole Workforce Training; Staff ICT Acceptable Use Policy.