

Code of Conduct Policy

Ambitious about Autism (AaA) and Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust (AaAST) exists to campaign for change, to make the world a more autism friendly place, to raise awareness and to provide specialist education and support for children and young people aged between 3 and 25. Whatever your role you have a key part to play in ensuring that we maintain our positive, credible reputation with all of our stakeholders and in order to maintain the highest standards of integrity & effectiveness be accountable in our work and to build and maintain good working relationships with parents/carers, pupils/students and others.

1 Principles

This code of conduct outlines what Ambitious about Autism and Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust expects of all those who work here. It should be read in conjunction with our policies and procedures. Failure to follow this code is a serious matter and can lead to disciplinary action.

Other policies to be referred to include:

- Data Protection
- Data Security
- Disciplinary
- Dignity at Work
- Drugs & Alcohol
- Equality and Diversity
- Grievance
- Health and Safety
- Flexible Working
- Personal Protective Equipment Guidance
- Social Distancing Guidance
- Special Leave of Absence
- Capability
- ICT Acceptable Use
- Social Media

2 Behaviours and Performance

We are ambitious

We invest in our people and aim high to make sure our work has the biggest impact for children or young people with autism and their families.

We are team players

We know, that leading change and making a real difference requires strong teamwork, so we work collaboratively across our entire organisation, we co-create with children and young people with autism and their families and we work in partnership with other organisations.

We are open

We strive to be open – open to new ideas, open in how we work and open in how we make decisions.

We value difference

We know that creating equal opportunity does not mean one size fits all and aim to make ourselves accessible to children and young people with autism across the spectrum, from all communities and backgrounds.

We are experts

We respect and develop the expertise of our talented staff and make sure that we are evidence based, rigorous and accountable in everything we do.

4 Equal Opportunities & Diversity

Aa/AaAST will ensure that any breaches of this code of conduct are dealt with in line with the Equalities Act.

Aa/AaAST is committed to equality of opportunity and values diversity in the workplace and in all services we deliver. It is a condition of your employment that you are familiar with and understand the Equality and Diversity Policy and actively seek to ensure that it is upheld in your area of work.

Policy Owner	Director of People	Review Date:	June 2022
Policy No.	043	Version No.	1.0

5 Confidentiality

All information about pupils, students, their families or about employees or volunteers whether oral, written or recorded electronically is strictly confidential, may only be used for the professional purposes for which they were gathered and may not be shared with third parties or other individuals except within the confines of a professional information exchange. If unsure as to whether a particular piece of information may be confidential it is your responsibility to treat it as such unless and to seek advice from your line manager before proceeding. You must follow the guidance as set out in the Data Protection and Data Security policies. Breach of either policy may lead to disciplinary action.

Any notes, photographs, reports or personal records that may be used as part of your day to day role must be stored securely and used for the purpose they were obtained only. They must be returned at the termination of any relevant project or at the termination of employment.

You might be responsible for managing or reviewing confidential information (for example pupil records). You are responsible for ensuring that you maintain security of these records and do not take them from AaA/AaAST premises in line with the detailed protocols laid out in the Data Security policy. Failure to follow these procedures can lead to disciplinary action. You may be required to sign a confidentiality agreement as an essential requirement of your role.

6 Attendance and Punctuality

Good timekeeping is essential to ensure that pupils and learners are fully supported throughout the day, that all services run efficiently, and that all staff are treated fairly. Staffing levels must remain in line with the demands of AaA and AaAST at all times of the day. Repeated or persistent lateness will be viewed as misconduct.

Staff are responsible for ensuring that they record accurately the time they arrive.

Each employee's contract defines the minimum hours of work that he/she is contractually required to work, including start time, finish time and provision for breaks.

- Employees should arrive at work early enough to enable them to begin work at their appointed start time.
- Similarly, employees are required to remain at work until the finishing time defined in their contracts, unless granted permission by their line manager to leave work before that time.
- It is accepted that some circumstances are outside an employees' control, for example if a traffic accident has caused long delays on the roads. However, a high volume of traffic causing delays that is a regular occurrence, or can reasonably be anticipated, will not be regarded as a valid reason for lateness.
- Employees also need to be aware of timekeeping while at work, in particular with respect to meetings (for example, morning briefings at School and College).

If an employee is late to work, a meeting, or other work commitment:

- The line manager should speak to the employee informally (and privately) to establish the reason for the lateness, and how the employee might be supported to achieve improvement.
- The line manager/SLT at TreeHouse School/Ambitious College/Rise School will be responsible for keeping records of lateness.

TreeHouse School, The Rise School and Ambitious College employees:

If an employee is likely to be late for work, he/she should call ahead before the contracted start time to explain the situation and give an estimated arrival time.

If an employee has three or more occasions of lateness within any six month period, AaA/AaAST may follow its disciplinary procedure.

Charity employees:

All contracts of employment state an employee's start time, and if flexibility is required on an ad hoc basis this must be agreed with the line manager.

Policy Owner	Director of People	Review Date:	June 2022
Policy No.	043	Version No.	1.0

Employees and line managers should be mindful of the service delivery and customer service needs of the organisation, and ensure that a service is provided by the department between the charity's working hours of 9am-5pm.

Day to day adhoc changes should be approved and monitored by line managers. Employees should make colleagues within their team aware of any variance in working patterns by noting this on their Outlook calendar.

If an employee is likely to be late for work, he/she should call ahead before the contracted start time to explain the situation and give an estimated arrival time.

If an employee has three or more occasions of lateness within any six month period, AaA/AaAST may follow its disciplinary procedure.

See Addendum re Covid-19

7 Dress

Clothing should be smart, practical and appropriate to your role.

Care should be taken that clothing is not revealing – this is particularly important because of the client group we work with in the Schools and at Ambitious College.

The only parts of the body that can be acceptably exposed are:

- Arms (shoulders should be covered)
- Neck and face (chest should be covered)
- Lower legs

Feet should be covered to protect you from injury (again this may depend on your role) e.g. by another person stepping on them, furniture, bikes running over feet. Footwear should be such that you are enabled to work directly with children or young people and to move swiftly and safely in all environments.

Hair should be tied back, where appropriate, and protective equipment worn, where required, to reduce the risk of injury.

Staff should not wear clothing with slogans inappropriate to their professional status and position as role models or for children, e.g. FCUK, or any reference to drug or alcohol use/abuse.

It is not acceptable to expose underwear at work.

Jeans and trainers or other casual clothes are acceptable for staff working directly with the children. There may be occasions – e.g. meetings with parents or LAs – when smarter, business clothing should be worn. Staff are expected to adopt the style of dress appropriate to representing AaA/AaAST within a given forum, and to match their style of dress to the environment (e.g. in a business environment to wear business suits and a tie if male).

Jewellery can hurt children and it is not sensible to wear anything which may injure a child or the wearer, or be easily broken. Body piercings must be covered. Ear or facial piercings should be limited to simple studs within the workplace for all those staff working directly with children.

Inappropriate dress or jewellery will be brought to the wearer's attention by his/her line manager and should be remedied as soon as is feasible and no later than the following day. In extreme cases, a staff member may be sent home. It is the responsibility of all the staff team working with someone dressed inappropriately to bring this to the wearer's attention if he/she seem not to be aware (e.g. low-cut trousers that expose flesh when seated).

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Policy Owner	Director of People	Review Date:	June 2022
Policy No.	043	Version No.	1.0

8 Press & Media

Aa/AaAST works to raise the profile of children and young people with autism and their families in the media and elsewhere. We are at times asked to comment on issues relating to our work or activities on site and in the community. Such interest is generally welcomed. However, the messages that go out to the media have to be carefully considered and should be in the very best interests of the organisation. Positive comments and open discussions can at times be distorted or misconstrued. For this reason you are asked not to talk directly to the media at any time without first contacting the Communications Team.

9 Mobile Phones

Each area of the organisation will have different rules in relation to the use of personal and work mobile phones. These should be followed at all times.

10 Social Media

Aa/AaAST has in place a comprehensive Social Media Policy which outlines which forums the organisation uses, how you can contribute and gives guidance on do's and don't with regard to both work and personal use in work time.

All employees and volunteers are required to become familiar with this policy and to follow the guidance.

11 Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing is when an employee raises a concern about malpractice or a dangerous activity that they are aware of through their work or from colleagues and raises the matter so that it may be investigated and where necessary corrected. It is important that concerns can be raised in a confidential manner with no detriment to the whistle blower. For this reason Aa/AaAST has a Whistleblowing Policy in place which outlines the steps to be taken by any employee who wishes to raise a concern. Should the concern relate to a Safeguarding matter, the Safeguarding Procedures must be followed.

12 Language

Language used in the workplace should be professional and considered (especially in areas where you are working with children or young people or which are open to the public). Sexist, racist, homophobic, language which does not promote fundamental British values ** or any other abusive language is not acceptable. Swearing is not acceptable within the School or the College, or their grounds or when you are out on Aa/AaAST business.

** fundamental British values are upheld as part of the government's Prevent Programme and refers to: democracy, rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance for those with different faiths.

13 Alcohol & Drugs

Aa/AaAST recognises the importance of the health and welfare of its employees. We realise that the misuse of alcohol and drugs is a health problem and, as such, will be treated sympathetically. However attending work or events outside of normal work hours on behalf of Aa/AaAST when under the influence of alcohol or drugs is likely to be considered as gross misconduct. Please see the Drugs and Alcohol Policy for further information.

14 Money & Donations

Employees should never put themselves under any financial obligation to individuals or organisations that might influence them in their judgement or performance of their duties.

Aa/AaAST received public and private funds to support its work and has a duty to fully account for these resources properly and effectively. You have a duty to comply with the financial procedures as laid out and appropriate to your role. All financial transactions must be properly authorised and recorded and wasteful or unnecessary expenditure must be avoided at all times.

From time to time employees may receive gifts including from funders, suppliers or parents. To ensure the highest standards of probity any gift must be notified to your line manager or team head. In respect of gifts of a value above £50 consideration will be given as to how they can best be used to benefit the organisation as a whole.

Policy Owner	Director of People	Review Date:	June 2022
Policy No.	043	Version No.	1.0

15 Resources

Valuable equipment must be stored and secured appropriately as directed. We all have a duty to ensure that good care is taken of property and finite resources at all times. This includes items in your care such as work mobile phones.

16 Relationships at Work

Pupils and students

Physical handling should be gentle but firm. Physical prompts should comprise no or minimum force. Children and young people should be prompted rather than forced to undertake tasks. Physical contact with children and young people should always be pupil or student lead and in the interest of the child or young person not the member of staff. Staff should never be negative, critical or undermining in the way they talk about pupils within or outside of their hearing. Where possible children and young People should be included in any discussion about themselves in their presence. Inappropriate discussion about the child, young person, parents/carers or other pupils or personal matters should not occur.

Parents and Carers

Relationships with parents/carers must remain professional at all times. Employees should ensure that they do not develop personal relationships that could compromise the essential professional relationship. Communications between parents and staff should, in almost all situations, take place during working hours, and should be framed in a positive and professional manner. Staff personal telephone numbers should not be given out. School/College staff should never discuss pupils or student with their parents/carers and never with the parents of another student. Further guidance on professional boundaries appropriate to role will be supported by line managers and school/college leaders.

Trustees and Governors

Relationships with trustees and Governors must remain professional at all times. Employees should ensure that they do not develop personal relationships with Trustees or Governors that could affect their professional relationship. Employees should not discuss individual pupils or students with Trustees or Governors except where essential for professional reasons.

Staff & Team Relationships

Aa/AaAST recognises that work is demanding and at times can be stressful. Good supportive relationships between colleagues are essential. Staff are expected to treat each other with courtesy and respect. Intolerance and harassment are not acceptable and will be treated seriously. Aa/AaAST is committed to operating in such a way as is compatible with confidentiality. In return, staff are expected to display a positive attitude at work.

Close personal relationships can develop between members of staff or between a member of staff and a volunteer and these should be declared and open. This is particularly important where the individuals are in the same team, where one individual in a personal relationship may be the line manager of the other or where issues of integrity or accountability may come into question. Should you find yourself in this situation you should inform your line manager.

See Addendum re Covid-19

All personal information about staff and volunteers or about those applying for roles at Aa/AaAST should remain confidential and on a strictly 'need to know' basis.

All employees are encouraged to offer each other positive feedback, constructive criticism and support. It is not acceptable to criticise a colleague or a volunteer in front of a pupil or student or their family or in front of a representative of another organisation. Communication should remain courteous and respectful with all other members of staff.

Should a grievance or dispute arise between colleagues the grievance or disciplinary procedures will be used as appropriate. Guidance in their use emphasises the importance of aiming to resolve such difficulties with more informal, open dialogue and mediation arrangements which may involve

Policy Owner	Director of People	Review Date:	June 2022
Policy No.	043	Version No.	1.0

your line manager in the first instance rather than moving directly to more formal procedures. This approach will only be appropriate in some cases.

17 Conflict of Interest

- a) You will devote the whole of your time, attention and skills to the business and affairs of AaA/AaAST. Any paid or voluntary work undertaken outside of the organisation must have the prior agreement of your line manager, and written approval from the divisional ELT member. For the avoidance of doubt, "conflict" for the purposes of this clause is understood to include both conflicts as to the nature of the work/activities undertaken and also as to the amount of time entailed. Any breach of this clause may render you liable to serious disciplinary action, which could result in your summary dismissal if the circumstances so warrant.
- b) It is a condition of employment that you do not provide voluntary or paid assistance to parents/carers of AaA/AaAST pupils or visit their homes without the prior agreement of your line manager and written approval from divisional ELT member of AaA/AaAST. Any assistance provided under such approval shall be deemed to have been provided in your capacity as an individual and not as an employee of AaA/AaAST.
- c) It is also a condition of your employment that you do not, during your term of employment, without AaA/AaAST prior written consent, directly or indirectly trade or carry on a profession on your own account or in partnership with any other person or persons or act as servant, agent, or officer of any other person, firm, company or organization without the prior agreement of the line manager and written approval of the divisional ELT member.

Policy Owner	Director of People	Review Date:	June 2022
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ADDENDUM to be reviewed in line with Government guidance on Covid-19

Social Distancing

While on AaA's and AaAST's premises, with the exception for staff providing support/education to pupils and the learners where social distancing may be more difficult, the expectation is that you will practice social distancing:

- Stay at least 2 meters (about 2 arms' length) from other people
- Do not gather in groups
- Stay out of crowded places and avoid mass gatherings

Other general principles you can follow to help prevent the spread of Covid-19, include:

- Washing your hands more often – with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use a hand sanitiser when you get home or into work, when you blow your nose, sneeze or cough, eat or handle food
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- Avoid close contact with people who have symptoms
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in a bin and wash your hands
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces in the home/work

Attendance and Punctuality

As part of our commitment to support staff working remotely where possible as a result of COVID-19 staff need to agree working patterns with their line manager in line with their contractual hours.

Dress

Particularly during COVID-19 it is essential that when staff are donning and doffing Personal Protective Equipment, they follow the correct procedure and guidance to minimise the transmission of COVID-19.

Staff & Team Relationships

In addition, as a result of COVID-19 and our commitment to reduce the transmission of the coronavirus, should you share a house with another member of staff please inform your line manager.

Policy Owner	Director of People	Review Date:	June 2022
Policy No.	043	Version No.	1.0