



# Ponteland Academy Trust

<b>Name of Policy</b>	<b>Code of Conduct for Employees (HR)</b>
<b>Adopted Policy</b>	<b>Ponteland Academy Trust</b>
<b>Author(s)</b>	<b>AVEC Finance Partners/CP/DF</b>
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## **1. PURPOSE**

1.1 The purpose of having a Code of Conduct is to:

- To make a clear statement about the standards of conduct expected of ALL employees of Ponteland Academy Trust.
- To ensure the highest standards of conduct by identifying Trust standards which sit alongside professional codes and guidelines
- Help all employees to act in a way, which upholds Trust standards, and at the same time, protect them from criticism, misunderstanding or complaint.
- To help build trust between Ponteland Academy and the people who come into contact with those working for it.

## **2. SCOPE**

2.1 This Code of Conduct applies to:

- All employees of the Academy Trust
- All volunteers
- Individuals providing services for the Trust e.g. contractors, agencies, self-employed, and those working for the Trust as part of partnerships with the Trust.

2.2 Disregarding this Code will, in certain circumstances, result in disciplinary action being taken. This Code of Conduct forms part of the school's disciplinary rules. A serious breach of the Code will be regarded as gross misconduct. A less serious breach may result in a disciplinary warning.

2.3 All employees/volunteers will be supplied with a copy of this Code, against which their conduct will be measured.

## **3 STANDARDS AND ATTITUDE**

3.1 All employees/volunteers of Ponteland Academy Trust are expected to give the highest possible standard of service to the public and fellow employees.

3.2 The attitude of employees/volunteers in dealing with people reflects on the Trust so it is important that they are helpful, polite and courteous. People's impression of the Trust is strongly influenced by the views of the people who work for it. Whether or not employees are aware of it, others will accept the comments they make. Employees/volunteers therefore need to consider carefully the effect of what they say.

3.3 All employees/volunteers are expected to report to their manager or supervisor any perceived or anticipated impropriety, breach of procedure or policy of the Academy Trust.

3.4 Public perceptions are very important. Therefore employees/volunteers should at all times, avoid any appearance of improper conduct, which may give rise to suspicion.

3.5 In appearance as well as behaviour you should regard yourself as an ambassador for the Trust and ensure that you wear clothing that is appropriate for your duties. Clothing should be smart, formal (no jeans) and appropriate for a professional school environment.

3.6 There are a number of principles that exemplify the standards that are required. They are set out below. A number of these aspects are dealt with in more detail within this Code.

## **4. THE PRINCIPLES**

### **4.1 Honesty, Integrity, Impartiality and Objectivity**

All employees/volunteers must perform their duties with honesty, integrity, impartiality and objectivity.

### **4.2 Accountability**

All employees/volunteers must be accountable to Ponteland Academy Trust for their actions.

### **4.3 Respect for Others**

All employees/volunteers must;

- Treat others with respect
- Not discriminate unlawfully against any person; and
- Treat others professionally.

### **4.4 Stewardship**

All employees/volunteers must;

- Use any of Ponteland Academy Trust's funds entrusted to or handled by them in a responsible and lawful manner; and
- Not make personal use of property or facilities of Ponteland Academy Trust unless properly authorised to do so.

### **4.5 Personal Interests**

All employees/volunteers must not in their official or personal capacity

- Allow their personal interests to conflict with Ponteland Academy Trust requirements; or
- Use their position improperly to confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person

### **4.6 Declaring Interests**

All employees/volunteers must comply with any of Ponteland Academy Trust requirements:

- To declare interests; and
- To declare hospitality, benefits or gifts received as a consequence of their employment.

### **4.7 Openness**

All employees/volunteers must NOT:

- Disclose information given to them in confidence by anyone, or information acquired which they believe is of a confidential nature, without the consent of a person authorised to give it, or unless they are required by law to do so; and
- Prevent another person from gaining access to information, which law entitles to that person.

#### **4.8 Duty of Trust**

All employees/volunteers must at all times act in accordance with the trust that parents and the public is entitled to place in them.

#### **4.9 Safeguarding**

All employees/volunteers must undertake their work in accordance with requirements laid down (for their job) in support of Ponteland Academy Trust duties for safeguarding children and young people.

### **5. CONFIDENTIALITY AND DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION**

5.1 Ponteland Academy Trust recognises the importance of an open, transparent culture with clear communication and accountability. It is the Trust's aim to be as open as possible about all its activities. The law requires that certain types of information must be available to auditors, government departments, service users and the public. Different rules apply in different situations. If an employee/volunteer is in any doubt as to whether they can release any particular information, they should always check with the Head Teacher first.

5.2 The confidentiality of information received in the course of an employee's/volunteer's duties should be respected and must never be used for personal or political gain. Employees/volunteers must not knowingly pass information on to others who might use it in such a way. If an employee/volunteer believes that information should be disclosed in the public interest, they should follow the Trust's Whistle Blowing Policy before doing so. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action being taken.

5.3 Employees/volunteers must not communicate confidential information or documents to others who do not have a legitimate right to know. Furthermore, information which is stored, whether on computer systems or manually, must only be disclosed in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.

5.4 Information given in the course of an employee's/volunteer's duties should be accurate and fair and never designed to mislead.

### **6. CONFIDENTIAL REPORTING / WHISTLE BLOWING POLICY**

6.1 Employees/volunteers are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within the Trust. However, they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or to the Trust. They may also fear harassment or victimisation. In these circumstances it may be easier to ignore the concern rather than report what may just be a suspicion of malpractice.

6.2 Ponteland Academy Trust is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with that commitment employees, and those associated with Ponteland Academy Trust, who have serious concerns about any aspect of the Trust's work are expected to come forward and voice those concerns. It is recognised that most cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis.

6.3 In order to ensure that this can happen the Trust has adopted a Whistle Blowing policy, a copy is available to staff on the shared network.

6.4 The Whistle Blowing Policy is intended to encourage and enable employees to raise

serious concerns within Ponteland Academy Trust rather than overlooking a problem or 'blowing the whistle' outside.

- 6.5 The policy is in addition to Ponteland Academy Trust's complaints procedures and other statutory reporting procedures.

## **7. POLITICAL NEUTRALITY**

Employees/volunteers must not allow their own personal or political opinions to interfere with their work and must at all times perform their duties in an objective manner.

## **8. RELATIONSHIPS**

- 8.1 Ponteland Academy Trust is firmly committed to equal opportunities and believes that every employee has the right to work in a safe environment without the fear of discrimination, harassment or abuse. The Trust will not tolerate or condone harassment or bullying in any form.

### **Appointment of Staff**

- 8.2 It is unlawful for appointments to be made on the basis of anything other than the ability of the candidate to undertake the duties of the post. Employees involved in making appointments should do everything possible to ensure that these are made on the basis of merit and in accordance with the Academy Recruitment Policy.
- 8.3 In order to avoid any possible accusation of bias, employees must not become involved in any appointment or any other decision relating to the discipline, promotion, pay or conditions of another employee, or prospective employee, if they are a relative of an applicant, or have a close personal relationship with him or her, nor where they have the opportunity to benefit, directly or indirectly, from an appointment without the express prior approval of the Head Teacher.
- 8.4 In this paragraph 'relative' means a spouse, partner, parent, parent-in-law, son, daughter, stepson, stepdaughter, child of a partner, brother, sister grandparent, grandchild, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece, or the spouse or partner of any of the preceding person.
- 8.5 'Partner' means a member of a couple who live together or who are involved in a romantic relationship.
- 8.6 'Close personal relationship' would include a person not employed by the Trust with whom an employee has a close business connection.
- 8.7 Personal relationships between colleagues who work together can give rise to conflicts of interest. Therefore, employees who have entered into a close personal or romantic relationship with a colleague are required to disclose this fact to the Head Teacher.
- 8.8 This information should only be considered to ensure that the existence of the relationship does not impact on the smooth running of Ponteland Academy Trust.

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

- 8.9 Employees/volunteers should always remember their responsibilities to the community they serve and ensure courteous, efficient service delivery to that community in

accordance with the policies of the Trust. This may involve dealing with troubled, angry and frustrated parents and carers, although employees are entitled not to be expected to place their personal health, safety and welfare at risk.

### **Contractors**

- 8.10 All relationships of a business or personal nature with external contractors or suppliers, or potential contractors or suppliers, must be declared to the Head Teacher at the earliest opportunity.
- 8.11 Orders and contracts must be awarded in accordance with contracting procedures and rules and no special favour should be shown to businesses run by, for example, friends, partners or relatives.

## **9. OUTSIDE COMMITMENTS**

- 9.1 Ponteland Academy Trust recognises that employees are entitled to their private lives. In general, an employee's choices and action outside of work are not the Trust's concern. However, in order to protect both the employee/volunteer and Ponteland Academy Trust there are exceptions to this.

## **10. CONDUCT**

- 10.1 Whether in or outside work, employees/volunteers must not conduct themselves in any way that creates doubt as to their suitability for their post or brings Ponteland Academy Trust into disrepute. This includes conduct which would bring into question their suitability to work with children.
- 10.2 All adults working with children and young people have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of children and young people. It is therefore expected that they will adopt high standards of personal conduct in order to maintain the confidence and respect of parents, the public in general and all those with whom they work.
- 10.3 There may be times, for example, when an adult's behaviour or actions in their personal life come under scrutiny from local communities, the media or public authorities. This could be because their behaviour is considered to compromise their position in the workplace or indicate unsuitability to work with children or young people. Misuse of drugs, alcohol or acts of violence would be examples of such behaviour.
- 10.4 Adults in contact with children and young people should therefore understand and be aware that safe practice also involves using judgement and integrity about behaviours in places other than the work setting.
- 10.5 The behaviour of an adult's partner or other family members may raise similar concerns and may require careful consideration by the Trust as to whether there may be a potential risk to children and young people in the workforce.

## **11. ADDITIONAL WORK**

- 11.1 Employees are able to take on work in addition to their existing contract of employment, providing it does not conflict with the performance of their duties in the role for which they are employed. In order to assess whether or not there might be a conflict, employees are required to inform the Head Teacher before taking any outside employment.

- 11.2 Ponteland Academy Trust will not unreasonably stop employees from undertaking additional employment, but this employment must not, in the Trust's view, conflict with or be detrimental to its interests, or weaken public confidence in the conduct of its business.
- 11.3 An employee who wishes to take on additional work must ensure that:
- (a) The additional hours worked do not contravene the Working Time Regulations or otherwise give the Trust cause for concern about health and safety at work. Details of the Working Time Regulations are available on request.
  - (b) The outside work does not place the employee in a position where their duties and private interests conflict.
  - (c) The outside work does not damage, or potentially damage, public confidence in Ponteland Academy Trust's conduct or business

## **12. BOOKS, TRAINING MATERIALS AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS**

- 12.1 If an employee writes a book for payment on subjects relating to their work for the Trust they must seek the permission of the Trust in writing through the Head Teacher.
- 12.2 Ponteland Academy Trust retains intellectual property rights for work undertaken by employees. Research, reports, designs, drawings, software and other developments or similar work, when created in the course of an employee's normal duties, remain the property of the Trust. These should not be removed from Ponteland Academy Trust's premises or passed on to third parties by any employee acting in a private capacity without the express consent of the Head Teacher.

## **13. PATENTS AND INVENTIONS**

- 13.1 Any matter, or thing capable of being patented under the Patents Act 1977, made developed or discovered by an employee, either alone or with others, whilst in the performance of their duties should be disclosed to the Trust through the Head Teacher, subject to the provisions of the Patents Act, it will belong to and be the absolute property of Ponteland Academy Trust.
- 13.2 Employees must not undertake private or personal work, paid or unpaid, of any description in working hours or on Ponteland Academy Trust premises unless the Head Teacher has given them specific permission. Where approval is given, any payments will be made in accordance with Ponteland Academy Trust's Pay Policy.

## **14. REFUSAL OF A REQUEST TO TAKE ON ADDITIONAL WORK**

- 14.1 If an employee has their request to take on additional work refused and wishes to challenge this, they should speak to their Head Teacher or consider raising a grievance under the Academy Trust's Grievance Procedure.

## **15. COMPUTER USE**

- 15.1 Ponteland Academy Trust wants employees/volunteers to use computers to the full and to feel competent and comfortable about doing so. However, it is essential that computers be used appropriately. Any reference to computers should be taken to mean all computer equipment and any associated technology.

## **16. MISUSE OF COMPUTERS**

- 16.1 The misuse of computers is a serious matter and may result in disciplinary and, where appropriate, legal action being taken.
- 16.2 Guidance documents exist within Ponteland Academy Trust in relation to the use of computers and information technology.
- 16.3 Private use of Ponteland Academy Trust's facilities, such as computers (including use of the internet), stationery and fax machines, is governed by these documents. Employees/volunteers should not arrange to receive correspondence, telephone calls and fax messages within the Trust related to outside work or private interests.
- 16.4 An employee who is aware or suspects that abuse of computers, email or the internet is taking place is under a duty to report this immediately under the Trust's Whistle Blowing Policy.
- 16.5 Ponteland Academy Trust will monitor the use of computers, etc without notice. A record of any sites accessed by staff is automatically stored on the system and may be examined later if misuse is suspected.

## **17. USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES**

- 17.1 The growing popularity of personal web logs (blogs) and social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, may raise issues for Ponteland Academy Trust, particularly where employees choose to write about their work and Ponteland Academy Trust in which they are employed.
- 17.2 Employees/volunteers should ensure that the content of their blogs/social networking sites does not bring the Trust into disrepute or breach their obligations in relation to confidentiality and appropriate behaviour.
- 17.3 Employees/volunteers should not access personal blogs/social networking sites during working hours. When accessing such sites outside working hours employees are advised not to write about their work or make reference to Ponteland Academy Trust on external web pages. Where an employee/volunteers chooses to do so he/she should make it clear that the views expressed are his/hers only and do not reflect the views of the Trust. In addition, employees/volunteers must adhere to the rules below.
- 17.4 Employees/volunteers must not:
  - Disclose any information that is confidential to Ponteland Academy Trust or any third party or disclose personal data of information about any individual/colleague/pupil/parent which could be in breach of the Data Protection Act;
  - Disclose any information which is not yet in the public arena;
  - Post illegal material, e.g. material which incites racial hatred;
  - Link their own blogs/personal web pages to Ponteland Academy Trust's website;
  - Include any information, sourced from Ponteland Academy Trust, which breaches copyright;
  - Make defamatory remarks about Ponteland Academy Trust's colleagues, Governors, pupils and parents;
  - Publish any material or comment that could undermine public confidence in the individual as an employee/volunteer of Ponteland Academy Trust or in their position of trust within the community; and/or

- Misrepresent Ponteland Academy Trust by posting false or inaccurate statements about the work of the Trust.

## **18. PERSONAL INTERESTS**

- 18.1 Employees/ volunteers may have a variety of personal interests, which may from time to time impact on their role for Ponteland Academy Trust. To protect the Trust and the employee/volunteers from any accusations of wrong doing, Ponteland Academy Trust has in place a number of safeguards which demonstrate that these interests are not allowed to influence the way Ponteland Academy Trust conducts its business.
- 18.2 Whatever an employee's/volunteer's role within the organisation, they must declare to the Head Teacher any financial or non-financial interests which could bring about conflict with Ponteland Academy Trust's interests.
- 18.3 If employees/volunteers are in any doubt about a potential conflict of interest, they should bring the matter to the attention of the Head Teacher so that a decision can be made as to how best to proceed.
- 18.4 Employees/volunteers must not make, or become involved with, any official or professional decisions about matters in which they have a personal interest.

## **19. GIFTS, HOSPITALITY and SPONSORSHIP**

- 19.1 A potential source of conflict between public and private interests is the offer of gifts, hospitality, sponsorship or benefits in kind to employees/volunteers in connection with their official duties. It is important to avoid any suggestion of improper influence.

## **20. GIFTS GENERALLY**

Casual gifts offered to employees/volunteers by contractors, organisations, firms, parents and carers or individuals such as calendars, diaries, pens, food, drink, flowers and other small gifts need not be declared. The general rule is that a gift below the value of £40.00 does not need to be declared. However, it will not be appropriate to accept a gift below that value if it is more than minimal and may be perceived as an inducement. Refer to the Academy Policy Statement on Gift and Hospitality.

- 20.1 In cases where employees/volunteers are given alcoholic beverages as gifts they need to ensure that they do not contravene Academy Policy.
- 20.2 Employees/volunteers should decline any personal gift offered to them, or to a member of their family, with a value of £40.00 or over by any person or organisation having dealings with Ponteland Academy Trust.
- 20.3 When a gift needs to be refused, this should be done with tact and courtesy, because the offer of gifts is common custom and practice in the commercial world, particularly at Christmas time. If the gift is simply delivered to Ponteland Academy Trust, there may be a problem returning it, in which case it should be reported immediately to the Head Teacher.
- 20.4 The Headteacher will keep a register of all gifts and hospitality offered to employees where the value exceeds £40.00 or when a gift was offered and declined.
- 20.5 The following checklist of questions should help staff to decide whether a gift or an

offer of hospitality should be accepted or tactfully rejected:

- Is the donor, or event, significant in the community or in the Trust's area?
- Are you expected to attend because of your position in the community?
- Will the event be attended by others of a similar standing in the community?
- What is the motivation behind the invitation?
- Would acceptance of the invitation be, in any way, inappropriate or place you under pressure in relation to any current or future issue involving the Trust?
- Could you justify the decision to the Trust, press and public?
- Is the extent of the hospitality or the nature of the gift reasonable and appropriate?
- How will you respond to the hospitality?
- Are you comfortable with the decisions?

## **21. Incidental Perquisite**

### **21.1 General Rules**

A Department of Education representative explained to the Key [online resource] that it is up to school/academy Headteacher and governing body to decide how to spend the delegated budget/GAG appropriately.

The academy must ensure it delivers good value in the use of public resources. Where a gesture of flowers, alcohol or hospitality would be considered to receive broad, public support, the Trustee Board supports the Headteacher in arranging a gift for staff, governors or members of the community.

The Headteacher will, at all times, consider value for money, connected parties and in what should be an open and transparent process. This includes providing free refreshments in the staff room or during parents' evenings.

The school/academy staff must not receive gifts, hospitality or benefits of any kind from a third party which might be seen to compromise their personal judgement or integrity. Staff are asked to immediately report any offer or receipt of such gifts to the Bursar to be recorded in the Register of Gifts and Hospitality.

It is normal practice for Customers/Suppliers/Parents to issue members of staff with token gifts at various points of the year e.g. Christmas and summer term ends. These gifts (e.g. diaries, pens, wine and gift vouchers) are tokens of appreciation and it is clear that the items are not intended to influence the progression of their child nor the awarding of a purchasing contract. As a rule, where the gift is of this nature and is below £40 in value there is NO REQUIREMENT TO DECLARE.

### **21.2 Celebration**

Gifts, such as flowers, chocolates, and vouchers, up to a value of £30 per item may be given at the discretion of the Headteacher to:

- Volunteers who make a regular or a significant one-off contribution to their school
- Governors/Directors who have made significant contributions to the governance of the School
- Staff, for compassionate reasons such as long term illness or bereavement
- Staff who have contributed above and beyond their contracted duties

Any gifts above the stated amounts, or outside these circumstances, must be authorised by the Headteacher or School Manager.

Administrators are responsible for recording any gifts given by their school/academy in the school's Register of Gifts and Hospitality. The School Manager is responsible for recording any gifts given to trustees, volunteers and staff.

### **21.3 Donations**

There will be on occasion times when donations are given to the school/academy e.g. by parents or the schools' Friends Association. When donations are received, unless there are grounds to decline the donation (as outlined below), the reason for the donation, and who the donation was given by, should be identified and the money should then be allocated against the activity or purpose for which it was originally donated. If a donation is received without a specific area or activity identified then the matter will be discussed by the Bursar and Headteacher who will then decide how the donation will be spent.

**The school/academy reserves the right to decline a donation if:**

- The donation has conditions attached that are inconsistent with the school/academy objects;
- The donation has conditions attached that are inconsistent with procurement best practice or legislation;
- The donation has conditions attached that are inconsistent with the principle that a donation is a contribution that voluntarily transferred by one person to another without compensation or benefit flowing from the giver to the receiver.
- The source of the donation or its intended purpose are inconsistent with the characteristics as laid out in the academy's Master Funding Agreement or Supplemental Funding Agreements
- The source of the donation or its intended purpose are likely, in the view of the Headteacher, to draw adverse publicity for the school/academy or bring it into disrepute.

### **21.4 Hospitality**

**The following principles should be followed in deciding whether or not to accept hospitality:-**

- Staff and governors/directors should ask themselves whether members of the public, knowing the facts of the situation, could reasonably think that they might be influenced by the hospitality offered. If the answer is yes, the hospitality should be declined. In making judgements, relevant facts to take into account include the person or organisation offering the hospitality, its scale and nature, and its timing in relation to decisions to be made by the school/academy.
- Care should be taken to avoid situations in which an individual governor/director or member of staff is the sole person invited to partake of hospitality or where it creates a pattern of receiving hospitality from that organisation.
- School/academy provides tea and coffee for all staff in the staffroom.
- School/academy provides refreshments in the staff room during parents' evenings.

Examples of when it may be proper to accept hospitality (always depending upon the particular circumstances) are as follows;

- a) Attendance at conferences, events and demonstrations of equipment organised by outside bodies where there is a service interest.
- b) Attendance at events or functions where there is a demonstrable need for the Academy (school) and/or Trust to be represented to either give or to receive information, network or to participate as part of the Academy (school) and/or Trust corporate image and profile.
- c) Attendance at events or functions which are part of the civic, cultural or sporting life of the Academy (school).
- d) Working lunches where this is an appropriate and effective way of conducting business and the refreshments provided are on a reasonable level.

Overnight hospitality linked to any of the above should be declared to either the Headteacher or Chair of Directors before being accepted.

These policies may be subject to review from time to time. Any subsequent change in the Policy Statement will be notified to affected employees.

***This is also documented in the Financial Regulations manual.***

## **22. EQUALITY**

22.1 All members of the local community, parents and carers, and other Ponteland Academy Trust employees have a right to be treated with fairness and equity. Employee's/volunteers should become familiar with and observe all of Ponteland Academy Trust's policies relating to equality issues in addition to the requirements of the law.

## **23. TENDER PROCEDURES**

23.1 Employees should exercise fairness and impartiality when dealing with all customers, contractors and subcontracts.

23.2 Employees responsible for engaging or supervising contractors and who have previously had, or currently have, a relationship in a private or domestic capacity with a particular contractor, must declare that relationship to the Head Teacher.

23.3 If employees become privy to confidential information on tenders or costs relating to external contractors, they must not disclose that information to any unauthorised person or organisation.

23.4 All employees must ensure that no special favour is shown to current, or recent former, employees or their partners, close relatives or associates in awarding contracts to businesses run by them or employing them in any capacity.

## **24. FINANCIAL PROCEDURE RULES**

24.1 All employees involved in financial activities and transactions on behalf of the Trust, including budgetary control, payments of accounts, payments of salaries and wages, petty cash and orders of works, goods or services must follow Ponteland Academy Trust's Financial Procedures policy.



## Appendix B - ENTERTAINMENT EXPENSES REGISTER

This form should be completed and returned to the School Manager/Accounting Officer prior to any event.

Section one of this form should be completed (either in electronic or paper form), in accordance with the Gifts, Hospitality and Entertaining Policy.

**SECTION ONE: Details of the entertaining event** – this section must be completed by the Staff Member undertaking the entertaining.

Date of Event:

Name of Employee:

What is the reason for the event:

Employees Signature:

Date:

Authorised by:

.....DETACH HERE.....

**SECTION TWO:** Assessment and impact of event. Please give details, venue, cost etc (ensure receipts are attached to this section).

Employee's signature:

Date: