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# **MODEL POLICY: CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS AT WORK**

**FOR USE BY GOVERNING BODIES,  
PRU MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES AND HEAD TEACHERS**

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**INVESTOR IN PEOPLE**



## **MODEL POLICY:** **CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS AT WORK**

### **INTRODUCTION AND AIMS OF THE POLICY**

The nature and kinds of relationships between individuals working within an educational environment may be many and varied. Good working and social relationships can be beneficial in promoting team working and underpin a productive organisational culture. However, closer personal relationships may from time to time exist, or develop, between prospective employees, employees, workers and others within the *school/PRU* or Council environment. Therefore, it is important to recognise that there will be situations arising in which there is the potential for either real or perceived conflicts of interest, including preferential treatment, bias, breaches of confidentiality, and/or divided loyalties.

This policy is not intended to preclude the appointment of near relatives, partners, close friends or associates without prior consideration of the circumstances or the continued employment of those already within the working environment. It is intended to set out a transparent framework within which the *school/PRU* will operate to ensure that everyone is treated fairly and reasonably and afforded equality of opportunity in recruitment and during their employment or work, regardless of any relationship that may exist between persons within, or connected with, the workplace.

The overall aims of the policy are to ensure that:

- all prospective employees, employees and workers are treated fairly and reasonably in relation to the recruitment process;
- all employees, workers and others are treated and managed fairly and equitably during their employment or work;
- the principles of equality of opportunity are applied at all times;
- any scope for challenge or allegations of preferential treatment, nepotism or discrimination are eliminated or minimised.

The principles set out in this policy apply to all employees, casual workers, agency workers apprentices and volunteers, including Governors and others, as appropriate to their role.

### **THE MEANING OF 'CLOSE RELATIONSHIP' FOR THE PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY**

A close relationship will exist in relation to a near relative, partner, close friend or associate who may be one of the following:

- husband, wife, civil partner, partner or cohabitee
- parent
- child
- brother or sister
- grandparent or grandchild
- aunt, uncle, cousin or second cousin
- niece or nephew
- anyone else connected with the *school/PRU* with whom an individual has a close relationship, for example, a Governor or the parent or carer of a pupil.

The above meanings should also be taken to include adoptive and step family relationships, and in-laws. This list is not necessarily exhaustive. Individuals should assume it to mean being in a relationship with anyone in circumstances which could potentially prejudice equality of treatment.

## **CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS - JOB APPLICANTS AND THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS**

The principles set out below will apply. All candidates for posts/roles, as well as those involved in any part of the recruitment and selection process, are expected to adhere to them at all times.

- To ensure equality of opportunity, to encourage and promote an open and transparent process and reduce the likelihood of recruiting a family member or another person in a close relationship, employment positions will normally be advertised. Advertising will be by external means where there is a vacancy for an additional staff member, or otherwise an advert will be placed internally.
- The main aim is to seek to appoint the most suitable candidate for the role.
- All applicants for posts, as well as those interested in applying for, or engaged in, casual and volunteer roles must declare whether they are in a close relationship with any employee, worker, volunteer, Governor or anyone else connected with the *school/PRU*, or any senior Officer or Councillor of the London Borough of Enfield. Where the individual is in any doubt about the need to declare a relationship, s/he should seek advice from a member of the Senior Leadership Team, the Head teacher (or otherwise the Chair of Governors/PRU Management Committee, as appropriate). Advice may also be sought from the London Borough of Enfield's Schools' Personnel Service.
- Where an applicant is in a close relationship, the person s/he is in the relationship with will not take part in any element of the recruitment and selection process and is responsible for declaring such a connection with the applicant at the start of the process.
- Applicants for posts, casual work or volunteer roles will not normally be employed or engaged to work within a department, team or post where they would be reporting to, or line managed by, someone with whom they are in a close relationship.

However, in circumstances where this is considered by the recruiters/recruitment panel to be unavoidable, the matter will be referred to the Head teacher (or Chair of Governors/PRU Management Committee) for consideration and a final decision..

If it is decided to proceed with the appointment, the Head teacher (or Chair/PRU Management Committee) will put in place appropriate measures to ensure that working arrangements and any decisions to be taken, are made, and can be perceived to be made, in an objective and professional manner.

- The Head teacher (or Chair/PRU Management Committee) reserves the right not to appoint, or engage, an applicant in circumstances where it is not possible to avoid a line management responsibility and it is considered that this would, or could, prove to be detrimental to the functioning *school/PRU*, the pupils and/or other employees/workers.
- In other cases, there may be no line management responsibility between the parties but the relationship could, nevertheless, involve conflicting priorities or interests. In these circumstances, the relevant Line Manager(s), the Head teacher (or Chair/PRU Management Committee) will consider and implement any practical measures to ensure that potential conflicts of interest, including priorities, breaches of confidentiality, use of resources, preferential treatment, divided loyalties bias or ethics are minimised.
- Where an appointment is made, the employees, workers and/or volunteers who are in the close relationship must understand the need for professionalism at all times and are responsible for ensuring that this relationship does not give cause for concern – real or perceived – about possible conflicts of interest, including priorities, breaches of confidentiality, use of resources, preferential treatment, divided loyalties, bias or ethics.

## **CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS THAT EXIST OR DEVELOP DURING EMPLOYMENT**

Employees, workers and volunteers are encouraged to form good working relationships, including socialising amongst employees/workers, as this can enhance team working to the benefit of all colleagues and pupils.

Sometimes, a close relationship will develop between people and this is not precluded. However, the principles set out below will apply and the parties are expected to adhere to them at all times.

- Employees, workers and volunteers who are in, or form, a close relationship must understand the need for professionalism at all times and are responsible for ensuring that this relationship does not give cause for concern – real or perceived – about possible conflicts of interest, including priorities, breaches of confidentiality, use of resources, preferential treatment, divided loyalties, bias or ethics.
- The individuals themselves should take responsibility for disclosing their relationship to their Line Manager or the Head teacher (or Chair of Governors/PRU Management Committee, as appropriate) in circumstances where a potential conflict of interest could arise, or could be perceived to arise by others. However, where this does not happen, the Line Manager, Head teacher (or Chair/PRU Management Committee, as relevant) may recognise it and speak to the parties concerned, with a view to taking any appropriate action to ensure both their own protection and that of the *school/PRU*.
- Where there is a line management relationship between the parties, the Head teacher (or Chair/PRU Management Committee) will consider whether it is practical or possible to transfer the line management responsibility to another person. The Head teacher (Chair of Governors/PRU Management Committee) may consider that a change in other working arrangements is also appropriate. This will be discussed with the parties, but the final decision in the matter will rest with the Head teacher (or Chair/PRU Management Committee).
- Where it is not practical or possible to transfer line management responsibility or make changes to working arrangements, the Head teacher (or Chair/PRU Management Committee) will put in place appropriate measures to ensure that working arrangements and any decisions to be taken, are made, and can be perceived to be made, in an objective and professional manner.
- In other circumstances, there may be no line management responsibility between the parties but the relationship could, nevertheless, involve conflicting priorities or interests. In these circumstances, the relevant Line Manager(s), the Head teacher (or Chair/PRU Management Committee) will consider and implement any practical measures to ensure that potential conflicts of interest, including priorities, breaches of confidentiality, use of resources, preferential treatment, divided loyalties, bias or ethics are minimised. This will be discussed with the relevant party(ies) but the final decision in the matter will rest with the Head teacher (or Chair/PRU Management Committee).

## **CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS AT WORK – OTHER GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

The points set out below should also be noted and observed.

- References to 'Line Manager' in this document does not just mean the direct Line Manager, but also includes that Manager's Manager, or anyone else who has an overall line management responsibility for an individual's work or role.
- Discussions between parties involved in a close relationship and the Line Manager, Head teacher, Chair of Governors/PRU Management Committee will include matters of privacy, the need for confidentiality and who else may need to be informed.
- Discussions will be documented to include:
  - information received from the individuals
  - potential conflicts and steps taken to avoid or eliminate them
  - changes to working arrangements
  - details of any necessary or appropriate disclosures, or changes made, to other managers, colleagues or others
  - how and when any action taken (or not taken) will be reviewed.
- Individuals must at all times maintain their professionalism and not allow a close relationship at work influence their conduct. This applies during all working time, whether at the normal workplace or elsewhere.
- Where a close relationship comes to an end and the individuals concerned are in the same Department or Team, or otherwise need to work together, they are expected to maintain their professionalism at all times. If it is envisaged that the ending of a close relationship may impact adversely on team working and/or service delivery, the relevant Line Manager or the Head teacher (or Chair of Governors/PRU Management Committee, as appropriate) will address the matter with the individuals with a view to resolving the situation. This may include exploring the possibility of transferring one or both parties to other work and/or changing working arrangements.
- All employees, workers and volunteers are also advised to refer to relevant references in the Code of Conduct.
- Any employee found to have breached the principles of this policy may face disciplinary action, which could result in summary dismissal.
- Any employee, worker or volunteer who considers that s/he is affected by a close relationship at work involving others may approach, without prejudice, their Line Manager or the Head teacher (or Chair/PRU Management Committee) with their concerns. These will be considered objectively and any appropriate action taken.

