

South Staffordshire College

Lichfield • Cannock • Tamworth • Rodbaston



FREEDOM OF SPEECH POLICY

Reference: Version	1
Policy Originator:	Assistant Principal Learner Services
Equality Impact Assessment	September 2020
Approved by:	Board
Date Approved:	September 2020
Review Interval:	Biennial
Last Review Date:	N/A
Next Review Date:	September 2022
Audience:	Governors, Staff, Learners, Visitors and other stakeholders



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Freedom of Speech Policy

1.0 Policy Statement

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to support the achievement of the outcomes identified within the College's 2025 Strategic Vision. The College aims to continually improve its outcomes and processes and to be a truly outstanding organisation.
- 1.2 The policy will establish clear guidance regarding freedom of speech within college and establish key principles, structures and monitoring arrangements for the college.
- 1.3 This policy will support the implementation of our "Purpose":
"Transforming the life chances of our communities."

2.0 Scope

- 2.1 The scope of this policy will be all procedures and processes of the College relating to the legal observation and the promotion of free speech and the consequences of infringement.
- 2.2 This policy applies to all learners, staff, governors, clients and partners with whom we work to deliver services.
- 2.3 Other policies and procedures linked to this policy include: the E-safety policy, Child Protection Policy, Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy, Safeguarding Procedures, Guidelines for Safeguarding Staff and Learners, Staff Induction Procedures, IT Conditions of Use (Operational Policy), Whistle Blowing Policy, Equality and Diversity Policy and Visiting .Speaker and Events Procedures.

3.0 Values and Guiding Principles

3.1 College Policies and Procedures are designed to support the delivery of our 2025 Strategic Vision that has our Purpose of “*Transforming the Life Chances of our Communities*” at its heart.

3.2 Critical to the delivery of this Vision is our individual and combined commitment to ensuring we continually improve how we work to remain a sustainable organisation through the delivery of three strategic imperatives, to:

- Deliver high quality, sustainable educational outcomes at lower cost in all sectors of our delivery,
- Generate income to invest in the key elements of the 2025 Vision,
- Further develop our strategic positioning in the markets we serve.

3.3 This policy will be implemented in a manner that embraces our “Values” and “Guiding Principles:

Values:

- *Togetherness* - Working together to provide an outstanding experience for our learners, employers and communities
- *Standards* - High performance to enhance life chances and success of learners, communities and employers
- *Sustainability* - A beacon for sustainable development, to educate, inspire and enhance quality of life
- *Customer Care* - Exceed the expectations of all by providing creative leadership, inclusivity and respect for people and their future

Guiding Principles:

- Excellence in learning and teaching
- Community contribution
- Entrepreneurial attitude

3.4 The policy is also aligned to the following strategic priorities that will ensure delivery of the 2025 Vision.

Our Strategic Priorities are:

- Developing Inspirational Talent - Future success is reliant upon the creativity, commitment and passion of our staff,
- The Learner Journey - We are committed to providing an outstanding experience for our learners and will measure our success through their success,
- Our DNA - Our Values and Guiding Principles form the character of our College. Our commitment to the highest standards in everything we do will be a beacon of sustainability for aspiring communities,

- Innovation - Our destination-driven curriculum will provide for the future skills needs of employers enabling them to prosper,
- A Sustainable Organisation - we will build on the reputation of South Staffordshire College through growing the talent and creativity of our staff and learners.

4.0 General

- 4.1 The purpose of this policy is to establish clear College guidance regarding freedom of speech in order that freedom of speech - which legislation supports as a fundamental human right - might be fostered and promoted, whilst at the same time seeking to ensure that freedom of speech does not impinge upon the rights of others via unintended negative consequences such as discrimination, bullying and harassment, abuse or, in extremis, to violence. The policy is intended to support the development of a conducive learning and working environment that encourages critical thinking. The policy establishes key principles, structures and monitoring arrangements for the College. The guidance will be applicable to all employees and learners in the College, governors, contractors, business partners, volunteers and visitors.
- 4.2 The policy will be implemented in accordance with all existing and emerging legislation. Key legislation relating to this policy includes:
- Human Rights Act 1998, Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights
 - Equality Act 2010
 - The Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015
 - Common Law
- 4.3 The Policy will be publicised as widely as possible to include staff, learners, governors, business partners and the community and will be available in a variety of formats on request.
- 4.4 The college will actively support the fundamental human right to free speech, giving support to an individual's right to express their thoughts, opinions and beliefs. However, in order to foster and preserve an environment of tolerance and respect, which are statutorily identified fundamental British Values, then an individual's right to *entirely* free speech in college as a public organisation, or when representing the college externally, may on occasions have to be moderated in order to avoid either intended or unintended discrimination and harassment or abuse. This is informed by the public sector duty to promote equality and diversity that is enshrined in law and must also be observed and supported.
- 4.5 Individuals within the college environment, as well as learners, staff and governors who learn and work as a part of college in other working environments, should take all reasonable steps to ensure that their human right to freedom of speech does not impinge upon the right of others to be able to work and live in an environment which is welcoming, respectful, tolerant, safe and free from discrimination, abuse or violence. Ignorance of the law and associated good practice is not an acceptable mitigation.
- 4.6 In exercising their freedom of speech, visitors to the college as well as governors, staff and students, including when representing the college externally, must not create, store or transmit unlawful material, or material that is indecent, likely to

cause offensive, threatening, discriminatory or extremist. This may have serious disciplinary or legal consequences.

- 4.7 All governors, staff, learners and visitors to the college should be aware and informed of the statutory 'Prevent' agenda and play a proactive role in ensuring that its guiding principles to prevent radicalisation, extremism and terrorism are upheld and promoted at all times.

5.0 Infringement

- 5.1 Infringement of this policy may result in disciplinary action.
- 5.2 Penalties may include exclusion from learning or employment.
- 5.3 Information about infringement may be passed to appropriate law enforcement agencies, and any other organisations whose regulations you have breached.

6.0 Monitoring and Review

- 6.1 This policy has been supported by the Board of Governors at its meeting in September and will be reviewed by the Board as scheduled on the Board's business calendar.
- 6.2 The internal monitoring of the implementation of this policy will be the responsibility of the Deputy Principal.
- 6.3 The responsibility for ensuring that this policy, and its associated processes and procedures, remain appropriate and comply with changes in legislation will be the Assistant Principal Learner Services.