



Relationships at Work Policy

A WCF Policy; adopted by Matchborough First School Academy

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1. Scope and purpose of the policy

The purpose of this Policy is to provide guidance to all staff regarding personal relationships within the work environment.

The school recognises the importance of preserving the integrity of professional relationships between members of staff. Whilst most social and personal relationships need not present a difficulty and can be entirely beneficial in that they promote good working relationships and trust, it is recognised that there will be particular circumstances where staff members concerned will need to withdraw from certain situations in order to protect themselves, the school and its pupils from any possible criticism of unfair bias.

In particular, it is important to recognise that relationships at work can leave staff vulnerable to allegations of bias or coercion in safeguarding matters.

This Policy is in place to minimise these risks.

The purpose of the policy is therefore to:

- Protect members of staff from allegations;
- Avoid any actual or potential conflicts;
- Avoid misuse of authority.

2. Who is covered by the policy?

This policy covers all employees working at all levels and grades. It also applies to, consultants, contractors, casual and agency staff and volunteers (collectively referred to as staff in this policy).

3. Personnel responsible for implementing the policy

All Senior Leaders have a specific responsibility for operating within the boundaries of this policy, ensuring that all staff understand the standards of behaviour expected of them and taking action when behaviour falls below its requirements.

All staff are responsible for adhering to this policy and should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it.

4. Definition of related persons

In the context of this policy, a personal relationship is defined as follows:

- Spouse;
- Parent or child;
- Siblings;
- In-laws;
- Aunt/uncle;
- Niece/nephew
- First cousins;
- Grandparent/grandchild;
- Member of same household;
- Persons in a romantic or sexual relationship;
- Close personal friendships; and
- Significant business relationships.

The above definitions are examples of personal relationships which may give rise to conflicts of interests in the workplace. However personal relationships are not restricted to these examples and anyone who considers that they are in a potential conflict of interests should declare it as outlined in the policy below.

5. Expectations

Staff should conduct themselves at all times in ways that are consistent with their role and duties and within all school policies (i.e. The school's Code of Conduct & The Fairness & Dignity Procedure). The recruitment, selection, treatment, development and promotion of staff should be based solely on evidence and not be in any way affected by personal relationships at work.

Where personal relationships occur between members of staff, it is the responsibility of both individuals to avoid any actual or potential conflicts of interest.

Staff who are in a personal relationship must not display intimate behaviour e.g. kissing and holding hands, whilst at work and especially in the presence of pupils.

All members of staff have a responsibility to follow the terms of this policy. In cases where staff are unsure that the policy is being adhered to or where they believe a breach may have occurred or is likely to occur, the member of staff should raise the breach or potential breach with the Headteacher.

Once the matter has been raised, if it is unavoidable that the matter will need to be discussed with the members of staff involved and also with senior members of staff. However, any discussions will be undertaken with consideration to the sensitivities of the person reporting the breach and the potential impact on their working relationships.

If the member of staff involved in the actual or potential breach is a Headteacher, the member of staff concerned about the breach or potential breach should raise their concerns with the Chair of Governors.

6. Identifying and declaring a personal relationship at work

As part of the school's recruitment policy, candidates must declare on the Application Form any existing or personal relationships they have which involves an individual of the school community which may give rise to an actual or potential conflict of interest, misuse of power or unfair bias.

Staff should declare to the Headteacher any existing or new personal relationships they have with other members of staff, parents of pupils or contractors or suppliers which may give rise to an actual or potential conflict of interest, trust or breach of confidentiality. It is also appropriate that staff declare any professional relationships they have with pupils at the school i.e tutoring.

The Headteacher will treat these matters in confidence and in consultation with the member(s) of staff, find ways in which potential conflicts of interest can be avoided. The Senior Leadership Team will need to be notified of any declaration, but any such declaration will, so far as is practicable, be treated as confidential.

All declarations should be related in confidence, recorded in writing and placed on the employee's personnel file. Should there be any changes in the future, the member of staff should request that the documents should be removed from the file and destroyed.

Staff who declare a personal relationship at work, should be treated fairly and with due regard to equality of treatment issues.

Staff who are uncertain about whether there is likely to be any risk of a potential conflict of interests emerging from a personal relationship at work, should discuss the matter with the Headteacher or a member of the Senior Leadership Team in the first instance. Staff should

approach their line manager in confidence should a relationship develop that may potentially contravene the principles of this policy.

Where either a personal relationship as defined above, or a failure to comply with this policy, following investigation, results in an unfair advantage or disadvantage to either of the parties to the relationship the matter will be considered seriously by the school. This includes investigation of the above in accordance with the school's Disciplinary Procedure.

7. Personal relationships at work

In order to accommodate partners and family members working the school, some regulation is necessary where such staff are brought into closer contact, e.g. where they may be working within the same class, key stage, department/faculty or subject area.

In establishing whether there is a potential conflict of interest, Senior Leaders should consider the following:

- a) Is there any implication in relation to the safeguarding of pupils?
- b) Are there any implications in relation to the members of staff working in the same key stage/area or performing their relevant allocated roles?
- c) Are any staff likely to be made uncomfortable in their dealings with either of the two staff members because of the existence of a known personal relationship?
- d) Is a personal relationship seen to offer advantage to an employee and disadvantage to another by them feeling excluded from the relationship?
- e) Is the relationship potentially interfering with the professional conduct of School?
- f) Is the relationship potentially having a negative effect on the workings of a team?

Where there is evidence that a potential safeguarding position exists, or if there is a conflict of interest, breach of confidentiality or unfair advantage may occur as a result of staff with a personal relationship working within the same key stage/area, or in their allocated role, the Senior Leader to whom the personal relationship has been disclosed should discuss the issue with the Headteacher.

If the Headteacher or a member of the Senior Leadership Team is involved, this should be discussed with the Chair of Governors and if necessary alternative arrangements will be put in place, e.g. a change in reporting arrangements or duties or arranging for one party being

moved to another area of work or work location if appropriate in the circumstances. They should consider all such matters. In all instances any changes should be of equal status wherever possible.

8. Personal relationships at work involving a more senior role

In order to avoid any actual or potential conflict of interests, members of staff who are in a line management or supervisory role, should not be involved in:

- a) The activity or performance review, promotion or discipline or any other management activity or process involving a member of staff with whom they have a declared personal relationship
- b) The authorisation of any financial payments/decisions relating to financial matters, e.g. expense claims, salary changes or allocation of personal funding for a member of staff with whom they have a declared personal relationship. However, if the person is the budget holder then they should see the financial transaction but have additional independent authorisation.

In the recruitment, selection or appointment of any application with whom they have a declared personal relationship and every decision should be justified as fair and equitable without bias or conflict of interest.

If a member of staff believes that they may be personally adversely affected by a misuse of power, authority or conflict of interest relating to a personal relationship at work involving a line manager or supervisor, they should raise this in the first instance with a member of the Senior Leadership Team, or they may go direct to the Headteacher.

Where there is evidence that a conflict of interest, breach of confidentiality or unfair advantage may result from a personal relationship, the manager to whom the personal relationship has been disclosed should discuss the issue with the Headteacher. Consideration may be given to an alternative arrangement, e.g. a change in reporting arrangements, or duties within a team; investigating one party being moved to another area of work or work location, if appropriate in the circumstances. They should consider all such matters in confidence and consult the staff involved and notify the member of the Senior Leadership Team. In all instances, any changes should, wherever possible, be of equal status.

9. When a Relationship Breaks Down

There may be occasions when a relationship as defined, breaks down which has a potential impact on team relationships and the operation of the school. If it is envisaged that the breakdown of the relationship is or will cause ongoing workplace issues, these should be addressed sensitively in discussion with the employees with a view to the issues being resolved, where possible.

10. Personal relationships at work involving a staff member and a pupil

The school regards it as the unquestionable responsibility of staff to recognise the professional and ethical responsibilities inherent in the staff and pupil relationship, the protection of interests of pupils, respecting the trust obligation and accepting those constraints and obligations.

Members of staff are in a position of trust and must not enter into personal relationships with pupils. The school has a legal duty to report any such relationships.

It is recognised that professional relationships between staff members and pupils may exist. A professional relationship between a member of staff and a pupil is defined as one where there is an assessing, supervising, tutoring, teaching or pastoral role or a role providing any other support. Any such professional relationship must be declared to the Headteacher in accordance with the school code of conduct as below:

"You must advise your Line Manager before engaging in any other work especially if it could reasonably be seen to conflict with your employment with the school or lead to misunderstanding or criticism (for example, private tutoring of students from your school)".

If a member of staff has a child at school, is related to a child or a close family friend's child is a pupil then they need to ensure that appropriate professional boundaries are maintained to ensure there is no perceived favoritism. The JCQ provides guidance in its 'General Regulations for Approved Centres' on conflicts of interest when family members are preparing students for examinations as per page 12 - [Gen regs approved centres 23-24 FINAL-1.pdf \(jcq.org.uk\)](https://www.jcq.org.uk/Gen%20regs%20approved%20centres%2023-24%20FINAL-1.pdf)

11. Personal relationships at work involving a staff member and a parent of a pupil

It is recognised that members of staff may strike up friendships with parents.

- a) Members of staff must keep the relationship professional;
- b) Members of staff **must not** discuss school matters or other pupils or staff members.

12. Policy History

This policy is reviewed as required by the school in consultation with the recognised trade unions.

Issued	Aug 2023
Review	Jul 2026

Appendix 1

Examples of misconduct in line with this policy which could result in disciplinary action.

It is important to be clear that NO disciplinary action will be taken against a member of staff for having a relationship with another member of staff. It is only if the relationship causes a member of staff to act inappropriately that disciplinary action may be appropriate (examples as below):

- a) where a personal relationship has not been declared and results in unfair advantage or disadvantage to either party;
- b) where a staff member abuses their authority or influence to bring benefit or detriment to another individual;
- c) where a personal relationship has not been declared and brings the school into disrepute;
- d) where there has been a breach in confidentiality;
- e) Where a staff member behaves in a way that may cause difficulty or embarrassment to others, for example, arguing in the workplace or open displays of affection.

- f) Where as a result of disagreement or the breakdown of the relationship a staff member does not communicate with another member of staff or parent
- g) Where there is a general adverse impact on team dynamics and reduction in team/school morale
- h) where the conduct or behaviour of a staff member (or members) is inappropriate or breaches professional standards;

The above list should not be considered exhaustive and if as a result of an existing or previous personal relationship, an employee's actions are perceived or have been shown to be unacceptable, formal action may be taken.