



**PERSONAL
RELATIONSHIPS AT
WORK POLICY**

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1. Scope and purpose of the policy

- 1.1 The purpose of this Policy is to provide guidance to all staff at the Reach South Academy Trust regarding personal relationships within the work environment.
- 1.2 The Trust 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 Trust and its pupils from any possible criticism of unfair bias
- 1.3 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.

- 1.4 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?

- 2.1 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).
- 2.2 Third parties who have access to our electronic communication systems and equipment are also required to comply with this policy.

3. Personnel responsible for implementing the policy

- 3.1 The Board has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy, but has delegated day-to-day responsibility for its operation to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the Director of HR.
- 3.2 Responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for change to minimise risks also lies with the CEO and the Director of HR
- 3.3 All managers 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.
- 3.4 All staff are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it.
- 3.5 Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed to the same people.

4. Definition of related persons

4.1 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.

4.2 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. Good practice

5.1 Staff should conduct themselves at all times in ways that are consistent with their role and duties and within all Trust policies (i.e. Appropriate Behaviour in the Workplace Policy, Dignity at Work Policy and Equality and Diversity Policy). 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.

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

5.3 Staff who are in a personal relationship must not display intimate behaviour whilst at work and especially in the presence of pupils.

5.4 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 relevant Headteacher or the HR Team.

5.5 Once the matter has been raised, if it is unavoidable that others be informed 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.

5.6 If the member of staff involved in the actual or potential breach is a Headteacher or a member of the Senior Leadership Team, the member of staff concerned about the breach or potential breach should raise their concerns with another member of the Senior Leadership Team or they may go direct to the Director of Human Resources,

CEO, or the Trustees. Contact details can be found in the policies section of the Employee Self-Service portal.

6. Identifying and declaring a personal relationship at work

- 6.1 As part of the Trust's recruitment policy, candidates must declare on the Application Form any existing or personal relationships they have which involves an individual of the Trust community which may give rise to an actual or potential conflict of interest, misuse of power or unfair bias.
- 6.2 Staff should declare to the CEO, Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher or Departmental Director any existing or new personal relationship they have with other members of staff or contractors or suppliers which may give rise to an actual or potential conflict of interest, trust or breach of confidentiality. Alternatively where the relationship is with an employee within another school within the Trust then you can instead declare the relationship to the Director of Human Resources (email: hr@reachsouth.org) and where it is agreed there is no conflict of interest then this will be recorded centrally and there would be no requirement for the line manager to be informed.
- 6.3 The Trust CEO, Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher or Departmental Director 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.
- 6.4 All declarations should be related in confidence, recorded in writing and placed on the employee's personnel file located within the School/HQ Office, 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.
- 6.5 Staff who declare a personal relationship at work, should be treated fairly and with due regard to equality of treatment issues.
- 6.6 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, Deputy Headteacher, relevant Department Director or a member of the Senior Leadership Team where the issue may involve their immediate line manager, 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
- 6.7 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 Trust. This includes investigation of the above in accordance with the Trust Disciplinary Policy.

7. Personal relationships at work involving a more senior role

- 7.1 In order to avoid any actual or potential conflict of interests, members of staff who are in a line management or supervisory role, or in a more senior position outside the

immediate management structure (e.g., within a support service) 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.
- 7.2 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.
- 7.3 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 the next higher level of the management structure or directly with a member of the Senior Leadership Team, or they may go direct to the Director of Human Resources, CEO or the Trustees.
- 7.4 Where there is evidence that a conflict of interest, breach of confidentiality or unfair advantage may result from a personal relationship within a particular organisational structure, the manager to whom the personal relationship has been disclosed should discuss the issue with the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, relevant Department Director or a member of the Senior Leadership Team. 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.

8. Personal relationships at work not involving a more senior role

- 8.1 Whilst the School/Trust is big enough to accommodate partners and family members working within its broad organisational and geographic spread, some regulation is necessary where such staff are brought into closer contact, e.g. where they may be working within the same department, or where members of staff may be required to provide additional 2:1 support.
- 8.2 In establishing whether there is a potential conflict of interest, managers 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 departments 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/Trust business?

(f) Is the relationship potentially having a negative effect on the workings of a team?

8.3 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 department, or in their allocated role, the Department Head to whom the personal relationship has been disclosed should discuss the issue with the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, relevant Department Director or a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

8.4 If the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, relevant Department Director or a member of the Senior Leadership Team is involved, this should be discussed with the Trust CEO or Director of Human Resources and if necessary alternative arrangements will be put in place, e.g. a change in reporting arrangements or duties within the Department, 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.

9. **Personal relationships at work involving a staff member and a pupil or parent of a pupil**

9.1 The Trust 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 students, respecting the trust obligation and accepting those constraints and obligations.

9.2 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/Trust business or other pupils or staff members.

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

9.5 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 notified to the Headteacher and a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

10. Additional information

- 10.1 Any further information or advice on this process should be obtained from the Headteacher in the first instance.

11. Review of policy

- 11.1 This policy is reviewed as required by the Trust in consultation with the recognised trade unions.
- 11.2 We will monitor the application and outcomes of this policy to ensure it is working effectively.

POLICY HISTORY

Policy Date	Summary of change	Contact	Implementation Date	Review Date
September 2020	Trade Union consultation	All Recognised Trade Unions	N/A	N/A
October 2020	New policy implemented	HR	October 2020	April 2023

Appendix 1

CONFIDENTIAL DECLARATION OF PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP

This form must be completed, dated and signed by the member of staff who has, or enters into, any personal relationship as defined in the Policy on Personal Relationships at Work ("the Policy").

The form must be handed to your Headteacher, Director or a member of the Senior Leadership Team. The information contained in the form will be used to determine work schedules and positions.

The form will be held on your personnel file held by the Headteacher

Should the nature of the declared relationship change at any point, the Headteacher and a member of the Senior Leadership Team should be informed and this form will be removed from your file. The information contained in this form will be kept confidential so far as possible and as outlined in the Policy.

Employee Name:
Name of person with whom a personal relationship* exists
Nature of relationship:
Name of person with whom a personal relationship* exists
Nature of relationship:
Name of person with whom a personal relationship* exists
Nature of relationship:
Employee Signed:
Date:
For Management Use Only:
Notified to:
Signed:
Date: