SOLENT
Academies Trust

Together we inspire lifelong learning, perseverance, kindness and growth, transforming the lives of our children and families

Staff Code of Conduct (for staff and volunteers)

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Contents

1 Purpose 3
2 Scope 3
3 Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and recognising low level concerns 3
4 Duty of care 4
5 Health & Safety 5
6 Honesty and personal integrity 5
7 Tackling discrimination 6
8 Professional boundaries and relationships 6
9 Confidentiality and data protection 7
10 Physical contact with pupils 7
11 Behaviour management 8
12 Social contact with pupils 8
13 Photography, videos and other images/media 9
14 Acceptable use of technology 9
15 Personal Phones and Tablets 9
16 Personal belongings 9
17 Alcohol and Substance Misuse 10
18 Working one to one with pupils 10
19 Curriculum 10
20 Dress and appearance 11
21 Gifts and hospitality 11
22 Keeping within the law 12
23 Conduct outside of work and at work related functions 13
24 Agency workers 14
25 Review 14
25 Appendices 12

1 Purpose

1.1 The aim of this Code of Conduct for employees is to set out the standards of conduct expected of all staff and to provide further information for employees. This should be read in conjunction with our Allegations of Abuse against Staff, Complaints and Disciplinary Policies, Teachers' Standards and the statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education.

1.2 This Code should make it clear to employees the expectations the Trust has of them. Employees should note that this Code is not exhaustive in defining acceptable and unacceptable standards of conduct and employees must use common sense in adhering to the underpinning principles. If any employee is ever unsure what the expectations are in any given circumstance they should speak to their line manager.

1.3 This Code does not form part of any employee's contract of employment, and it may be amended at any time.

2 Scope

2.1 The Code applies to all employees regardless of length of service including those in their probationary period. It also applies to consultants, contractors, casual and agency staff and volunteers (collectively referred to as staff in this policy although, unlike employees, breaches of the Code will not be managed through the disciplinary procedure.

2.2 As recognisable figures in the local community the behaviour and conduct of staff of the Trust outside of work can impact on their employment. Therefore, conduct outside work may be treated as a disciplinary matter if it is considered that it is relevant to the employee's employment.

3 Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and recognising low level concerns

3.1 All employees are responsible for safeguarding children and promoting their welfare. This means that employees are required to take action to protect children from maltreatment, prevent impairment of children's health or development and ensure that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care. This will enable all children to have the best outcomes.

3.2 All employees should be prepared to identify children who may benefit from early help. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges at any point in a child's life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years.

3.3 All employees must be aware of the signs of abuse and neglect and know what action to take if these are identified.

3.4 All employees must be aware of low-level concerns, no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt' - that an adult working in or on behalf of the Academy or college may have acted in a way that:

- is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work; and

- does not meet the allegations threshold or is otherwise not considered serious enough to consider a referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

Examples of such behaviour could include, but is not limited to:

- being over friendly with children;
- having favourites – this could include but limited to calling pupils by a pet name, unless a preferred name, as agreed by the child's family.
- using terms of endearment;
- buying pupils personal gifts;
- taking photographs of children on their mobile phone;
- engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door; or,
- humiliating children;
- using inappropriate, sexualised, intimidating or offensive language.

3.5 To do this, employees must have fully read and understood our Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy and be aware of our systems for keeping children safe and must always follow the guidance in these policies.

3.6 All employees must cooperate with colleagues and with external agencies where necessary.

3.7 Staff members will report their concerns to the appropriate DSL (Designated Safeguarding Lead) by submitting a low-level concern reporting form. (See Appendix A).

4 Duty of care

Staff must:

- Understand the responsibilities, which are part of their employment or role, and be aware that sanctions will be applied if these provisions are breached
- Always act, and be seen to act, in our pupils' best interests
- Avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and/or intentions
- Avoid any conduct that could amount to discrimination or harassment
- Ensure their actions are warranted, proportionate, safe, and applied equitably
- Take responsibility for their own actions and behaviour

5 Health & Safety

All employees must ensure that they:

- Familiarise themselves with the Health and Safety statements produced by the Trust as published in the Staff Handbook
- Read and understand the Trust/Academy's Health and Safety Policy
- Comply with Health and Safety Regulations or instructions and use any safety equipment and protective clothing which is supplied to you by the Trust/Academy
- Comply with any hygiene requirements
- Comply with any accident reporting requirements
- Safely act within the levels of your capability
- Never act in a way which might cause risk or damage to any other members of the Trust/Academy, community, or visitors.
- Inform their line manager of any paid work undertaken elsewhere. This is to comply with the Working Time Regulations, which are a Health and Safety initiative.

6 Honesty and personal integrity

6.1 Employees are expected to demonstrate consistently high standards of personal and professional conduct. The following statements define the behaviour and attitudes which set the required standard for conduct in our Academies/Trust.

6.2 Employees must comply with any lawful or reasonable instructions issued by managers or governors.

6.3 Employees uphold public trust in our establishments and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside of our Academies or Trust, by:

- Treating pupils with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to their professional position
- Having regard for the need to safeguard pupils' well-being, in accordance with statutory provisions
- Showing tolerance of, and respect for, the rights of others
- Not undermining fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs
- Ensuring that personal beliefs are not expressed in ways which exploit pupils' vulnerability or might lead them to break the law.

6.4 Employees must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of our Trust and maintain high standards in their own attendance and punctuality. Employees must treat all colleagues with respect, dignity, fairness and courtesy at all times.

6.5 Staff must maintain high standards of honesty and integrity in their work. This includes the handling and claiming of money and the use of any Trust property and facilities.

7 Tackling discrimination and harassment

7.1 Employees are required to understand the types of discrimination, harassment, and bullying that pupils and colleagues may be subject to. Employees are required to have read and understood our Trust Equality Policy.

7.2 The law protects employees, workers, contractors, self-employed staff, apprentices, those undertaking vocational training, volunteers, former workers and job applicants from sexual harassment and the Trust has a duty to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of its staff at work.

Examples of sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:

- Flirting, gesturing, making sexual remarks about someone's appearance in any means of communication.
- Asking questions about someone's sex life.
- Telling sexually offensive jokes/pranks and or sharing pornographic or sexual images.
- Unwanted touching, kissing or assault.

To report an incident of sexual harassment or to raise a concern with Principal/Head of School/Line Manager or HR and please refer to the preventing sexual harassment at work policy for details of how the Trust responds to a report of sexual harassment.

7.3 Employees must not ignore any form of discrimination or harassment.. Employees must positively promote equality and diversity and inclusion at all times and not display any behaviour that constitutes any form of discrimination, bullying, or harassment.

8 Professional boundaries and relationships

8.1 Employees in our Trust are in a position of trust in relation to our pupils which means that the relationship between an employee and a pupil is not one of equals. It is a specific offence for a person aged 18 or over (e.g. teacher, youth worker) to have a sexual relationship with a child under 18 where that person is in a position of trust in respect of that child, even if the relationship is consensual.

8.2 Employees must ensure that they avoid behaviour which might be misinterpreted by others. This includes any type of communication that they may have with pupils.

8.3 Employees must not make sexual remarks to any pupil or discuss their own sexual relationships with, or in the presence of pupils. Employees must not discuss a pupil's sexual relationships in inappropriate settings or contexts. Any sexual behaviour by a member of staff towards any pupil is unacceptable and illegal.

8.4 Employees must ensure that professional boundaries are maintained at all times. This means that employees should not show favouritism to any pupil and should not allow

pupils to engage in any type of behaviour that could be seen to be inappropriate. Pupils are not employees' friends and should not be treated as such.

8.5 Employees should be aware that it is not uncommon for pupils to become strongly attracted to a member of staff or to develop an infatuation. If any member of staff becomes aware of an infatuation, they should discuss it with the Principal/Head of School immediately so that they can receive support on the most appropriate way to manage the situation.

8.6 For employees who are in a relationship with a colleague, parent or carer, or any other person associated with the Trust, we expect that they identify this to the Principal/Head of School/Line Manager and ensure that this does not create a conflict of interest or affect their professional judgement or responsibilities in any way. Where an employee has managerial authority over another employee with whom they are in a close personal relationship, the Trust reserves the right to transfer one or both employees to another role in the Trust following appropriate consultation with both employees in order to seek agreement to the transfer.

9 Confidentiality and data protection

9.1 Members of staff may have access to confidential information about pupils, colleagues or other matters relating to the Trust. This could include personal and sensitive data, for example information about a pupil's home life. Employees should never use this information to their own personal advantage, or to humiliate, intimidate or embarrass others. Employees should never disclose this information unless this is in the proper circumstances and with the proper authority.

9.2 If an employee is ever in doubt about what information can or can't be disclosed, they should speak to the Data Protection Officer.

9.3 We will comply with the requirements of Data Protection Legislation (being the UK General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018) and any implementing laws, regulations and secondary legislation, as amended or updated from time to time. Employees are expected to comply with the Trust's systems as set out in our Data Protection Policy. If any employee becomes aware that data is at risk of compromise or loss or has been compromised or lost, they must report it immediately to the Data Protection Officer, in order (where applicable) for relevant breaches to be reported to the Information Commissioners Office within 72 hours.

9.4 Employees must read and understand our Data Protection Policy and other relevant policies including in relation to criminal records information, recruitment and safer recruitment, internet, email and communications, information security, copies of which are available on Solent Academies Trust Sharepoint page.

10 Physical contact with pupils

10.1 There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for staff to have physical contact with pupils. Employees must ensure that they only do so in ways that are appropriate to their professional role and in response to the pupil's needs at the time. This

should be of limited duration and appropriate to the age, stage of development, gender and background of the pupil. Employees should always be able to explain why they have made physical contact with a pupil. Employees should ensure that they have read and understood the Academy's Positive Behaviour and Relationships Policy

10.2 There may also be occasions where a pupil is in distress and needs comfort and reassurance which may include age-appropriate physical contact. If an employee is in this position, then they should consider the way in which they offer comfort, ensuring that it is not open to misinterpretation and is always reported to their line manager.

10.3 Staff may legally physically intervene with pupils to prevent them from committing a crime, injuring themselves or others, causing damage to property, engaging in behaviour prejudicial to good order and to maintain good order and discipline. Physical force should never be used as a form of punishment.

10.4 Sexual contact, including grooming patterns of behaviour, with pupils is unlawful and unacceptable in all circumstances.

11 Behaviour management

11.1 Employees should not use any form of degrading or humiliating treatment to punish a pupil. The use of sarcasm, demeaning or insensitive comments towards pupils is completely unacceptable.

11.2 Where pupils display difficult or challenging behaviour, employees should follow the Academy's Positive Behaviour and Relationships using strategies appropriate to the circumstance and situation.

12 Social contact with pupils

12.1 Employees should not establish or seek to establish social contact, via any channels (including social media), with pupils for the purposes of securing a friendship or to pursue or strengthen a relationship. Employees should use their work provided equipment only for communicating electronically with pupils. If there are any circumstances in which an employee has had to provide their personal contact details, including phone numbers, email address etc, to any pupil then they should report this to the Principal/Head of School

12.2 The Trust's advice to staff is not to connect to pupils via social media or other communication channels unless this is for professional purposes and that the employee can demonstrate that this is the case.

12.3 Our Academies and Trust are part of our community, and we recognise that, as members of the community, employees will come into contact with pupils outside of work. We expect staff to use their professional judgement in such situations and to report to the Principal/Head of School any contact that they have had with a pupil, outside of the Academy, that they are concerned about or that could be misinterpreted by others.

Staff must not post disparaging or defamatory statements about our Academies/Trust, our pupils or their parents or carers; our governors or staff; suppliers and vendors; and other

affiliates and stakeholders. Staff should avoid social media communications that might be misconstrued in a way that could damage our Academies/Trust's reputation, even indirectly.

If you see content in social media that disparages or reflects poorly on our Academies, Trust or our stakeholders, you should print out the content and contact Principal/Head of School. All staff are responsible for protecting our Academies/Trust's reputation.

13 Photography, videos and other images/media

Many educational activities involve recording images. These may be undertaken for displays, publicity, to celebrate achievement and to provide records of evidence of the activity. Under no circumstances should employees use their personal equipment to take images of pupils at or on behalf of the Academy or Trust.

14 Acceptable use of technology

Staff should only use ICT systems and resources (email and phone) for all Academies/Trust business or only in line with what is allowed.

Employees should read our ICT and Acceptable Use Policy.

15 Personal Phones and Tablets

15.1 Staff must not use personal electronic communication devices such as mobile phones or iPads as cameras in our Academies. Any photographs/video footage must be taken using Academy equipment. Staff must only save images on Academy IT hardware/computers.

15.2 Staff who are in contact with pupils should not use personal mobile phones in our Academies during their directed/paid hours of employment unless there are exceptional circumstances and they have requested and been given explicit permission to do so by the Principal/Head of School. Outside of these times, mobile phones should only be used in areas of our Academies where pupils are not present.

16 Personal belongings

16.1 Staff are expected to maintain responsibility for their personal belongings at all times while on Trust premises or taking part in any school activities, such as trips. The Trust is not liable for any loss, theft, or damage to personal property. Staff should ensure that their belongings are stored securely and are not disruptive to the workplace environment and not left in places where they might be vulnerable. Staff are strongly advised against brining items of significant or sentimental value into the Trust premises or when taking part in any school activities, such as trips.

16.2 Any electrical items bought into Trust premises should meet all health and safety requirements and it is the staff members responsibility to ensure this.

16.3 Should staff bring any items into Trust premises, for purposes of supporting teaching and learning or to assist them in undertaking their duties, they should ensure the items are not hazardous and dangerous. Staff should ensure they have approval from their line manager, where items would not be considered everyday resources.

16.4 Respect for the personal property of others is paramount, and any interference with or damage to another person's belongings may result in disciplinary action.

17 Alcohol and Substance Misuse

17.1 Staff are expected to arrive at work fit to carry out their job and to be able to perform their duties safely without any limitations due to the use or aftereffects of alcohol or drugs. In this policy drug use includes the use of controlled drugs, psychoactive (or mind-altering) substances formerly known as "legal highs", and the misuse of prescribed or over-the-counter medication.

17.2 Alcohol and drug-related problems may develop for a variety of reasons and over a considerable period of time. Therefore, Academies/Trust will seek, where appropriate, to treat these problems in a similar way to other health issues. Support may be provided at this point, in order to aid a full recovery, allowing a return to work/effective performance and the full range of duties.

18 Working one to one with pupils

18.1 There will be times where an employee is working one to one with a pupil and this is acceptable. Employees need to understand that this means that they may be more vulnerable to allegations being made against them. Therefore, it is important that employees:

- Avoid meeting on a one-to-one basis in secluded areas of the Academy/any Trust premises.
- Ensure that the door to the room is open or that there is visual access into the room
- Inform a colleague or line manager of the meeting, preferably beforehand
- Reports to their line manager if the pupil becomes distressed or angry.

19 Curriculum

19.1 Many areas of the curriculum can include or raise subject matter which is sexually explicit or of a political or sensitive nature. Care should be taken to ensure that resource materials cannot be misinterpreted and clearly relate to the learning outcomes identified by the lesson plan. This can be supported by developing ground rules with pupils to ensure sensitive topics can be discussed in a safe learning environment. This plan should highlight particular areas of risk and sensitivity and care should especially be taken in those areas of the curriculum where usual boundaries or rules are less rigorously applied e.g. Health and Social Care, PSHE, drama.

19.2 The curriculum can sometimes include or lead to unplanned discussion about subject matter of a sexually explicit, political or otherwise sensitive nature. Responding to pupil's questions requires careful judgement and employees should take guidance in these circumstances from the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

20 Dress and appearance

Working in our Academies/Trust, employees are role models to our pupils and how they present themselves is important. Our expectation is that staff are decently, appropriately, and professionally dressed in work at all times. We do not permit the wearing of clothes that are revealing, allow underwear to be seen, have offensive logos or writing, or are ripped or torn at any times. If an employee is unsure whether any item of clothing is inappropriate, then they should not wear it to work. Employees can always speak to their line manager if they are unsure. Where we identify that an employee is wearing clothing that we do not find acceptable, they will be informed.

We would ask you not to wear:

- Blue denim clothing, 'ripped' jeans/trousers
- Short revealing tops
- Cycling shorts
- See-through leggings
- Clothing which displays the midriff
- Clothing which displays offensive or political slogans
- Shorts, unless special permission is given during periods of unusually hot weather
- PE staff only to wear shorts for PE lessons wearing 'standard' clothing for non PE lessons, meetings and events
- Shoes that present a health and safety hazard e.g. flip flops, slip-ons (sandals with no back straps, very high, spiked heels, open toed sandals)
- Any jewellery other than a simple watch (to time seizure activity) and a wedding band where appropriate. No other jewellery. This is for both health and hygiene reasons and personal safety
- Body piercings other than single ear studs or small, single nose studs worn only for religious or cultural reasons
- Visible tattoos must be covered at work where the location of the tattoo makes it reasonably practicable to do so. It is not acceptable for offensive tattoos to be displayed in any circumstances
- Long nails/false nails or painted nails for both health and safety and hygiene reasons for all educational staff working closely with our pupils.

21 Gifts and hospitality

For many of our employees there will be a limited opportunity to accept gifts and hospitality, but all staff must be aware that it is not acceptable for staff to accept bribes. Therefore, any gift, promotional offer or hospitality, intended either for the employee or for the Academy or Trust that exceeds a nominal value of £30 must be declared to

Management Accountant and Chief Finance and Operating Officer for entry in the Gift Register. If an employee is ever unsure, then the best course of action is to politely decline the offer.

It is traditional for pupils and their parents or carers to give gifts as a small token of appreciation or as a thank you to members of staff at certain times throughout the academic year. This Code of Conduct is not designed to stop that practice. Staff may accept gifts from pupils and their parents or carers provided that they meet this definition in line with the Anti Fraud and Anit Corruption Policy . Any member of staff receiving a gift with a value of greater than £30.00 should inform the Principal/Head of School. They will then decide whether the gift can be accepted. Staff should make Principal/Head of School aware of any pupil who is giving them gifts on a regular basis, or any pupil or parent or carer who expects something in return for a gift, as this would not be acceptable. Staff should not give gifts to pupils unless this is part of a recognised practice in line with the Academy's Positive Behaviour and Relationships policy.

22 Keeping within the law

22.1 Staff are expected to operate within the law. Unlawful or criminal behaviour, at work or outside work, may lead to disciplinary action, including dismissal, being taken. However, being investigated by the police, receiving a caution or being charged will not automatically mean that an employee's employment is at risk.

22.2 Employees must ensure that they:

22.2.1 Uphold the law at work

22.2.2 Never commit a crime away from work which could damage public confidence in them or the Academy/Trust or which makes them unsuitable for the work they do. This includes, for example:

- submitting false or fraudulent claims to public bodies (for example, benefit claims for the Department for Work and Pensions or local authority.)
- breaching copyright on computer software or published documents
- sexual offences which will render them unfit to work with children or vulnerable adults
- crimes of dishonesty which render them unfit to hold a position of trust.

22.2.3 Staff must inform the Chief Executive Officer/Chief Finance & Operations Officer/Principal or Head of School (where applicable), without delay if they are arrested, questioned by the police under caution, charged with, or convicted of any criminal offence during the course of their employment with the Trust. This requirement applies whether the matter arises during or outside of working hours.

Upon notification, the Chief Executive Officer/Chief Finance & Operations Officer/Principal or Head of School will assess the matter in line with the Trust's safeguarding obligations and relevant statutory guidance, including consideration of whether the circumstances:

- affect the employee's suitability to work with children or vulnerable individuals;
- present a safeguarding risk;
- damage, or have the potential to damage, public confidence in the Academy or Trust; or
- impact the employee's ability to fulfil their contractual duties.

Where appropriate, the Trust may seek advice from the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and/or other relevant agencies.

Failure to disclose such information promptly and fully may be treated as a serious disciplinary matter and could result in action up to and including dismissal.

23 Conduct outside of work and at work related functions

23.1 Unlike some other forms of employment, working at our Academy/Trust means that an employee's conduct outside of work could have an impact on their role.

23.2 Staff must not engage in conduct outside work which could seriously damage the reputation and standing of the organisation or the employee's own reputation or the reputation of other members of the Academy/Trust community. Employees should be aware that any conduct that we become aware of that could impact on their role within the Academy/Trust or affect their reputation will be addressed under our disciplinary procedure.

23.3 Employees are required to demonstrate responsible behaviour at work-related functions and work-related social events that take place outside of normal work hours and to act in a way that will not have a detrimental effect on our reputation.

23.4 Staff must not behave in a way outside work that may impact on their suitability to work with children. This includes behaviour which does not directly involve a child/children. Should we become aware of any such incident or behaviour, we may treat the issue as a safeguarding matter and manage it in accordance with the Keeping Children Safe in Education statutory guidance document. Employees should be aware that any behaviour that we consider may impact on an employee's suitability to work with children will be addressed under our disciplinary procedure and may lead to a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and the Teaching Regulation Agency (where appropriate).

23.5 We therefore expect employees to make us aware immediately of any such situations that have happened outside of working hours.

23.6 Employees may undertake additional paid or voluntary work outside their role with the Trust, provided it does not conflict with the Trust's interests, values or reputation, or negatively affect their performance, attendance or wellbeing. Staff must disclose any outside employment in advance—particularly where it involves working with children or vulnerable adults, overlaps with Trust duties, or could present a potential conflict of interest. The Trust will assess disclosures to ensure there are no safeguarding, reputational or working time concerns, and approval may be subject to reasonable

conditions. Failure to disclose or comply with this requirement may result in disciplinary action.

24 Agency workers

24.1 We will investigate allegations made against agency workers with the cooperation of the agency. Whilst we may decide to cease using the services of an agency worker, this will not prevent us from investigating allegations and liaising with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) to determine a suitable outcome. We expect agency workers and agencies to cooperate with our investigations and with external agencies where applicable.

24.2 We will discuss with the agency whether it may be appropriate for them to consider suspending an agency worker, or whether we are prepared to redeploy an agency worker during an investigation.

25 Review

This Code of Conduct is reviewed and amended annually by the Trust. We will monitor the application and outcomes of this code of conduct to ensure it is working effectively.

APPENDIX A

Low-level Concern Reporting Form

Thank you for reporting your concerns to the safeguarding team; we are grateful to you for taking the safety and welfare of our pupils seriously. Please fill in the below form, including as much detail as you can, and return it directly to the Executive Principal, Principal, Head of School or DSL. Please refrain from discussing this concern with anyone other than the Executive Principal, Principal, Head of School or DSL. We ask that you keep all details, including the name staff member to whom the concern pertains, confidential.

Your details

Name	
Role	
Date and time of completing this form	

Details of individual whom the concern is about

Name	
Role	
Relationship to the individual reporting the concern, e.g. manager, colleague	
Date and time the concern/incident	

Details of concern

Please include as much detail as possible. Think about the following: What behaviour and/or incident are you reporting? What exactly happened? Why does the behaviour and/or incident worry you? Why do you believe the behaviour and/or incident is not consistent with our Staff Code of Conduct?

APPENDIX B

Expectations of Staff
Code of Conduct for Staff and Volunteers
Declaration of Interest Form

Solent Academies Trust requires all staff and volunteers to declare any actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest in accordance with the Staff Code of Conduct Policy.

A conflict of interest may arise where personal, financial, business or other interests could influence, or be perceived to influence, professional judgement, decision-making, or actions taken in the course of Trust duties.

If you are uncertain whether a matter should be declared, you should do so and seek guidance from your Principal/Head of School or Line Manager.

NAME……..……ROLE……. ACADEMY ……

Person/Organisation of Interest	Details of Interest or Relationship	How this relates to your role within the Trust

I confirm that I have read and understood my obligations under the Expectations of Staff – Staff Code of Conduct Policy – Solent Academies Trust.

I confirm that the information provided is accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that I am required to update this declaration should my circumstances change. I acknowledge that failure to declare a relevant interest may be treated as a breach of the Staff Code of Conduct and may result in disciplinary action.

Signed Employee…… ……..……Date …….....

Signed Principal/Head of School/Line Manager……..…….…... Date ….....