

Staff Code of Conduct (including Dress Code)

This policy was reviewed by the Executive Leadership Team in September 2026.

It will next be reviewed on or before September 2028.

Version	Date	Detail
1	September 2023	Newly created Policy adopted from NEO. This replaces the previous CAT and Coast Academies' policies.
2	September 2025	No changes
3	March 2026	Section 9. Data Protection wording updated.
4	September 2026	Appendix 1: New 'Standards of Dress & Appearance for staff, volunteers & visitors' added to replace previous version.

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1 Purpose

Connect Academy Trust expects the highest possible professional conduct of its employees within a positive and respectful environment. Of utmost importance is the safeguarding of the children in its care. The Trust requires its employees to understand that their own behaviour and the way they conduct themselves with their colleagues, pupils, parents, and other stakeholders, sets an important example. “You do not ‘get’ respect, you earn it.” The aim of this Code of Conduct 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 the Trust’s Disciplinary Procedure, Teachers’ Standards and the statutory guidance Keeping Pupils Safe in Education.

- 1.1 The Trust expects the highest possible professional conduct within a positive and respectful environment. 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 or Headteacher.
- 1.2 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 agency workers and self-employed contractors 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 (see the Trust’s Disciplinary Procedure).

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

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

- 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 school 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 pupils
- having favourites;
- taking photographs of pupils on their mobile phone;
- engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door; or,
- using inappropriate sexualised, intimidating or offensive language.

3.4 To do this, employees must have fully read and understood the Trust's Child Protection Policy, be aware of our systems for keeping pupils safe and must follow the guidance in these policies at all times.

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

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.
- Take responsibility for their own actions and behaviour. The use of foul and abusive language will not be tolerated.

5 Health and Safety

All employees must ensure that they:

- Familiarise themselves with the Health and Safety statements produced by the Trust.
- Read and understand the Trust'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.
- Comply with any hygiene requirements.
- Comply with any accident reporting requirements.
- Never act in a way which might cause risk or damage to any other members of the Trust 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 sets the required standard for conduct at our 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 Trust and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school, by:
- Treating others 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 Trust property and facilities. Illegal, inappropriate or unacceptable use of school equipment or communication systems may result in disciplinary action being taken against the employee.

7 Tackling discrimination

- 7.1 Employees are required to understand the types of discrimination and bullying that pupils and colleagues may be subject to. Employees are required to have read and understood our Equality and Diversity Policy and Anti-Harassment & Bullying Policy.
- 7.2 Employees must not ignore any form of discrimination. This includes inappropriate jokes and banter. Employees must positively promote equality and diversity and inclusion at all times.

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 Headteacher 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 Headteacher 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.

If an employee is ever in doubt about what information can or cannot be disclosed, they should speak to the Headteacher. As part of the application of this Policy, the Trust may collect, process and store personal data in accordance with our data protection Policy. We will comply with the requirements of **Data Protection Legislation** in compliance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018, as amended, in the collecting, holding and sharing of information in relation to our workforce. Records will be kept in accordance with our Privacy Notice for Employees, Agency Workers, Governors and Trustees, our Retention and Destruction Policy and in line with the requirements of Data Protection Legislation.

- 9.2 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.
- 9.3 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 to view on the staff portal.

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.
- 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 the Headteacher.
- 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 Trust's Behaviour Policy using strategies appropriate to the circumstance and situation.

12 Social contact with pupils and social media

- 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 Headteacher.
- 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 Trust Schools are part of their local community and we recognise that as members of the community, employees will come into contact with pupils outside of the school. We expect staff to use their professional judgement in such situations and to report to the Headteacher any contact that they have had with a pupil, outside of school, that they are concerned about or that could be misinterpreted by others.
- 12.4 Employees should read, understand and follow the Trust's Social Media Policy (2026) and adhere to the IT Acceptable Use Agreement at all times.

13 Photography, videos and other images/media

Many educational activities involve recording images and videos. These may be undertaken for displays, publicity, to celebrate achievement and to provide records of evidence of an activity. Under no circumstances should employees use their personal equipment to take images of pupils on behalf of the Trust. Employees will need to check that consent has been obtained from the relevant parents before publishing images of any pupils.

14 Working one to one with pupils

14.1 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 school.
- 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.

15 Curriculum

15.1 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.

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

16 Transporting Pupils

Please refer to the Trust's Driving at Work Policy which includes Risk Assessments.

17 Financial Inducements including Gifts and hospitality

Employees are expected to familiarise themselves and comply with, the Trust's financial regulations as set out in its Finance Policy. For guidance on receiving gifts and hospitality, please refer to Section 11 of the Policy.

Staff should not give gifts to pupils unless this is part of a recognised practice in line with the Trust's Behaviour Policy.

18 Declaration of interests

Employees are required to declare their interests, both personal and financial, where the group or organisation they are affiliated with would be in conflict with the ethos of the Trust. Failure to make a relevant declaration of interests would be a serious break

of trust and therefore if employees are in any doubt about a declaration, they are advised to contact the Headteacher or their Trade Union.

19 Keeping within the law

19.1 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.

19.2 Employees must ensure that they:

19.2.1 Uphold the law at work;

19.2.2 Never commit a crime away from work which could damage public confidence in them or the 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, income support, housing or other benefit claims)
- breaching copyright on computer software or published documents
- sexual offences which will render them unfit to work with pupils or vulnerable adults
- crimes of dishonesty which render them unfit to hold a position of trust.

19.2.3 Write and tell the Headteacher (or CEO if they are the Headteacher) immediately if they are questioned by the police, charged with, or convicted of, any crime whilst they are employed at the Trust (this includes outside of their working hours). The Headteacher/CEO will then need to consider whether this charge or conviction damages public confidence in the Trust or makes the employee unsuitable to carry out their duties.

20 Conduct outside of work and at work related functions

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

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

20.3 We therefore expect employees to make us aware immediately of any such situations that have happened outside of the school.

- 20.4 Employees are required to demonstrate responsible behaviour at work-related functions and work-related social events that take place outside normal work hours and to act in a way that will not have a detrimental effect on our reputation.
- 20.5 Staff must not behave in a way outside work that may impact on their suitability to work with pupils. This includes behaviour which does not directly involve a child. 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 pupils 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).
- 20.6 We therefore expect employees to make us aware immediately of any such situations that have happened outside of the school.

21 Agency workers

- 21.1 We will investigate allegations made against agency workers with the co-operation 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.
- 21.2 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.

22 Review

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



STANDARDS OF DRESS AND APPEARANCE FOR STAFF, VOLUNTEERS AND VISITORS

1. Our Approach

As a Trust we are **empowering, principled, trailblazing and nurturing**. Our dress and appearance should reflect these values and support us in being positive role models for every child.

Empowering

We dress in a way that enables both staff and children to feel confident, capable and ready to learn.

- Comfortable, practical clothing that supports active teaching and learning.
- Dress that promotes confidence, professionalism and approachability.

Principled

We uphold high standards and model professionalism in everything we do.

- Clean, neat and appropriate appearance.
- Clothing suitable for a professional educational environment.
- No offensive, discriminatory, inappropriate or revealing clothing, slogans or imagery.

Trailblazing

We embrace innovation and modern practice while maintaining professionalism.

- Smart-casual dress appropriate for a primary setting.
- Flexibility to adapt clothing to different roles and activities
- Professional judgement over rigid rules.

Nurturing

We create safe, inclusive and supportive environments where children can thrive.

- Clothing suitable for working closely with children, including floor work and outdoor learning.
- Safe, practical footwear.
- Appearance that supports positive relationships and public confidence.

2. Principles

All staff, volunteers and visitors are expected to present a professional appearance that:

- Reflects their role as positive role models for children.
- Supports a safe, inclusive and effective learning environment.
- Maintains public and professional confidence in the school and wider Trust.

Professional judgement should be applied to ensure dress is appropriate to:

- The age and needs of pupils, including EYFS/N
- The activities being undertaken.
- The practical demands of the school day.

Final decisions regarding suitability of dress and appearance rest with Headteachers and the ELT.

3. General Expectations

Staff should always be:

- Clean, neat and well-presented.
- Dressed appropriately for a professional educational setting.
- Comfortable and able to carry out their duties effectively.

Smart-casual dress is appropriate for most roles. However, clothing and appearance must not:

- Be offensive, discriminatory or display inappropriate slogans or imagery.
- Be excessively revealing or likely to cause embarrassment or misunderstanding.
- Present a health and safety risk.
- Undermine professional standards or relationships.

4. Adapting Dress to Role

Recognising the practical nature of primary education, staff may wear practical and smart-casual clothing suitable for:

- Working at floor level.
- Outdoor learning.

- Physical interaction with children.
- Messy or active activities.

Examples of suitable clothing include:

- Comfortable trousers, dresses or skirts suitable for movement.
- Polo shirts, smart tops or knitwear.
- Layers for outdoor learning.
- Flat or low-heeled footwear appropriate for active roles.

More formal business wear may occasionally be expected for:

- Formal meetings.
- External visitors.
- Inspections, audits or significant events.

The Trust recognises that there may be occasions when staff require temporary or on-going flexibility in dress to support their health, wellbeing or medical needs. This may include for example, pregnancy, menopause, menstrual health conditions or other medical circumstances. Reasonable adjustments will be considered to enable staff to remain comfortable whilst maintaining professional standards.

5. Role-Specific Expectations

Staff should dress appropriately for their role and activities, including:

- PE and outdoor learning staff wearing suitable sportswear and trainers.
- Early Years/similar staff wearing practical clothing suitable for outdoor, active and/or messy play.
- Facilities and site staff wearing protective clothing and PPE as required.

6. Footwear

Footwear must be:

- Safe and suitable for moving around a school environment.
- Appropriate for the activities undertaken.

Staff should avoid footwear that:

- Presents a trip or injury risk.
- Is impractical for active duties or emergency situations.

7. Appearance and Personal Presentation

Staff should avoid extremes in appearance that may undermine professionalism.

This may include:

- Excessive or inappropriate jewellery.
- Visible tattoos that could reasonably be considered offensive or intimidating.
- Clothing or presentation inconsistent with a professional educational environment.

Professional discretion and good judgement should always be applied.

8. Identification and Safeguarding

Lanyards and/or identification badges should be worn in accordance with school safeguarding procedures and local expectations.

9. Equity, Inclusion and Respect

The Trust is committed to equity, diversity and inclusion. This Dress Code will be applied reasonably and flexibly to respect:

- Religious dress and symbols.
- Cultural practices and identity.
- Disabilities, medical needs and protected characteristics.

Reasonable adjustments will be made where appropriate. This includes considering adjustments for colleagues experiencing menopause or menstrual health conditions where they affect comfort, wellbeing or the ability to comply with the usual dress expectations. Such adjustments will be discussed sensitively and on an individual basis.

10. Health and Safety

Staff must ensure that their dress and appearance:

- Does not compromise their own safety or the safety of pupils.
- Is suitable for the activities and environment involved.

- Meets any relevant health and safety requirements.

11. Professional Judgement and Leadership Discretion

This Dress Code is not exhaustive and cannot cover every circumstance. Where uncertainty exists, staff must seek guidance from their line manager or Headteacher.

Any concerns regarding dress or appearance will be addressed reasonably and proportionately by Headteachers or Trust ELT.

12. Remote and Virtual Working

Staff working remotely or attending virtual meetings should maintain standards of professional appearance appropriate to the context and nature of the engagement.

13. Non-Term Time / Non-Pupil Days

Dress expectations during Non-Pupil Days, holiday working or non-pupil days may be adapted at leadership discretion, provided standards remain professional, appropriate and safe.

14. A Simple Check

Before coming to work, staff and volunteers should consider:

- Is my attire professional?
- Is my attire practical for working with children?
- Is my attire safe and appropriate for my role?
- Does my appearance reflect our Trust values?

15. Review

This Dress Code will be reviewed periodically to ensure it remains appropriate, inclusive, compliant and reflective of best practice across the education sector.