



# Southend East Community Academy Trust

“Strong Partnerships, Strong Community, Strong Schools”

## Employee Code of Conduct

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## Contents

1	Introduction .....	3
1.1	Who the Code is aimed at .....	3
1.2	Standards .....	3
1.3	Safeguarding .....	3
1.4	Disclosure of Information .....	3
2	Staff Code of Conduct .....	4
2.1	Unacceptable Professional Conduct .....	4
2.2	Conduct relating to pupils and partners in education .....	4
3	Other conduct .....	4
3.1	Conviction of a Relevant Offence .....	5
3.2	Serious Professional Incompetence for Teachers .....	5
4	Relationships .....	5
4.1	Governors .....	5
4.2	The Local Community and Service Users .....	5
5	Appointment and Other Employment Matters .....	6
6	Outside Commitments .....	6
7	Personal Interests .....	7
8	Separation of roles during Tendering .....	7
8.1	Contractors .....	7
9	Use of Financial Resources .....	7
9.1	Hospitality and Gifts .....	7
10	Sponsorship - Giving and Receiving .....	8
11	Corrupt Practices .....	8
12	Social Networking .....	9
12.1	Security and identity theft .....	9
12.2	Use of Internet .....	9
13	Use of Mobile Phones during the working day .....	10
14	Smoking Policy .....	10
15	Alcohol .....	10
16	Dress Code for Staff .....	10
17	Breaches of the Code of Conduct .....	11
18	Staff with Children in SECAT .....	11
19	Union Membership/Professional Association .....	11

# **Employee Code of Conduct**

Southend East Community Academy Trust (SECAT) expects all staff\* to uphold appropriate standards of professional conduct and competence.

\* All staff is defined as trustees, teaching staff, associate staff and volunteers working across the Academies within the Multi Academy Trust (MAT).

## **1 Introduction**

Parents, pupils and the public are entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from all employees who work for SECAT. The aim of this Code is to lay down guidelines for SECAT employees which will help maintain and improve standards and protect employees from misunderstanding or criticism.

### **1.1 *Who the Code is aimed at***

The Code is intended to cover all employees under a contract of employment with SECAT. Activities carried out by employees acting as members of companies or voluntary organisations should be subject to the minimum standards within this code.

### **1.2 *Standards***

Employees of SECAT are expected to give the highest possible standard of service to the public, and where it is part of their duties, to provide appropriate advice to governors and fellow employees with impartiality. Employees will be expected, through agreed procedures and without fear of recrimination, to bring to the attention of the appropriate level of management any deficiency in the provision of service. Employees must report to the relevant Headteacher any impropriety or breach of procedure.

### **1.3 *Safeguarding***

Employees must ensure that they work to the highest standards of safeguarding pupils at all times. If staff are unclear of their Safeguarding responsibilities, they should contact their relevant Headteacher to seek guidance immediately.

### **1.4 *Disclosure of Information***

The law requires that certain types of information must be available to inspectors and auditors, government departments, service users, the local authority, and the public. SECAT itself may decide to be open about other types of information. Employees must be aware of which information SECAT is open about, and act accordingly.

Employees should not use any information obtained in the course of their employment for personal gain or benefit, nor should they pass it on to others who might use it in such a way. Any particular information received by an

employee which is personal and does not belong to SECAT should not be divulged by the employee without the prior approval of SECAT, except where such disclosure is required or sanctioned by the law.

Employees must ensure that they do not divulge any confidential information, including any information about pupils, unless it is professionally appropriate to do so and in accordance with Safeguarding requirements.

If staff are in any doubt as to what information they can or cannot pass on, they should contact their relevant Headteacher or the CEO to seek guidance.

## **2 Staff Code of Conduct**

### **2.1 Unacceptable Professional Conduct**

“Unacceptable professional conduct” is defined as “conduct which falls short of the standard expected of an employed teacher or associate staff, and is behaviour which involves a breach of the standards of propriety expected of the profession.”

Whether a teacher or member of staff is guilty of unacceptable professional conduct is a matter for a hearing committee to decide in relation to the facts of the given case, taking into account the provisions of this Policy as appropriate.

### **2.2 Conduct relating to pupils and partners in education**

Employed teachers or members of associate staff may be found to be guilty of unacceptable professional conduct -

Where they:

Seriously demean or undermine pupils, their parents, carers or colleagues, or act towards them in a manner which is discriminatory in relation to gender, marital status, religion, belief, colour, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, disability or age

**Where they fail to:**

- Take reasonable care of pupils under their supervision with the aim of ensuring their safety and welfare
- Comply with relevant statutory provisions which support the well-being and development of pupils, including where these require co-operation and collaboration with a range of agencies, as well as colleagues and other adults
- Observe confidentiality in a manner consistent with legal requirements
- Comply with the requirements of statutory bodies relating to the examination, assessment and evaluation of pupil achievement and attainment.

## **3 Other conduct**

Employed teachers or members of associate staff may be found to be guilty of unacceptable professional conduct -

Where they fail to:

- Maintain appropriate standards of honesty and integrity in management and administrative duties, including in the use of property and finance belonging to SECAT and SECAT Academies.

Where they:

- Misuse or misrepresent their professional position, qualifications or experience.
- Use social networking sites in an inappropriate way.
- Bring the profession into serious disrepute
- Otherwise bring the reputation and standing of any of SECAT Academies into serious disrepute.

### **3.1 Conviction of a Relevant Offence**

Should any member of staff receive a charge and/or conviction whilst employed within SECAT Academies, they must notify SECAT and the relevant Academy immediately. SECAT may also take disciplinary action where an employed teacher or member of associate staff has been convicted of a relevant criminal offence or has accepted a caution in relation to such an offence.

### **3.2 *Serious Professional Incompetence for Teachers***

Under the Disciplinary Rules of Procedure, employed teachers may be found guilty of “serious professional incompetence” where they demonstrate “a level of competence which falls seriously short of that expected of an employed teacher, taking into account the relevant circumstances.”

In assessing whether an employed teacher has demonstrated “serious professional incompetence”, hearing committees will take into account the extent to which an employed teacher has failed to maintain a level of professional competence consistent with the standards for Qualified Teacher Status, the Induction Standards and the nature of their professional responsibilities.

The determination of serious professional incompetence includes failings relating to management and leadership roles. Where a failure of management and leadership on the part of any Headteacher within SECAT is at issue, a committee may take into account the National Standards for Headship published by the National College for Schools Leadership (NCSL).

## **4 Relationships**

### **4.1 *Governors***

For some employees, their role is to give advice to governors and Headteachers and all are there to carry out SECAT’s work. Mutual respect between employees and governors is essential. Close personal familiarity between employees and individual governors can damage the relationship and prove embarrassing to other governors and should therefore be avoided.

### **4.2 *The Local Community and Service Users***

Employees should always remember their responsibilities, as set out by both SECAT and Academy policies, to the Community they serve and ensure

courteous, efficient and impartial service delivery to all groups and individuals within that community.

## **5 Appointment and Other Employment Matters**

Employees involved in recruitment must ensure that appointments are made on the basis of merit. It is unlawful for an employee to make an appointment which is based on anything other than the ability of the candidate to undertake the duties of the post. In order to avoid any possible accusation of bias, employees should not be involved in an appointment where they are related to an applicant, or have a close personal relationship outside work with the applicant.

In accordance with the individual Academy's recruitment practice, candidates for any appointment at the relevant Academy, when making application, must disclose in writing to the appropriate Headteacher whether to their knowledge they are related to any Governor or member of staff. A Candidate who fails to do so shall be disqualified from such appointment and if appointed shall be liable to dismissal without notice.

Similarly, employees should not be involved in decisions relating to discipline, or promotion or pay adjustments for any other employee who is a relative, partner, etc.

## **6 Outside Commitments**

Off duty hours are an employee's personal concern. However, employees are required to ensure that there is no conflict of interest with their Academy responsibilities. SECAT will not attempt to preclude employees from undertaking additional employment but any such employment must not, in the view of SECAT conflict with, or react detrimentally to SECAT's business.

Employees whose pay scale includes a salary equivalent to NJC for Local Authority staff SCP 28 or above shall devote their whole-time service to the work of SECAT and shall not engage in any other paid business or take up any other additional appointment without the express written consent of the relevant SECAT Academy.

Employees must not carry out any work for another employee unless it is totally unrelated to their role within SECAT.

Employees should follow SECAT's rules on the ownership of intellectual property or copyright created during their employment that may from time to time be stated. Intellectual property is a general term that includes inventions, creative writings and drawings. If these are created by the employee during the course of employment, then as a general rule they belong to the employer (i.e. SECAT). However, various acts of parliament cover different types of intellectual property and each situation would be considered on its merits.

## **7 Personal Interests**

Employees must declare to their Headteacher any financial or non-financial interests that they consider could bring about conflict with SECAT's interests

## **8 Separation of roles during Tendering**

### **8.1 Contractors**

All relationships of a business or private nature with external contractors, or potential contractors, should be made known to the relevant Headteacher. Orders and contracts must be awarded on merit, by fair competition against other tenders (i.e. contract standing orders), and no special favour should be shown to businesses run, by, for example, friends, partners or relatives, in the tendering process. No part of the local community should be discriminated against.

Employees who engage or supervise contractors or have any other official relationship with contractors and have previously had or currently have a relationship in a private domestic capacity with contractors, should declare that relationship to the appropriate Headteacher.

Employees who are privy to confidential information on tender or costs for either internal or external contractors should not disclose that information to any unauthorised party or organisation.

If it comes to the knowledge of any employee that the Academy: -

- has entered into, or propose to enter into, any contract in which the employee has any pecuniary interest, whether directly or indirectly, or
- is considering making a subscription, contribution or a concession to any club, society or other organisation of which the employee is a member,

the appropriate Headteacher should be notified immediately.

## **9 Use of Financial Resources**

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

### **9.1 Hospitality and Gifts**

Employees should only accept offers of hospitality if there is a genuine need to impart information or represent SECAT in the community. Offers to attend purely social or sporting functions should be accepted only when these are part of the life of the community or where SECAT should be seen to be represented. They should be properly authorised and recorded.

Employees should not accept personal gifts from contractors and outside suppliers, except items of token value such as pens, diaries, etc. The receipt or offer of gifts other than those of token value must be reported to the relevant Headteacher. Details of the gift and the proposed method of disposal should be entered into a register. Such registers shall be inspected quarterly by a senior officer.

## **10 Sponsorship - Giving and Receiving**

Where an outside organisation wishes to sponsor or is seeking to sponsor a SECAT Academy, whether by invitation, tender, negotiation or voluntarily, the basic conventions concerning acceptance of gifts or hospitality apply. Particular care must be taken when dealing with contractors or potential contractors.

Where a SECAT Academy wishes to sponsor an event or service, neither an employee nor any partner, spouse or relative must benefit from such sponsorship in a direct way without full disclosure to the CEO of any such interest.

## **11 Corrupt Practices**

Employees must be aware that it is a serious criminal offence 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.

The falsification of any time sheet, prime cost document or account, will be regarded as sufficiently serious to warrant dismissal of the person or persons responsible. Furthermore, erasures should not be made on any time sheet or other document. Where it is necessary to make a correction the original entry should be struck through and the alteration initialled by the employee making it.

If you become aware of any circumstances which suggest the possibility that:-

- some fraud, financial corruption or other irregularity may have occurred, in respect of school or private funds, or
- the provision of any statute or regulation has been contravened,

**Employees should report the matter to their relevant Headteacher.**



## **12 Social Networking**

Staff should be aware that the use of social networking sites (i.e. Facebook) is not an acceptable form of communication with students and is not allowed. Staff should also be aware that the inappropriate use of such sites, which could bring the reputation and standing of SECAT or colleagues within SECAT into disrepute, could lead to disciplinary action.

SECAT respects an employee's right to a private life. However, they must also ensure that confidentiality and reputation are fully protected. It therefore requires employees using social networking websites to:

- refrain from identifying themselves as working for a member of SECAT
- ensure that they do not divulge any confidential information, including any information about, or photos of, pupils - including pupil names or nicknames or anything else which could identify a pupil
- ensure that they do not conduct themselves in a way that is detrimental to the employer
- take care not to allow their interaction on these websites to damage working relationships between members of staff or other stakeholders
- not bring the Academy, or themselves as employees, into disrepute

### **12.1 Security and identity theft**

Employees should be aware that social networking websites are a public forum, particularly if the employee is part of a "network". Employees should not assume that their entries on any website will remain private. Employees should never send abusive or defamatory messages.

Employees must also be security conscious and should take steps to protect themselves from identity theft, for example by restricting the amount of personal information that they give out. Social networking websites allow people to post detailed personal information such as date of birth, place of birth and favourite football team, which can form the basis of security questions and passwords.

### **12.2 Use of Internet**

Employees will be notified whether the school they are based at does not allow access to social networking websites from its computers at any time or has added websites of the list of restricted websites (broadly "adult" websites).

SECAT also state that the internet is available for personal use ONLY during certain times (provided the employee is not claiming overtime). These times are:

- before and after work hours; and
- during the set break and lunchtimes.

All SECAT Academies reserve the right to restrict employee access to any websites and reserve the right to retain information that it has gathered on employees' use of the internet.

### **13 Use of Mobile Phones during the working day**

The use of mobile phones by staff to make/receive personal calls and/or texts, and/or web browsing during the working day is discouraged as:

- It does not set a professional and positive example to pupils.
- It can be disruptive and interrupt lessons
- It avoids the potential use of cameras for illicit photo taking
- It can be a nuisance/discourteous to colleagues
- It could be deemed a misuse of SECAT's time

Whilst in offices, can you please ensure your mobile is set on silent, as a courtesy to other., Thank you for your cooperation and support in working together and setting a good example to the students.

### **14 Smoking Policy**

In line with legislative requirements, all SECAT Academies are totally non-smoking organisations. For further information, please refer to the relevant 'Non- Smoking' policy. Please note these policies also includes electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) which are not allowed to be used on any site.

### **15 Alcohol**

The school prohibits employees consuming alcohol at any time whilst employees are in the workplace or undertaking work for the Academy.

### **16 Dress Code for Staff**

Local Governing Bodies have no desire to impose a particular style of dress or appearance but rather to set a standard appropriate within a learning environment for effective teaching and learning. Academies are a place of work for both staff and pupils. As professionals, staff must be mindful of the need to set a good example to our children of smart and suitable dress for a place of work. **Smartness and high standards of appearance are expected of all stakeholders and children at all times.**

The dress code has been introduced following discussion and consultation with staff and represents a consensus of views.

The purposes of the dress code are:

- To present a professional and positive image of the school.
- To avoid giving offence to people of different cultures or beliefs.
- To present positive role models for pupils.
- To contribute to high standards of health and safety

Staff should dress so that they inspire confidence in students and parents and all Staff are expected to wear clothing appropriate within SECAT Academies, where they act as role models for young people. Please refer to the individual Staff Operational Handbook at each site for full details

SECAT is committed to promoting diversity and will therefore respect individual preference in terms of customs, culture and tradition.

## **17 Breaches of the Code of Conduct**

Breaches of the Code of Conduct will be dealt with under SECAT disciplinary code. Similarly, if an employee has a grievance relating to any of the issues stated, or other matters not specifically stated, there may be the right to raise it under SECATs grievance procedure. If in any doubt, the employee should initially seek the advice of their appropriate Headteacher.

## **18 Staff with Children in SECAT**

A number of staff may have children in schools which form part of SECAT. These guidelines are designed to help both them and the rest of the staff ensure a professional approach is followed. Staff should avoid discussing the progress of these children in an informal manner or setting; making appointments for such dialogue through formal channels. In addition, staff with children at one of SECATs Academies should avoid becoming directly involved in the day to day events that their children encounter. They should encourage their children to be independent of their presence and impress upon them the need to follow formal procedures.

## **19 Union Membership/Professional Association**

It is sensible for you to be in membership of a recognised trade union which represents you on appropriate negotiating bodies, and you are encouraged to do so.