

Safeguarding code of conduct

This policy applies to the whole School and is published to staff and parents

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A **Safeguarding code of conduct** is required by the DfE regulations *Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2016*. All workers, volunteers, members and others involved in the life of the School are required to and have a responsibility to abide by this Code of conduct. This is required in order to support the School in providing a welcoming and safe environment for all students and in the implementation of its **Safeguarding policy and procedures**. This guidance is based on the *Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who work with Children and Young People in Education Settings* document produced by the DfE in March 2009 and reviewed in line with *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015*.

Professional practice—for the safety of staff and students

Always working in an open environment

We should always encourage open communication with no secrets both between staff and between staff and students.

- *Don't give the impression of having favourites. Generally only give gifts to a student as part of an agreed reward system. When giving gifts (say, Christmas chocolates for the class), ensure that these are of insignificant value and given to all students equally.*
- *The best safeguard of our students is an understanding of appropriate behaviour and a willingness to raise concerns about adult behaviour which is inappropriate within the spirit of the code of conduct.*

Never allowing ourselves to be left alone with a student

We will occasionally encounter occasions when a confidential interview or a one-to-one meeting is necessary.

- *In such circumstances, conduct the interview in a room with an open door or visual access. Position chairs and furniture so that you can engage with the student, but are also visible from doors and windows. Where this is not possible, always ensure that there is another adult nearby. Let a colleague know that you are with a student and where appropriate arrange a time with the student. If your work regularly brings you into one-to-one contact with students make sure the Pastoral Director is aware of arrangements and send an updated log of meetings.*
- *If you unexpectedly find yourself in a private or potentially compromising situation, for example a student appears in your office before or after school, make sure you alert someone to the situation as quickly as you can, letting another colleague know what is happening or asking the student to come with you to a more "open" environment.*
- *In some circumstances being alone with a student is part of the role of a member of staff in school e.g. Visiting Music Teacher (VMT),*

Medical Officer, Careers Advisor, Counsellor. In these situations meetings with students should only take place via a recognised appointment system. Ad hoc meetings should form part of a log sent to the Pastoral Director.

- *The Pastoral Director or another member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) should be informed beforehand of any meetings with students (including former students) outside of school hours e.g. weekends and term times whether these are in school or not.*

Avoiding touching students unless absolutely necessary

We must always be aware of the potential for misunderstanding when touching children. The DfE advice (*Use of Reasonable Force 2013*) makes it clear that when consoling a child who is upset we should do no more than put a gentle hand on their arm. Administering first aid or supporting a participant in an activity, for example helping a student with additional physical needs, is acceptable and necessary contact.

- *If it is an accepted part of an activity (e.g. demonstrating, holding a gymnast for safety), touching should be appropriate to the situation, of limited duration and appropriate to the child's age. In such cases, or when administering first aid, minimise any risk of misunderstanding of your actions by asking the child if it is all right to touch them and explain exactly what you are going to do and why.*

Never using active physical force against a student unless their actions place themselves or others in danger

If it is necessary to restrain a student - because they are an immediate danger to themselves or others or to property - the minimum amount of force should be used for the shortest amount of time.

- *Force can mean passive force to control a situation, e.g. standing between two students, or active force such as leading someone out of the classroom by the arm.*
- *Restraint means to hold back physically or to bring a student under control. It is typically used in more extreme circumstances, e.g. when two students are fighting and refuse to separate without physical intervention. Any use of physical force or restraint should be reported to the Pastoral Director at the earliest opportunity.*

At no time should corporal punishment or the threat of corporal punishment be used.

Reporting/recording any incidents between us and a child

If we find ourselves in a situation like those listed above where there might be any scope for misunderstanding, we need to be prepared to share and discuss the circumstances that informed our action, or our proposed action, with a senior colleague. This will help to ensure that the safest practices are employed and reduce the risk of actions being misinterpreted.

- *Always discuss any misunderstanding, accidents or threats with a senior colleague. Always (briefly) record your discussions and the actions you took, with reasons. For example, if a distressed child*

throws his/her arms round you and sobs, drop the Pastoral Director a brief email to say so. Someone else might have seen the episode and misconstrued it.

Treating information given to us with integrity and confidentially

We are expected to treat information we receive about children and young people in a discreet and confidential manner. We may not use our position to gain access to information for our own advantage and/or a child's or family's detriment.

- *If you are in any doubt about sharing information you hold, or which has been requested of you, seek advice from a senior colleague. Be cautious when passing information to others about a child/young person. Remember that conversations may be overheard and therefore that confidentiality may be inadvertently broken if due care is not taken.*
- *You should not hold photos or other images of students on your personal devices or other electronic storage arrangements e.g. memory sticks or cloud sharing. Any photos taken as part of a school event should be sent to the Communications Manager or added to the Event Photos (G:) drive and then deleted from your device. If you wish to keep a photo or other image, for example of a Duke of Edinburgh expedition group, then you should inform the Pastoral Director or the Headmaster. Such photos should not be shared via social networking (unless an official RGS channel) etc. as this would compromise the privacy of the students.*

Any media or legal enquiries should be passed immediately to the Headmaster.

Treating students with dignity and respect

We must never use our power and position to intimidate, threaten, coerce or, undermine students - nor to form or promote sexual relationships with young people in our charge (see below).

- *Don't behave in a manner which would lead any reasonable person to question your suitability to work with children or act as a role model. Never make sexual remarks to a student (including email, text messages, phone or letter), nor discuss your own sexual relationships with, or in the presence of, students. Don't make (or allow others to make) unprofessional personal comments which scapegoat, demean or humiliate, or might be interpreted as such. Remember that children and young people may be more sensitive to comments and that we have a duty to provide an environment where they feel at ease.*

Our position as a role model observed by students

We should conduct our professional relationships and wear clothing that promotes a positive and professional image, is appropriate to our role, is not likely to be viewed as offensive, revealing, or sexually provocative and does not distract, cause embarrassment or give rise to misunderstanding.

- *Children and young people are impressionable and will learn more than we think from observing our interactions with each other and our professional identity. Remember that it's not uncommon for students to be strongly attracted to a member of staff and/or develop an infatuation. All situations should be responded to sensitively to maintain the dignity of all concerned. Such circumstances always carry a high risk of words or actions being misinterpreted and for allegations to be made against the teacher. If you become aware that a student may be infatuated with you or observe it happening with a colleague, discuss this at the earliest opportunity with a senior colleague so that appropriate action can be taken. In this way, steps can be taken to avoid hurt and distress for all concerned.*

How our conduct with former students out of school could be misconstrued

The law forbids a teacher (or any other member of staff) to develop a relationship with a former student where the relationship is based on the abuse of trust fostered through a normal teacher - student relationship. For this reason the School advises staff that they should not embark on a sexual relationship with a former student unless it can be demonstrated that there is no imbalance of power within the relationship. Staff should always be aware that a sexual relationship with a former student, regardless of the time since they have left school, is likely to provoke questions regarding their integrity.

Inevitably, there will be times when we meet ex-students in more informal circumstances. We are required to act with the same degree of care and integrity as we would with a student at the School.

- *The relationship between a teacher and an ex-student is still one of a role model/mentor and will have developed as a result of your contact with the student at school. If you are concerned about relationships with ex-students, discuss it with a senior colleague for clarification and advice. Contact between yourself and ex-students should still be via formal means such as school email and the Pastoral Director should be informed (for example by copying her into an email). If you are going to meet ex-students you should inform the Pastoral Director before the meeting to discuss arrangements and so that the meeting is logged.*

Avoiding social contact out of school

We shouldn't establish or seek to establish social contact with students for the purpose of securing a friendship or to pursue or strengthen a relationship. Social contact with students should only ever be in the context of a formal school activity or as the result of a relationship between families. Even if a young person seeks to establish social contact, or if this occurs coincidentally, we must maintain our professionalism and be aware that such social contact could be misconstrued.

- *Report and record any situation which may place a child at risk or compromise the School or your own professional standing. Sending personal communications such as birthday or faith cards should be recorded, but is better discussed with a senior colleague beforehand.*

- *If you are also a parent of children at the School you will inevitably have social contact with other students; this is necessary and normal. You should generally be alert to any comments or actions which may be overheard or misconstrued, even in your own home.*
- *Restricting social contact to formal school activity means that you should never just go for a drink with student/s without making formal arrangements and ensuring that the School (usually the Pastoral Director) knows. Going to a nightclub or other social venue is almost certainly unacceptable under any circumstances.*

Communication and social media

We shouldn't give our personal details such as home/mobile phone number; home or personal email address to students or their families unless the need to do so is agreed with a member of the SLT. Any involvement with students through social media must be discussed with a member of SLT immediately.

- *Ensure that **personal** social networking sites are set at private and students are never listed as approved contacts or friends. **Never use or access the social networking sites of students.** Text messaging should only be used as part of a previously agreed protocol e.g. fixtures and when other forms of communication are not possible. **Don't use internet or web-based communication channels to send personal messages to a student.** Internal email systems should only be used in accordance with school policy which includes proper policing.*
- *Social media such as Facebook groups and Twitter feeds may be a good way to disseminate information. A member of the SLT should always be informed about such communication or the establishment of groups and should be a member of them as well as the Communications Manager. Where possible they should be closed or private groups. Remember that comments you post should remain professional and appropriate to the context of the group.*
- *Remember that your personal online profile is public (despite privacy settings) and may be tagged or shared by friends. Never*

post pictures or comments which could be used to question your professionalism or suitability to work with children.

Never take children alone in a car on journeys, however short

If it's necessary to transport a student in your car, plan and agree arrangements with all parties in advance, responding sensitively and flexibly to disagreements and remembering that you may not be insured for business use.

- *If you really must transport a student in your car, ensure that you are alone with a single student for the minimum time possible (you might decide you are best placed to take them to A&E, for example). Remember that the safety and welfare of the child is entirely your responsibility until he/she is safely passed over in person to a parent/carer. Where practicable, inform a senior colleague of the nature of the journey, the route, timings and all arrangements in place to ensure the safety of vehicle, passenger and driver.*

Notifying relevant senior colleagues when adults are visiting the school

Visiting speakers and advisers are of great benefit to the students and the School. Adults visiting the School who will not come into contact with children or who will be meeting students in large groups, supervised by teachers, do not need extra child protection checks. However, for security reasons, their name and details of their visit should be passed to the relevant senior manager and usually a Visiting Speaker's Checklist will need to be completed prior to the visit as part of our commitment to the **Prevent strategy**. They must be signed in at the Main Reception by the member of staff responsible for them.

- Adults who are visiting the School on a short-term but regular basis and who will have regular contact with children (e.g. sports coaches) should be subject to the appropriate DBS checks. The member of staff who has arranged for these visitors to come is responsible for contacting the Compliance Manager to put DBS checks in place and to notify the Pastoral Director about the nature and extent of the visits.

Two golden rules

- **If you're unsure of procedure or the checks required, contact the Pastoral Director for guidance. All adult visitors (including past students) must sign in at the front office and should wear a visitor's badge to show they are known to be in school.**
- **If you see an adult behaving in a way which contravenes these guidelines, or the spirit of them, you should discuss your concerns with the Headmaster or Pastoral Director at the earliest opportunity. If you remain concerned you can also contact the Newcastle LADO (local authority designated officer) Melanie Scott on 0191 277 4636 for advice.**