



Policy name:	Relatives, Relationships and Related Matters
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Introduction

This policy is one of a set of policies governing the conduct of employees of The Mead Trust.

This policy and procedure sets out our approach and expectations regarding close personal relationships at work and aims to assist the leadership team and Governance Community to work sensitively with volunteers, Academy Advisors, 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 and procedure is linked to expectations and standards of behaviour set out in the our staff code of conduct and our financial regulations regarding close personal relationships and financial transactions. Teachers are also required to observe the Teacher Standards 2012; namely to uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside the Trust.

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 or Governance Community members 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's community, its staff, Governance Community and volunteers. For this reason the Trust also has its own code of conduct in place which it expects its staff to follow.

Financial Regulations

Where a close personal relationship might exist between two individuals involved in financial transactions the Trust's Financial Regulations and Finance Manual should be followed to ensure the appropriate separation of duties, probity and other financial safeguards are followed. The Board of Trustees and its auditors 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 Trust. 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 Board of Trustees of The Mead Trust has agreed to adopt this policy. The policy will be applied to all permanent, temporary and casual employees employed at the Trust.

This policy sets out a framework of expectations and guidance around the issue of relatives and relationships and more generally the use of the Trust workplace as a professional environment. It is intended to cover all employees under a contract of employment within the Trust as well as Governance Community members, 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 (see definitions below)
- 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

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 he/she will 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.

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 code of conduct and to address other potential problems, thereby facilitating the appointment. Only if the Headteacher considers it is not practicable to make all necessary alternative management arrangements will such an appointment be disallowed, after due consultation with an Education 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 Headteacher should be informed in writing and any alternative management arrangements should be fully documented.

Where the relationship is with the Headteacher then the Chair of the Academy Advisory Group should be informed in writing and alternative management arrangements should be documented after taking advice from an Education HR Advisor. Only if the Chair considers it is not operationally practicable to make necessary alternative management arrangements will such an appointment be disallowed following due consultation with an Education HR Advisor.

Where an Academy Advisor 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 the Academy Advisory Group / Chair of the Board of Trustees. They should not be included in any decisions of the Academy Advisory Group / Board of Trustees involving that member of staff (or candidate/contractor) to avoid conflicts of interest.

Management of relatives employed by the Trust

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 Trust 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 an Academy Advisor 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. Again, every effort will be made to reassign one of the individuals to a different line-management arrangement. In the meantime, 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 a more senior manager or the Headteacher. If it is not possible to put alternative management arrangements in place then the Headteacher should always seek the advice of an Education HR Advisor on how best to manage the situation.

Where the relationship with a manager or supervisor is the Headteacher then the Chair of the Academy Advisory Group should be informed by the Headteacher of this personally. The Chair of the Academy Advisory Group is expected to seek further advice from an Education HR Advisor on how best to manage such a situation and, if necessary, should also include reference to their own 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 Headteacher or team manager / supervisor where appropriate by the employees concerned. Failure to disclose a personal relationship to a line manager could leave an employee open to allegations of misconduct should subsequent issues arise.

Where the close personal relationship is with the Headteacher of a school then the Chair of the Academy Advisory Group should be informed of this by the Headteacher 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.

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 Headteacher or if it is the Headteacher to the Chair of the Academy Advisory Group. Academy Advisors and Trustees should also notify their Chair if they find themselves in the same circumstances.

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 their line manager or Headteacher if this proves difficult.

Bringing children to 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 in to work in order to cancel prior engagements or allow for any necessary hand-over of work. It is unacceptable for an employee to bring his or her child into work with the intention of continuing their normal work.

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.

Bringing pets into work

Animals belonging to employees apart from guide dogs, other assistive animals trained to perform tasks for people with disabilities and permitted animals used for therapeutic reasons, are not allowed in Trust workplaces, including Trust vehicles. Schools should always check their insurance cover to see what risks and liabilities they might acquire when animals are permitted to be on the campus.

Obligations

This policy falls within the general obligations outlined in the Trust's code of conduct. Failure to adhere to the principles outlined in this policy on working with relatives, relationship and related matters will constitute a breach of the Trust's code of conduct and as such will be dealt with in accordance with the Trust's Disciplinary Procedure.