



South
Staffordshire
College

Freedom of Speech Policy

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Policy Originator:	Assistant Principal Learner Services
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Audience:	Governors, Staff, Learners, Visitors and other stakeholders

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.

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 Child Protection, Safeguarding and PREVENT Policy, IT Conditions of Use (Operational Policy), Whistle Blowing Policy, Equality Diversity Policy

3.0 Values and Guiding Principles

- 3.1 College Policies and Procedures are designed to support the delivery of our 2025 Core Strategic Vision that has our Purpose of "*Transforming People's Lives*" 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 our 5 strategic imperatives:
 - Participation – Be the first choice College by meeting the needs of local and regional priorities
 - Provision – Deliver demand led, well sequenced, high quality vocational technical and professional skills in collaboration with others that lead to sustainable careers and employment

- Performance – Inspire our learners to develop high quality skills leading to sustainable careers driven by excellent teaching and business
- People – High staff engagement through reward/recognition development and health/wellbeing interventions
- Prosperity – Remain financially robust, sustainable and resilient organization that can continue to develop and invest in its facilities, infrastructure and workforce

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 approved by the Board of Governors at its meeting in September and will be reviewed by the Board every 2 years.
- 6.2 The internal monitoring of the implementation of this policy will be the responsibility of the Assistant Principal Learner Services.
- 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.