

CODE OF CONDUCT (STAFF) POLICY

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Approval level	Executive Board

Approved by (Name, date, signature)



Executive Board, 27th September 2023
Executive Board Chair, David Kreyling
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Omnia Foundation Website

STAFF CODE OF CONDUCT

MISSION

We believe in investing in people. As professionals in the teaching and training professions, we strive to provide a better future for the children, young people and home settings we work with. Success for us means unleashing the potential of each individual so they can grow, develop and reach the potential of which they are capable. Our values are grounded in our determination to be the change we want to see in the world, through passion, commitment and integrity. We strive to plant a seed of kindness and compassion in a generation that will produce resilience and hope and enable them to aspire and achieve productive and fulfilled lives. Our success is measured in the lives we changed.

At the Omnia Foundation, we create a secure and safe environment that encourages communication, self-belief, mutual respect and success. We provide a rich and balanced curriculum that develops every child, allowing them to achieve their true potential.

Aims of the policy

- to set and maintain standards of conduct that we expect all staff to follow
- to ensure the Omnia Foundation is an environment where everyone is safe, happy and treated with respect
- to ensure that staff act as role models for students by consistently demonstrating high standards of conduct and integrity both in and outside of work
- to ensure that standards set at the Omnia Foundation are in line with the Teachers' Standards and that staff will act professionally in accordance with these expectations
- to ensure that all support staff, board members and volunteers also act with personal and professional integrity, respecting the safety and wellbeing of others and upholding the ethos of the Omnia Foundation

Failure to follow the Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action being taken, as set out in our staff Disciplinary Procedures.

Please note that this Code of Conduct is not exhaustive. If situations arise that are not covered by this code, senior leaders and managers will use their professional judgement and act in the best interests of the foundation and its students.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Staff Disciplinary Procedures, Child Protection Policy, Staff Capability Policy, Rights & Responsibilities Policy, Use of Facebook Policy, Communications Policy and Communication with Former Students Policy.

Legislation and guidance

The staff code of conduct has been drawn up in line with the statutory safeguarding guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education.' This will cover acceptable use of technologies, staff/student relationships and communications, including the use of social media.

General expectations

Staff at the Omnia Foundation are in a position of trust and as such must set an example to students. They will be expected to:

- Maintain high standards in their attendance and punctuality
 - Never use inappropriate or offensive language in school
 - Treat students and others with dignity and respect
 - Show tolerance and respect for the rights of others
 - Not undermine fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs
 - Express personal beliefs in a way that will not overly influence students, and will not exploit students' vulnerability or might lead them to break the law
 - Understand the statutory frameworks they must act within
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- Adhere to the Teachers' Standards
- Embed Omnia' Values throughout

Safeguarding

Staff have a duty to safeguard students from harm, and to report any concerns they have. This includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse, or neglect.

Staff will familiarise themselves with and receive training on our Child Protection Policy and the Prevent initiative, and ensure they are aware of the processes to follow if they have concerns about a child.

Our Child Protection Policy is available on the foundation website.

Staff/student relationships

Staff will observe proper boundaries with students that are appropriate to their professional position. They will act in a fair and transparent way that would not lead anyone to reasonably assume they are not doing so.

If staff members and students must spend time on a one-to-one basis, staff will ensure that, where possible:

- This takes place in a public place that others can access
- Others can see into the room
- A colleague or line manager knows this is taking place

Staff should avoid contact with students outside of school hours if possible.

Personal contact details should not be exchanged between staff and students. This includes social media profiles.

While we are aware many students and their parents may wish to give gifts to staff, for example, at the end of the school year, gifts from staff to students are unacceptable.

If a staff member is concerned at any point that an interaction between themselves and a student may be misinterpreted, this should be reported to the Head of Foundation.

Managing personal relationships at work

The Omnia Foundation recognises that, from time to time, close personal relationships may develop between members of staff and/or customers/clients/suppliers etc.

Whilst the organisation realises that employees have a right to a private life and therefore does not discourage relationships between employees, such relationships can be problematic where employees become unable to draw an important distinction between private and professional life.

This section of the Staff Code of Conduct outlines the organisation's position on personal relationships between employees in order to ensure that the business interests are maintained at all times, whilst at the same time balancing the interests of employees. The approach places certain expectations on employees and their managers to ensure that no blurring of judgement or conflict of interest arises.

It also seeks to protect the Organisation and any employees in order to avoid any allegations of improper professional conduct.

Definitions

In the context of this policy, a personal relationship is defined as:

- a family connection or
- a romantic/sexual relationship.

This policy applies to all employees of the Organisation. In relation to romantic/sexual partnerships, it applies to both opposite and same sex relationships.

Employees' responsibilities

In order to ensure potential conflicts of interest are avoided, employees are required to inform their line manager of any relationship which may affect their work or compromise the business in any way. Any such information will be treated in the strictest confidence. The Organisation fully acknowledges the right of employees to privacy in their personal affairs.

The following points should be observed:

- where the relationship exists between a member of staff and their line manager, it is the responsibility of both to inform a more senior manager
- if an employee who is applying for a role in an area of the business in which an individual works with whom they have a personal relationship, this must be declared during the recruitment process to ensure a fair and impartial recruitment exercise
- professionalism must always be maintained both at the workplace and any work-related events which are attended by employees who have a personal relationship
- consistency of treatment is paramount and no preferential or unfavourable treatment of those in the relationship or any other person is permitted as a result of the relationship.

Managers' responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the manager of a team within which employees are in a personal relationship to take action to ensure the relationship is not the cause of a conflict of interest. Where it is suspected that two employees are in a relationship and this has not been disclosed to the Head of Foundation, the Head of Foundation reserves the right to investigate rumours, since it will be deemed that this policy has not been followed.

Confidentiality must be maintained at all times if the employees do not wish their relationship to be disclosed. Specifically, the manager should:

- consider alternative roles when an employee applies for a role in the same team as their partner and valid concerns are raised regarding the feasibility of this arrangement. This may include consideration of an equivalent role in a different area of the group
- take action where complaints are received from other team members if tensions are caused by the relationship, howsoever they may arise. This may include reorganising working patterns, moving one or both employees to another department or area of the group. Care should be taken in these circumstances not to make a decision on who is to be moved based on any discriminatory grounds. The manager should seek advice from the People Team before confirming any redeployment
- report suspicions of fraudulent activity to the Head of Finance & Operations
- take advice from the People Team in the event that a personal relationship breaks down in an attempt to avoid allegations of sexual harassment
- maintain an appropriate confidential record of personal relationships using the confidential personnel file kept at Head Office

Restricted activities

A more senior manager will be responsible for the conduct of operational matters when a personal relationship exists between a line manager and a person for whom the line manager has responsibility. These operational matters are, for example:

- dealing with any disciplinary or performance concerns, whether routine or caused by specific incidents
- signing off any hours worked above normal working hours
- authorising leave of any kind
- confirming any payment arrangements to be made
- involvement in reorganisation of the area of the business in which the employee work.

Requests for leave

Requests for leave from all employees will be dealt with consistently. The authorisation of any requests from partners in personal relationships to take time off at the same time will be made in consideration with the needs of the business at the time, in the same way as requests from other employees.

Policy breaches

The Organisation will attempt to deal with any difficulties caused by personal relationships in the workplace in a sensitive manner and an informal method will always be used in the first instance. However, where this does not bring about a satisfactory resolution, recourse to formal procedures, such as the disciplinary or procedure, may be required.

The Organisation may deem the following to be disciplinary offences:

- the failure of an employee to declare their relationship in accordance with this policy
- actions of a line manager who is in a personal relationship with an employee which are prohibited by this policy.
- Inappropriate and / or excessive use of the organisation's IT or telephony systems, including email and instant messaging, such as (but not limited to) Microsoft Teams, for personal communication between those involved in personal relationships at work
- The sharing of inappropriate content using the organisation's systems.
- Inappropriate physical interactions whilst working or on works premises or client's sites.
- Harassment of any kind, related or unrelated to a personal relationship and including but not limited to sexual harassment.

Employees who are subject to disciplinary action may lodge an appeal to any sanction applied that they are dissatisfied with.

Employees who feel they have been treated unfairly in some way in connection with a personal relationship may raise a grievance in line with the organisation's grievance procedure if initial attempts at an informal resolution have not produced a satisfactory outcome for them.

Communication and social media

Foundation staff's social media profiles should not be available to students. If they have a personal profile on social media sites, they should use an alias or redacted version of their name in order to make it difficult for students to find them.

Profiles should be set to private.

Staff are prohibited from attempting to contact students or their home settings via social media, or any other means outside school, in order to develop any sort of relationship. They will not make any effort to find students' or home settings' social media profiles.

Staff will ensure that they do not post any images online that identify children who are students at the foundation without their consent. Staff should not post any images that identify the foundation on social media, unless it is for marketing purposes.

Failure to comply may result in Disciplinary Procedures.

Acceptable use of technology

Staff are prohibited from using technology on-site to view material that is illegal, inappropriate or likely to be deemed offensive. This includes, but is not limited to, sending obscene emails, gambling and viewing pornography or other inappropriate content.

Wherever possible, staff should use devices supplied by the foundation to record videos and images of students within the scope of their work. Where this is not possible, any images or videos recorded on personal devices should be transferred as soon as is practicable to the foundation system and those images and videos deleted from the member of staff's personal device.

The foundation reserves the right to monitor emails and internet use on the internal IT system.

Confidentiality

In the course of their work, members of staff are often privy to sensitive and confidential information about the foundation, staff, students and their home circumstances.

This information must never be:

- Disclosed to anyone without the relevant authority
- Used to humiliate, embarrass or blackmail others
- Used for a purpose other than what it was collected and intended for

This does not overrule the staff's duty to report child protection concerns to the appropriate channel where staff believe a child is at risk of harm.

Honesty and integrity

Staff should maintain high standards of honesty and integrity in their role. This includes when dealing with students, handling money, claiming expenses and using foundation property and facilities.

Staff will not accept bribes. Gifts that are worth more than £25 must be declared and recorded on the gifts and hospitality register. Staff will ensure that all information given to the foundation about their qualifications and professional experience is correct.

Any criminal offences i.e. driving offences, incurred during the course of employment need to be disclosed to the DSL.

Dress code

Staff will wear an Omnia branded top and dress in a professional, appropriate manner. Staff must not wear clothing where others can see up, down or through it.

Clothing will not display any offensive or political slogans.

The dress should be fit for purpose i.e. PE, outdoor activities, professional meetings etc.

Conduct outside of work

Staff will not act in a way that would bring the Omnia Foundation, or the teaching profession into disrepute. This covers relevant criminal offences, such as violence or sexual misconduct, as well as negative comments about the foundation on social media.

Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be monitored regularly by the Chief Operating Officer with the People Team on behalf of the Executive Board. It will be reviewed every two years.
