

# Code of Conduct for Parents, Carers and Visitors (including Online Media use for Pupils/Students)

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## 1. Rationale

Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust believes that everyone is entitled to a safe and protective environment in which to learn and work. This statement explains our expectations for all pupils, students, parents, carers and visitors connected to our schools.

## 2. Our commitment

We recognise the importance of good working relationships and the value of these relationships to equip our pupils and students with the necessary skills for their education and life. We expect all members of the school community to treat each other with respect. For these reasons we will continue to welcome and encourage parents, carers, and visitors to participate fully in the life of our schools.

No members of staff, governors, parents/carers, visitors, or pupils/students should be the victims of any behaviour that causes harassment, alarm or distress or is abusive or threatening from anyone, either in our schools, in our communities or on social network sites.

We are committed to resolving difficulties in a constructive manner, through an open and positive dialogue. We understand that sometimes, misunderstandings can cause frustrations. We encourage all concerns to be raised with an appropriate member of staff such as a Head of Year, members of the Senior Leadership Team, or the Principal so that issues can be dealt with fairly, appropriately, and effectively for all concerned. Where issues remain unresolved, please

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follow the Trust's Complaints procedure. This is available on the Trust website, or a copy can be requested from the school office.

## 3. Our expectations

- Adults always set a good example to pupils/students, showing them how to get along with all members of the school and the wider community.
- Physical attacks and threatening behaviour, abusive or insulting language verbal or written, to staff, governors, parents and carers, children and other users of the school premises will not be tolerated and will result in withdrawal of permission to be on school premises. Incidents will be logged.
- Parents/carers/adults present in the home where remote learning is taking place will be mindful that other pupils/students and members of staff might see or hear them and anything in the background
- Parents/carers will read and agree to abide by the Acceptable Use Policy and the school Behaviour Policy and be aware of their responsibilities around online bullying and inappropriate behaviour

## 4. Unacceptable Behaviour

Behaviour that is considered unacceptable and will not be tolerated includes: (this list is not exhaustive, but serves to give examples)

- Disruptive behaviour which interferes or threatens to interfere with any of the school's normal operation or activities anywhere on the school premises
- Any inappropriate behaviour on the school premises
- Using loud or offensive language, swearing, or displaying temper
- Making racist, homophobic, transphobic, or sexist comments including sexual innuendo
- Threatening *in any way*, a pupil/student, member of staff, parent/carer, or visitor
- Damaging or destroying school property
- Sending abusive or threatening emails, texts, voicemails, phone messages or written communications (including social media) to anyone within the community
- Defamatory, offensive, or derogatory comments regarding the school or any of the pupils/students/staff/governors
- The use of physical, verbal, or written aggression towards another adult, pupil/student including shouting, pushing, hitting, slapping, punching, kicking. This includes treatment of an adult's own child on school premises. Such an approach to a child may be seen as assault and may have legal consequences.
- Smoking, taking illegal drugs or the unauthorised/unlicensed consumption of alcohol on school premises.
- Dogs being brought on to the school premises other than authorised or guide dogs (school well-being dogs are exempt).

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## 5. Inappropriate use of Social Networking Sites

We ask that all online media, including online learning platforms and social networking sites whether public or private, are not used to fuel campaigns and voice complaints against schools, staff, parents/carers or pupils/students.

Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust takes very seriously the inappropriate use of social media or online platforms to humiliate, criticise, or bring into disrepute another parent/carer, member of staff, pupil/student.

Any concerns you may have about school issues must be made through the appropriate channels by speaking to a member of the school staff or school leadership, so that the matter can be dealt with fairly, appropriately and effectively for all concerned.

We will report libellous or defamatory comments on any social media to the appropriate 'report abuse' section of the network site. Social network sites have clear rules about the content which can be posted on the site, and they provide robust mechanisms to report contact or activity which breaches this. The Trust will also expect that any parent/carer or pupil removes such comments immediately.

We will remove such comments where they are included on our online learning platforms.

## 6. Online activity which we consider inappropriate

- Making defamatory, libellous, abusive or personal comments about staff, governors, children or other parents on online learning/ social network sites, in the media, or in emails circulated or sent directly
- Inappropriate behaviour within an online learning environment by students or parents/carers
- Bringing the school/ Trust into disrepute
- Identifying or posting images/videos of other people's children
- Using online learning/social media to publicly challenge school policies or discuss issues about individual children or members of staff

In serious cases the school will also consider its legal options to deal with any such misuse of social networking and other sites. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly is the issue of cyber bullying and the use by one pupil/student or a parent to publicly humiliate another by inappropriate social network entry. The Trust will take and deal with this as a serious incident of school bullying.

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## 7. Online activity

Keeping pupils and teachers safe during remote education is essential. The same principles set out in the Trust's staff code of conduct and school's behaviour policies will apply during remote education online. We encourage students to:

- Sit against a neutral background
- Avoid recording in private spaces such as bedrooms where possible (where that's not possible, use a neutral background) Alternatively, join in a shared space in their house or turn their cameras off.
- Wear appropriate clothing like they would for school
- Double check that any other tabs they have open in their browser are appropriate if they're sharing their screen
- Use appropriate language
- Ask parents who'll also be there to be mindful that other children might see or hear them and anything in the background.
- Read and understand the Acceptable Use and School Behaviour policy and be aware of their responsibilities around online bullying and inappropriate behaviour.
- Our schools may make recordings of online lessons. These may be to support other students or for internal reference only or to support student and teacher safeguarding. They will not be shared with any other third parties except other students of those classes in some circumstances. We will only keep the recordings for as long as necessary and will delete them within 20 days.

## 8. Actions we may take

We will take action against anyone who behaves in any way that is abusive or threatening to staff, governors, pupil/students or other parents, carers and visitors, whether in person or online. In serious cases or repeat offences, we will consider legal options and may inform the police.

We will record all incidents of abusive or threatening behaviour. We will write to anyone who has behaved in this way to warn them that the behaviour is not acceptable. We may choose to ban individuals from the school site after an incident or incidents. This may be a temporary measure, or a permanent one depending on the nature of the incident.

Our school premises are private property. Parents, carers and visitors have been granted permission from the school to be on school premises. It is an offence under section 547 of the Education Act 1996 for any person (including a parent/carer/adult) to cause a nuisance or disturbance on school premises. If a school has reasonable grounds to suspect that someone has committed an offence, then the police may be called to assist with their removal from the school.

Victims and perpetrators of any kind of abuse will be expected to cooperate with any investigation into action that has caused harassment, alarm or distress to other users.

As a Trust, we take our safeguarding responsibilities seriously and will deal with any reported incidents appropriately in line with the actions outlined above and our other Trust or school policies as appropriate.

Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust reserves the right to take any necessary actions to ensure

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that members of its schools' communities are not subjected to abuse.

Parents have the right of appeal by writing to the Chief Operations and Finance Officer at Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust within ten days of their permission to enter the school premises being withdrawn.

An adult approaches a pupil or student	The adult will be spoken to immediately and the issue investigated by a school leader. This will be reported to the Principal and logged. The adult will receive a warning letter, as a minimum*.
An adult inappropriately approaches a parent/carer/member of staff	The matter should be reported to a member of staff or a school leader. The offending adult will be spoken to as soon as possible after the incident and reminded that there is zero tolerance of inappropriate behaviour. A letter will be issued to the adult, warning of the potential to be banned from the school site under section 547 of the Education Act 1996 if the behaviour is repeated*.
Inappropriate use of social media	The matter will be investigated and the adult will be spoken to/ a letter issued. Libellous or defamatory comments on any social media will be reported to the appropriate 'report abuse' section of the network site. The adult will be requested to remove the offending comment immediately. We will remove such comments where they are included on our online learning platforms.
Repeated inappropriate behaviour	If an adult continues to use inappropriate behaviour, they will be referred to this Code of Conduct. This can then lead to a ban from the school site under section 547 of the Education Act 1996.

*\*Depending on the circumstances of the individual incident, these procedural steps may be amended at the discretion of the Trust. Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust reserves the right to go straight to a bar where the circumstances are deemed sufficiently serious.*

The over-riding aim of this code of conduct is always to promote positive behaviours, through high expectations, clear strategies and guidance that encourage consideration, respect and kindness. This is particularly appropriate to the cooperative values of our Trust.

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## 9. Appendix 1: Template Letter to Parents re: misuse of online media

Dear [name],

It has recently come to our attention that you have used [online learning/ social media and/or private Facebook or chat groups] to:

Amend this list as appropriate, or describe the incident in question:

- Complain about individual members of staff
- Complain about the school
- Make inappropriate comments about members of staff, or other parents or pupils
- Draw attention to behaviour incidents
- Post pictures of children that aren't your own

Include a link to the social media post if possible.

Depending on the nature of the incident, adapt one of the sections below.

### a) If the incident relates to complaints about individual members of staff

Our staff are committed, dedicated professionals who deserve to be treated with respect. If you have a concern or complaint about a member of staff, please raise it directly with the school, in line with our complaints policy.

Comments, concerns or complaints posted on social media cannot be addressed by the school/college in a constructive manner.

A copy of our Complaints procedure is available on the Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust website. You can also request a paper copy from the school office.

### b) If the incident relate to complaints about the school:

We take complaints and concerns from parents seriously and try to resolve them as best we can. To do this, parents need to follow our complaints procedure, and raise any concerns by contacting the school directly. Complaints raised on social media cannot be addressed constructively.

A copy of our complaints procedure is available on the Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust website. You can also request a paper copy from the school office.

### c) If the incident relates to inappropriate comments about members of staff, or other parents or pupils:

At [school name], we believe it is important for our pupils to learn how to treat others with respect, including when they are online. Parents have an important role to play in modelling this for their children.

We ask parents to refrain from using inappropriate language, or from speaking about staff, parents and pupils in a way that is rude, intimidating or threatening. We expect all members of our community to treat each other with respect.

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## d) If the incident relates to a behaviour incident:

The school/ college has a robust behaviour policy, and our staff work hard to ensure it is applied consistently while pupils/students are in school. Our policy also sets out when we will intervene in behaviour incidents that occur outside of school.

Discussing behaviour incidents online does not help the school address the issue. It may also prevent the school from conducting a full and fair investigation or present a safeguarding concern for any parents or pupils named in the incident. If you are aware of a behaviour incident, please make an appointment to speak to the appropriate member of staff directly.

A copy of our Complaints procedure is available on the Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust website. You can also request a paper copy from the school office.

If you would like to make an appointment to speak to the Headteacher or another member of staff, please contact the school office on [insert phone number].

## e) If the incident relates to posts including pictures of other children:

Our school/ college has a responsibility to keep pupils safe online and offline.

You must not take or share photos or videos on social media of other people's children unless you have the express consent of the other child's parents. Children, and parents are entitled to control what information about them, if any, is shared online. In some cases, posting photos of a child online can present a safeguarding concern.

Please delete or remove any photos of other children you have taken or shared without their parents' consent.

## f) If appropriate, add this at the end of any of the sections above:

If you continue to [make inappropriate comments, complain about staff/the school, draw attention to behaviour incidents, etc.] in this way, the school/ college may take further action. We will seek legal advice if we believe any comments about the school, or individual members of staff, to be defamatory, indecent or threatening. We will involve the police if we believe comments or behaviour are threatening or discriminatory.

We may also consult with the Executive Team of Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust about banning you from the school site.

Continue with:

If you would like to discuss the [incident(s)] further, please call the school/college office and make an appointment.

Yours sincerely

**Principal**



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## 10. Appendix 2: Template Letter to Parents re: Code of Conduct – inappropriate behaviour

Dear [insert name],

Following a recent visit you made to [insert name of school/college] on [date], it has been drawn to my attention by the member of staff involved that your conduct was [insert nature of inappropriate behaviour linked to code of conduct], causing considerable distress to the person involved.

Whilst I am sure that you may have been unhappy about a situation, I would like to draw your attention to our Code of Conduct for Parents/Carers and Visitors which clearly outlines unacceptable behaviour and the procedure that will follow such an occurrence.

Therefore, I would like to ask you to make an appointment through the school office to attend a meeting regarding this incident.

I would like to assure you that as a school, we are very keen to ensure that all incidents are resolved satisfactorily for all concerned, but that escalating the situation in a heated fashion does not lead to an effective resolution of the problem.

As a school/college, we are always keen to resolve parental concerns quickly and would always wish to discuss these issues in a calm, rational and professional manner which benefits all parties. It is also essential that we work together closely supporting each other for the benefit of your child.

I would like to hope that we will be able to work together in a positive way in the future and trust that you will support all that has been suggested in this letter as the best way forward. I look forward to meeting with you very soon.

Yours sincerely,

**Principal**