



Personal Relationships Policy

RELATIVES AND RELATIONSHIPS
CONCORDIA MULTI ACADEMY TRUST



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1. Document Control

Amendment History

Version No.	Date	Comments
0.1	20/12/2021	Initial Draft
0.2	11/01/2021	Reviewer updates
0.3	02/02/2022	Approver Updates
0.4	July 2023	Annual Review

Review Dates

Next Review Date
July 2024

Author(s)

Name	Role
Simon Faircloth	Chief Operating Officer

Reviewers(s)

Name	Role
Tracy Webb	Chief Executive Officer

Approver(s)

Name	Role
John Cook	HR Solicitor

2. Introduction

This policy sets out the Trusts approach and expectations regarding close personal relationships at work and aims to assist the Trust leadership team and Trustees to work sensitively with volunteers, governors, trustees, staff and job applicants to identify and resolve potential conflicts of interest which may arise as a result of a close personal relationship at work.

This policy is linked to expectations and standards of behaviour set out in the Trust's code of conduct and the Trust's financial regulations regarding close personal relationships and financial transactions.

The policy also covers the issue of bringing domestic pets and employee's children into the workplace.

The expectations in relation to standards of behaviour and the resolution of potential conflict of interests relating to close personal relationships at work also extends to cover relationships with contractors, sub-contractors, consultants, staff seconded from other organisations, agency workers, volunteers and work experience placements or those tendering for work with the Trust.

It is recognised that there will inevitably be close personal relationships at work (see the definitions section below) including those that already exist and those that develop during the course of employment/work with the Trust. Whilst not all such close personal relationships raise issues of conflict of interest, this is not always the case. This policy is intended to avoid any possible conflict of interest or accusation of bias, favouritism, prejudice or potential for breach of confidentiality. It is also intended to ensure that all employees feel confident of receiving fair treatment without the fear that a close personal relationship will influence their or other employees' treatment or broader working relationships. The same provisions should allow effective management of those occasions when close personal relationships break down, or end, so allowing both parties to maintain a professional working relationship with each other.

In order to avoid any possible accusations of bias, employees, Trustees or governors should not be involved in an appointment where they are related to an applicant or have a close personal relationship outside work with him or her. The public is entitled to have trust and confidence in the integrity of the Trust, its staff, governors, Trustees and volunteers. For this reason, the Trust also has its own Conflict of Interest and Related Parties Policy in place which it expects its teaching and support staff to follow.

Financial Regulations

Where a close personal relationship might exist between two individuals involved in financial transactions the guidance in the Trusts Finance Handbook should be followed to ensure the appropriate separation of duties, probity and other financial safeguards are followed. The Trustees must be able to satisfy itself that there are adequate checks and segregation in place to ensure that the risk of error or fraud is minimised.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure compliance with the above provisions and to prevent other problems which may arise from the employment of people in close personal relationships. The policy aims to promote an open and flexible approach to the management of such situations.

It is acknowledged that work related friendships are quite naturally formed in the workplace but especially in the small community of a school. Any employee is, therefore, expected to exercise judgement as to whether or not the friendship or relationship has developed to such an extent that it can be described as a close personal relationship which could potentially raise the issue that this policy seeks to address. It is in these circumstances that the relationship should be disclosed.

Scope

The policy will be applied to all permanent, temporary and casual employees employed within the Trust or any volunteers such as Trustees and Governors.

This Policy sets out a framework of expectations and guidance around the issue of relatives and relationships and more generally the use of the workplace as a professional environment. It is intended to cover all employees under a contract of employment within the Trust as well as governors, Trustees, agency workers and volunteers.

The areas covered by this policy are:

- ◁ Appointment of relatives and contractors/consultants to posts within the Trust
- ◁ Management of relatives employed by the Trust
- ◁ Relationships which develop during the course of employment
- ◁ Provision of work experience for relatives outside the established procedures
- ◁ Bringing children into work (other than in an emergency)
- ◁ Bringing pets into work

3. Staff and Contractors

Appointment of staff and contractors

All staff appointments or awarding of contracts must be made on the basis of merit and avoid direct and indirect discrimination. Employees should not be involved in any stage of an appointment (no matter how short-term) where they are related to an applicant or contractor or with whom they have a close personal relationship outside work. They should disclose such a relationship as soon as they become aware of a person's candidature. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action under the Trust's Disciplinary Procedure.

Deliberate omission to make such a disclosure could disqualify the candidate or contractor for appointment and if the omission is discovered after appointment, they may be liable to dismissal.

Where a relative of an employee or contractor is appointed within the same School through the proper process, the relationship should be declared to the managers of both employees and noted in their personnel files. This should be completed retrospectively for instances prior to the introduction of this policy.

There is no general bar on the appointment of anyone to a post where they would manage, or be managed by, someone to whom they are related or with whom they have a close personal relationship. Wherever possible, alternative management arrangements should be put in place to ensure compliance with the Trust's code of conduct and to address other potential problems, thereby facilitating the appointment. Only if the Chief Executive Officer considers it is not practicable to make all necessary alternative management arrangements will such an appointment be disallowed, after due consultation with the Trusts HR Advisor. It is important that the rationale for such a decision is clear and recorded in writing in case a challenge is made about that decision.

If the appointment proceeds then the Head teacher should be informed in writing and any alternative management arrangements should be fully documented.

Where the relationship is with the Head teacher then the CEO should be informed in writing and alternative management arrangements should be documented after taking advice from the Trusts HR Advisor. Only if the CEO considers it is not operationally practicable to make necessary alternative management arrangements will such an appointment be disallowed following due consultation with the Trusts HR Advisor.

Where a Governor or Trustee has an existing personal relationship with a staff member (or candidate/contractor) or such a relationship commences, they need to declare that interest to the Chair of Governors, CEO and Chair of Trustees. They should not be included in any decisions of the governors or CEO involving that member of staff (or candidate/ contractor) to avoid conflicts of interest.

Management of relatives employed by the school

Direct line management of an employee by a relative is to be avoided. Where this is not possible to achieve through re-structuring, alternative reporting lines, etc, every effort will be made to relocate one of the parties concerned.

Employees should not be involved in decisions relating to grievance, capability, discipline, suitability to work in the school workforce, promotion or pay adjustments for any other employee who is a

relative or with whom they have a close personal relationship outside work. If this situation arises, the employee must disclose their relationship and remove themselves from any discussions relating to that individual's grievance, capability, disciplinary matters, suitability to work with children or young people, promotion, or pay adjustments.

Where a Governor or Trustee has a personal relationship with a staff member and/or is related to them they should not be included in any decisions relating to grievance, capability, disciplinary matters, suitability to work with children or young people, promotion, or pay adjustments relating to that member of staff.

Relationships which develop during the course of employment

Where a relationship with a colleague develops after appointment, and this could lead to conflict of interest in the future, this should be declared at the earliest opportunity. The normal rules of conduct will apply as set out in the previous section. Failure to declare such a relationship could lead to disciplinary action.

Any relationship which develops during the course of employment, between an employee and his/her line manager, and becomes a material factor in a future conflict of interest or disciplinary matter, may become subject to any conduct or disciplinary process. For this reason, it is recommended that relationships are declared but especially so where it is deemed that as a material factor in any investigation both the employee(s) concerned should have recognised that the relationship warranted such declaration.

Wherever possible alternative management arrangements will be put in place to ensure compliance with the Trust's code of conduct and address other potential issues, such as how the situation may affect team dynamics, thus enabling both employees to remain in their posts. In cases where the relationship involves the manager/supervisor, it is appropriate for employees to discuss matters with the Head teacher or CEO. If it is not possible to put alternative management arrangements in place then the Head teacher or CEO should always seek the advice of the Trusts HR Advisor on how best to manage the situation which may include transferring to another school within the Trust.

Where the relationship with a manager or supervisor is the Head teacher then the Chair of Governors and CEO should be informed by the Head teacher of this personally. The Chair of Governors and CEO are expected to seek further advice from the Trusts HR Advisor on how best to manage such a situation and, if necessary, should also include reference to the Trusts Finance Manual.

Where the relationship with a manager or supervisor is the CEO then the Chair of Trustees should be informed by the CEO of this personally. The Chair of Trustees is expected to seek further advice from the Trusts HR Advisor on how best to manage such a situation and, if necessary, should also include reference to the Trusts Finance Manual.

Requirement to disclose a close personal relationship where no management, supervision or oversight is involved

Where a close personal relationship is formed between members of the same team or establishment which could affect working relationships, this should be disclosed in confidence to the head teacher and they must disclose to the CEO. Failure to disclose a personal relationship could leave an employee open to allegations of misconduct should subsequent issues arise.

Where the close personal relationship is with the Head teacher at a school then the Chair of Governors and CEO should be informed of this by the Head teacher personally.

Where the close personal relationship is with the CEO then the Chair of Trustees should be informed of this by the CEO personally.

Definitions

For the purpose of this policy the definition of a close personal relationship includes but is not exclusive to:

- married/civil partnership/co-habiting
- sexual/romantic partner
- children, parents, siblings, grandparents, grandchildren, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews and cousins (blood relative/relative in law/step relationship, foster or adoptive relation)
- close personal friend

All staff are expected to exercise judgement as to whether or not the friendship or relationship has developed to such an extent that it can be described as a close personal relationship which potentially raises the type of difficulties, accusations or conflict of interest that this policy and procedure seeks to address. If an employee has any doubt about whether a friendship or relationship has developed to such an extent that it can be described as a close personal relationship, they should report it to the head teacher or CEO and seek further guidance.

Failure to declare such a close personal relationship, which leads or could potentially lead to a conflict of interest situation could result in disciplinary action for the employees concerned. Declarations from staff or volunteers should be made in writing to the head teacher or if it is the head teacher to the CEO. The CEO should also notify their Chair of Trustees if they find themselves in the same circumstances.

All staff are reminded that there are additional duties to report any circumstances that could give rise to a conflict of interest as contained in the Conflict of Interest and Related Parties Policy.

The Provision of Work Experience for Relatives and Youth Placements

Official recruitment to work experience placements should always operate through the proper channels so that fair opportunities are available to all young people.

Where a request for work experience or a placement, is made to an employee directly, he/she should refer the individual to the existing arrangements to deal with such requests or inform the Head teacher or CEO if this proves difficult.

Bringing Children into the Workplace

It is the responsibility of employees to ensure that adequate childcare arrangements are in place whilst the employee is engaged in working activities. However, the Trust recognises that there may be occasions when childcare arrangements fail and an employee may have to bring their child into work in order to cancel prior engagements or allow for any necessary hand-over of work. This will always be at the discretion of the Headteacher or CEO.

Children who accompany their parent or carer on a brief visit to Trust premises do not present an issue unless they are exposed to health and safety risks in that particular environment. In cases

where a child does accompany an employee, the employee must accept responsibility for the welfare of the child and minimise disruption to the normal flow of work.

Children in the Workplace

Where the child of an employee, volunteer, Trustee or Governor has a child at the school they must not deal with any issues relating to their own child to avoid perception of favouritism or any other negative impacts.

Bringing Pets into work

We recognise the benefits of encouraging children to engage with the whole created world. It is therefore permissible, with the agreement of the Headteacher or CEO, to bring pets to work but any such visits must be covered by a risk assessment. Owners who regularly bring their pets to school must have public liability insurance. All owners must take full responsibility for their pets whilst on school premises and must dispose of all waste. This clause will be subject to review should any child have an allergy to animal dander.

Whistleblowing

Where a member of the Trust feels that there is a breach of this policy then they should report this to their line manager or as set out in the Trust Whistleblowing policy.