



# **Relationships At Work Policy**

**BEDWELL PRIMARY SCHOOL**

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**Stevenage, Herts, SG1 1NJ**

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## **1. Introduction and scope**

The school recognises that employees who work together may form personal friendships and, in some cases, close personal relationships. While we do not wish to interfere with these personal relationships, it is necessary for the school to ensure that all employees behave in an appropriate and professional manner while at work.

This policy therefore applies to all employees regardless of their job or level of seniority including but not limited to all employees, casual workers, agency workers, apprentices, volunteers and governors.

A relationship at work can be with any of the above-mentioned parties but also includes but is not limited to parents and third-party providers.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment, and it may be amended at any time.

## **2. Definition of related persons**

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

- a family relationship (including extended family)
- a business/commercial/financial relationship
- a romantic/sexual relationship.

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

### **3. Personal relationships at work**

Whilst the school accepts that partners and family members and friends do work together within the school, some regulation is necessary.

Employees must declare any relationships that they may have with other employees, clients, contractors supplies or parents outside of the school. This may include connections such as mutual membership of social groups, tutoring, and/or family connections.

Existing or new personal relationships at work between colleagues should be declared to the Headteacher as soon as possible, especially where there is a potential for this to impact upon the work of either party (for example: a risk of allegations of bias or conflict of interest).

Employees should not assume that the school are aware of any such connections and should declare it using the declaration form connected to the code of conduct.

Any employee who has a close personal relationship with another colleague, parent, contractor, supplier, or any other party related to the school must not allow that relationship to influence their conduct while at work.

Where there is evidence that a conflict of interest, breach of confidentiality or unfair advantage may occur as a result of employees with a personal relationship working together, the Headteacher may consider an alternative arrangement, e.g., a change in reporting arrangements, or duties within a team if appropriate in the circumstances.

#### **3.1. Personal relationships with third parties**

Any employee who has a close personal relationship with a third party (such as parent, contractor, supplier, or any other party related to the school) must not allow that relationship to influence their conduct while at work.

If the employee's job allows them authority over any third party, they have a relationship with (for example if the employee has the authority to decide to whom to award contracts), the relationship must be declared to the Headteacher.

In these circumstances, the school reserves the right to transfer, or as a last resort to dismiss, the employee following consultation with them.

### 3.2. Behaviour at work

Intimate behaviour during work time, for example kissing, touching or holding hands, is expressly prohibited. This rule applies during all working time, whether at the normal workplace, at school events or on other premises.

Any breach of this rule will be regarded as a disciplinary offence leading to disciplinary action.

### 3.3. Safeguarding

Any relationships at work that create or cause a safeguarding breach will be investigated in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education and the schools disciplinary policy.

### 3.4. Identifying and declaring personal relationship at work

Existing or new personal relationships should be declared to the Headteacher.

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

Employees who are uncertain about whether there is likely to be any risk of a potential conflict of interest emerging from a personal relationship at work, should discuss the matter with the Headteacher in the first instance.

All employees have a duty to protect the school and children, any employee sees a conflict of interest, or any unfairness arise due to others having a personal relationship they must report it as soon as possible to Headteacher.

Should the conflict of interest involve the Headteacher then this should involve the Chair of Governors. In addition, should the conflict of interest involve the Chair of Governors then this should involve the Governance team.

#### **4. Process for managing personal relationships at work**

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

The Headteacher will treat these matters in confidence and in consultation with the employees and will find ways to avoid potential conflicts of interest.

All declarations should be treated in confidence, recorded in writing and kept securely. Should there be any changes in the future, the employee should request that the document should be removed from the file and destroyed (subject to potential conflict no longer being in existence).

#### **5. Personal relationships involving a more senior role**

In order to avoid any actual or potential conflict of interest, employees who are in a line management or supervisory role should ensure they are not involved in any management activity of process involving an employee they have a declared personal relationship. This includes but is not limited to:

- appraisal/performance reviews
- promotion or discipline
- authorisation of any financial payments/decisions relating to financial matters e.g., timesheets, fees payments, expense claims, salary changes or allocation of external funding for an employee with whom they have a declared personal relationship. However, if the person is the budget holder, then they should/can see the financial transaction (as part of their role) but have additional independent authorisation
- recruitment and selection - where it is not practical to remove an employee from the recruitment process, all panel members should be made aware of the personal relationship and every panel decision should be justified as fair and equitable, without bias or conflict of interest.

To avoid a situation in which an employee has managerial authority over another with whom they have a close personal relationship, the school reserves the right to elect to transfer one or both of the employees involved in the relationship to a job in another department/section/area of the school.

In these circumstances, the school will consult both of the employees and seek to reach a satisfactory agreement regarding the transfer of one or both of them.

In such a situation, if it is not possible to transfer at least one of the employees (for example if no suitable vacancies exist, or if an employee refuses to transfer), the school reserves the right to dismiss one or both employees (with notice in accordance with the employee's contract or pay in lieu of notice). Dismissal would, however, be undertaken only as a last resort in circumstances where no other course of action was reasonably open to the school.

## **6. When a relationship breaks down**

There may be occasions when a relationship as described above, breaks down and the individuals concerned remain working together. This can cause a potential impact on the direct team, wider team, school or pupils.

If it is envisaged that the breakdown of the relationship is or will cause ongoing issues, these should be addressed sensitively in discussion with the employees with a view to the issues being resolved.

## **7. Raising concerns**

If an employee believes that they may be personally adversely affected by a misuse of power/authority or conflict of interest, they should raise this with the Headteacher in the first instance.

Where any employee feels that there is a possible or actual misuse of power/authority or conflict of interest relating to a personal relationship at work they should raise this with the Headteacher in the first instance.

Where this relates to the Headteacher the employee should raise it to the next appropriate person, likely to be Chair of Governors. In addition, should the conflict of interest involve the Chair of Governors then this should involve the Governance team.

## **8. Breach of this policy**

Where there is evidence that a conflict of interest, breach of confidentiality or unfair advantage may result from a personal relationship the Headteacher may wish to consider 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.

In such a situation, if it is not possible to transfer at least one of the employees (for example if no suitable vacancies exist, or if an employee refuses to transfer), the school reserves the right to dismiss one or both employees (with notice in accordance with the employee's contract or pay in lieu of notice). Dismissal would, however, be undertaken only as a last resort in circumstances where no other course of action was reasonably open to the school.

Where there is evidence that a conflict of interest, breach of confidentiality, unfair advantage or created disadvantage has resulted from a personal relationship, the matter will be considered seriously by the school.

Breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal in accordance with the schools Disciplinary Policy.