

CODE OF CONDUCT

SOUTH EAST ESSEX ACADEMY TRUST

CODE OF CONDUCT

SCOPE & PURPOSE

1.1 This Code of Conduct should be read in conjunction with the Trust's Disciplinary Policy, Dignity at Work Policy, Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Data Protection Policy, Acceptable Use/IT policies and any applicable school mobile phone policy. These policies set out the standards of conduct expected of employees and provide a framework within which SEEAT can maintain those standards and encourage improvement where necessary.

1.2 It is SEEAT's policy to ensure that any disciplinary matter is dealt with fairly and in accordance with the Disciplinary Policy.

1.3 If an employee is in any doubt as to their responsibilities or the standards of conduct expected, they should speak to their Headteacher.

1.4 This Code of Conduct does not form part of any employee's contract of employment, and it may be amended by the Trust at any time.

2 WHO IS COVERED BY THE POLICY?

2.1 This policy covers all SEEAT employees at all levels and grades, including teachers, support staff and senior leaders, trainees, and part-time and fixed-term employees (collectively referred to as employees in this policy). It does not apply to agency staff and self-employed contractors.

2.2 Whilst this policy does not directly apply to agency staff, self-employed contractors, or volunteers, the expectations of good conduct detailed herein are equally applicable to such categories of workers and appropriate action may be taken where such workers fail to meet the reasonable expectation of SEEAT in this respect.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CODE OF CONDUCT?

2.3 The Trust Board has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this Code of Conduct and for ensuring compliance with the relevant statutory framework. The Board has delegated day-to-day responsibility for operating the Code of Conduct to the SEEAT Headteachers in their respective school and ensuring its maintenance and review to the SEEAT Director of People.

2.4 The Senior Leadership Team in each school has a specific responsibility to ensure the fair application of this Code of Conduct, and all members of staff are responsible for supporting colleagues and ensuring its success.

RULES OF CONDUCT

2.5 While working for SEEAT, an employee should at all times maintain professional and responsible standards of conduct. In particular, an employee should:

2.5.1 act always in good faith and in the best interests of the Trust, its pupils, parents, and employees;

2.5.2 behave in a manner that demonstrates dignity, professionalism, accountability, tolerance, and respect for SEEAT's values;

2.5.3 exercise confidentiality where required and as appropriate;

2.5.4 if relevant, observe the published standards for teachers (or any other relevant professional or occupational standards for employees who are not teachers);

2.5.5 comply with all reasonable instructions provided by the Trust Board, Executive Team, their Headteacher, Senior Leadership Team, and/or their line manager.

2.5.6 work together to create a culture based on mutual trust and respect and not engage in bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, victimisation or intimidation, whether in person or online;

2.5.7 desist from bringing any material onto a SEEAT site that is not appropriate and/or in breach of any SEEAT policy;

2.5.8 only exercise physical restraint as a last resort in accordance with relevant procedures;

2.5.9 ensure that one-to-one interactions with pupils are appropriate, transparent and conducted in accordance with SEEAT safeguarding procedures and professional-boundary expectations;

2.5.10 treat other staff, parents, pupils and members of the SEEAT community with dignity and respect, including in online communications;

2.5.11 treat resources responsibly and if possible, reduce, reuse and recycle resources;

2.5.12 be aware of SEEAT's guidelines on handling money;

2.5.13 create and maintain a good and open relationship with parents;

2.5.14 comply with the current Keeping Children Safe in Education statutory guidance, including reading Part One in full, undertaking required safeguarding and child protection training, and following SEEAT's

safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures, including arrangements for reporting safeguarding concerns, concerns or allegations about adults working with children, and whistleblowing;

2.5.15 create a positive classroom environment where all children are cared for, respected, and valued;

2.5.16 ensure that all activities, including curriculum provision, all forms of school supervision, interaction, and out of school provision, conform to the values and ethos of SEEAT, promote tolerance, uphold British values, and reject all forms of discrimination and extremism;

2.5.17 promote fundamental British values including democracy, the rule of law, mutual respect, and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs;

2.5.18 take care of their physical and mental well-being by maintaining a healthy work-life balance;

2.5.19 support high expectations of students wearing the required school uniform by maintaining professional and appropriate standards of smart business dress and personal appearance at work relevant to their workplace;

2.5.20 observe the terms and conditions of their contract;

2.5.21 observe all of SEEAT's policies, procedures, and regulations which are notified to them from time to time by means of notice boards, e-mail, the intranet, or otherwise;

2.5.22 take reasonable care in respect of the health and safety of pupils, parents, colleagues, and third parties and comply with SEEAT's Health and Safety Policy;

2.5.23 handle confidential and personal information obtained through employment or engagement by SEEAT securely and only access, use, share or disclose it where authorised, lawful and necessary for the role. Nothing in this provision prevents appropriate information-sharing for safeguarding, whistleblowing or another lawful purpose; staff must follow SEEAT's Data Protection, safeguarding and information-security requirements;

2.5.24 use SEEAT equipment, networks, systems and digital services responsibly and securely, in accordance with applicable law and SEEAT policies, procedures and cyber-security requirements;

2.5.25 maintain professional standards in all online activity and communications, including social media, messaging platforms, apps and personal accounts. Staff must maintain appropriate professional boundaries with pupils, protect confidential information and digital security, and avoid online

conduct that could bring SEEAT into disrepute or reasonably call into question their suitability to work with children;

2.5.26 use generative artificial intelligence (AI) and other emerging technologies only in accordance with SEEAT policies and approved arrangements; do not enter confidential, personal or safeguarding information into unauthorised tools; consider safeguarding, data protection and intellectual-property requirements; check outputs for accuracy and appropriateness; and remain professionally accountable for work produced with the assistance of AI;

2.5.27 not use personal devices, accounts or storage services to photograph or record pupils, or to store or process pupil information, except where expressly authorised under SEEAT procedures;

2.5.28 comply with and support the relevant school policy on mobile phones and personal devices and model appropriate personal-device use during the school day;

2.5.29 It is also recognised that situations arise where close personal relationships can be formed at work. Such relationships should be disclosed, in confidence, to the Headteacher, by the individuals concerned as this may impact on the conduct of the school or Trust.

2.6 Failure to maintain satisfactory standards of conduct may result in action being taken under the Trust's Disciplinary Policy.

MISCONDUCT

The following are examples of matters that will normally be regarded as misconduct and will be dealt with under the Trust's Disciplinary Policy:

2.7 minor breaches of the Trust's policies.

2.8 minor breaches of contract.

2.9 minor damage to, or minor unauthorised use of SEEAT property.

2.10 poor timekeeping.

2.11 time-wasting.

2.12 general insubordination.

2.13 inappropriate and/or excessive use of SEEAT's telephones for personal calls.

2.14 inappropriate and/or excessive personal e-mail or internet usage.

2.15 minor bad language or other minor offensive behaviour.

2.16 minor negligence in the performance of duties or responsibilities.

2.17 breaches of the SEEAT's policy of no smoking or vaping on school premises.

2.18 being an accessory to a minor disciplinary offense committed by another employee.

This list is intended as a guide and is not exhaustive.

GROSS MISCONDUCT

2.19 Gross misconduct is a serious breach of contract and includes misconduct which, in the Trust's opinion, is likely to prejudice SEEAT or its reputation or irreparably damage the working relationship and trust between employee and employer. Gross misconduct will be dealt with under the Trust's Disciplinary Policy and can, following the disciplinary process, lead to dismissal without notice or pay in lieu of notice (summary dismissal) as a worst-case scenario.

2.20 The following are examples of matters that are normally regarded as gross misconduct:

2.20.1 theft, or unauthorised removal of SEEAT property or the property of any other person or the incitement to steal.

2.20.2 fraud, forgery, or other dishonesty, including fabrication of expense claims and/or time sheets.

2.20.3 gross failure to follow reasonable and lawful instructions.

2.20.4 unauthorised absence.

2.20.5 gross insubordination.

2.20.6 deliberate mutilation or destruction of official documents.

2.20.7 the initiation or participation in any inappropriate verbal or physical conduct with a child.

2.20.8 actual or threatened violence or extremism, or behaviour which provokes violence or extremism.

2.20.9 any behaviour which can be considered as supporting fundamentalism, extremism, or otherwise as being anti-British values.

2.20.10 deliberate damage to SEEAT buildings, fittings, property or equipment, or the property of any other person.

2.20.11 serious misuse of SEEAT property.

2.20.12 deliberately accessing internet sites, social media, forums or groups containing pornographic, offensive, obscene, defamatory, extremist, incitements to violence, sexist, racist, homophobic, harassing or libellous material whilst at work or at any time using SEEAT equipment;

2.20.13 serious or persistent insubordination and/or the refusal to follow management instructions.

2.20.14 bringing SEEAT into serious disrepute.

2.20.15 being under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or other substances during working hours.

2.20.16 causing loss, damage, or injury through serious negligence.

2.20.17 serious breach of health and safety rules.

2.20.18 serious unauthorised use or disclosure of confidential or personal information, or serious failure to keep such information secure, except where disclosure is authorised or protected by law, including under SEEAT's Whistleblowing procedure;

2.20.19 acceptance of bribes or other secret payments.

2.20.20 using or attempting to use their official position for their own or another person's private advantage.

2.20.21 committing a criminal offence that in the opinion of the Trust may affect its reputation or its relationships with its employees, parents, pupils, or the public, or otherwise affects their suitability to continue to work for SEEAT.

2.20.22 possession, use, supply, or attempted supply of illegal drugs.

2.20.23 serious neglect of duties, or a serious or deliberate breach of his/her contract or operating procedures.

2.20.24 knowing breach of statutory rules affecting their work.

2.20.25 serious unauthorised access to, use, processing or disclosure of personal data contrary to SEEAT's Data Protection Policy and applicable data protection law;

2.20.26 harassment (including sexual harassment), victimisation or unlawful discrimination against employees, contractors, parents, pupils or members of the public contrary to SEEAT's Equality and Diversity or Dignity at Work Policies or applicable equality law;

2.20.27 giving false information as to qualifications or entitlement to work (including immigration status).

2.20.28 knowingly making a false disclosure under SEEAT's Whistleblowing Policy, or making a disclosure for personal gain or another improper purpose. A concern raised honestly or on reasonable grounds will not be treated as misconduct merely because it is not substantiated;

2.20.29 knowingly making a false or malicious allegation against a colleague; an allegation raised honestly or on reasonable grounds will not be treated as misconduct merely because it is not substantiated;

2.20.30 victimising, bullying, harassing or retaliating against a colleague who has raised a concern, made a complaint, or provided evidence or information under the Whistleblowing Policy, Dignity at Work Policy, Grievance Policy, Disciplinary Policy or otherwise;

2.20.31 serious misuse of SEEAT's IT systems, digital services or approved software, including unauthorised software, e-mail, internet or generative AI tools, or conduct that creates a serious cyber-security, safeguarding, data-protection or confidentiality risk;

2.20.32 serious misuse of social media, messaging platforms or other online services, including serious breaches of professional boundaries, confidentiality or SEEAT's online-conduct requirements;

2.20.33 undertaking unauthorised paid or unpaid employment during their working hours. This list is intended as a guide and is not exhaustive.