

## **SAFER WORKING PRACTICE - GUIDELINES FOR STAFF**

### **Context**

All adults who work with young people have a duty of care to keep them safe and to protect them from physical, emotional and sexual harm. The school also has a duty of care to provide a safe working environment for adults and to provide guidance about safe working practices.

### **Purpose**

These guidelines aim to:

- help all adults working at the school to establish safe environments which safeguard young people
- reduce the risk of adults being unjustly accused of improper or unprofessional conduct
- ensure that all adults understand what behaviours may call into question their suitability to work with young people

### **Remit**

These guidelines apply to all adults working for Cheltenham Bournside School in all settings, whatever their position, role, or responsibilities.

## **GENERAL GUIDELINES**

### **Power and Positions of Trust**

All adults working with young people are in a position of trust. This gives them power over the young people they care for and they have a responsibility to maintain appropriate professional boundaries. Staff must not use their position or status:

- to gain access to information for their own or others' advantage
- to intimidate, bully, humiliate, threaten or coerce young people in their care
- to form or promote relationships that are of a sexual nature or may become so

### **Propriety and Behaviour**

- Staff have a responsibility to adopt high standards of personal conduct in order to maintain public confidence in their suitability as a person working with young people.
- Staff need to be aware that behaviour in their personal lives may impact on their suitability to work with young people. E.g. misuse of drugs, alcohol or acts of violence could lead to their behaviour being scrutinised by local authorities or the media.

### **Confidentiality**

- All staff should be aware of their responsibility in having access to confidential and potentially very sensitive information about students. Such information must be kept confidential at all times and should only be shared if it is in the interests of the young person. If staff are in any doubts about sharing information they hold or which has been requested of them, they must seek advice from a member of Senior Leadership Team (SLT).
- All staff should follow the school's child protection policy and guidelines - see appendix
- Staff should at all times, at school and at home, be mindful of the need to keep all data secure. Information must not be disclosed to unauthorised parties.

### **Duty of Care**

- Staff have a duty to follow school guidelines on health and safety.
- Staff have a responsibility to report any health and safety issues of which they become aware to their immediate line manager.
- Staff have a duty to follow school guidelines on safeguarding procedures

- All staff should follow the school's child protection policy and guidelines - see appendix

### **Making a Professional Judgement**

Guidelines cannot exist for every eventuality or may not always be appropriate in all circumstances. Decisions and action should always seek to be in the best interests of the young people concerned. Staff should always seek advice from SLT if in doubt.

- Some issues are a matter of duty and responsibility. If school guidelines on these issues are not followed as a matter of decision, this should always be with the agreement of a member of the SLT. The reasons for deviating from the normal guidelines must be noted on the single central record and documented on the staff file, including a note of any disagreement about the best course of action.
- Other issues are only subject to advice from the school. Records will only be kept of deviation from guidelines if it is requested by the member of staff concerned.

## **GUIDELINES FOR SPECIFIC ISSUES AND SITUATIONS**

### **1. Dress and Appearance**

- Staff should wear clothing which is appropriate to their role, is not likely to be seen as sexually provocative or give rise to misunderstanding.
- Clothing must be culturally sensitive and bear no political or otherwise contentious slogans.

### **2. Personal Living Space**

- No student should be invited into the home of a member of staff or help them with any chores at that home unless the circumstances arise from an out-of-school relationship eg the student is a friend of a member of staff's child or a the member of staff is a friend of the family. Staff are strongly advised never to be alone with a student outside school eg babysitting for a student. The presence of a member of staff's own child would be a safeguard in these circumstances.

### **3. Gifts, Rewards and Favouritism**

- Occasional 'prizes' given for school-related activities, or end of term/year treats for tutor/teaching groups are acceptable, if given openly and as equitably as possible. Personal gifts to individual children should only be given in exceptional circumstances following a discussion with a senior leader, to ensure that there is no suggestion of favouritism or "grooming."
- The giving of small tokens by students to school staff as thanks or in appreciation is acceptable. It is unacceptable for staff to receive gifts on a regular basis from students. Staff should only accept gifts when it is absolutely clear that they are not bribes. If staff are in any doubt they must speak to a member of SLT.
- The selection of students for activities, privileges and responsibilities must be transparent and according to school guidelines, in order to avoid perceptions of favouritism.

### **4. Infatuations**

- Staff must report any indication that a young person may have an infatuation on any adult in the workplace to SLT. Any such indications should be noted and recorded.
- Staff who are subject to such an infatuation should ensure that their own behaviour is above suspicion.

### **5. Communication with Young People**

- Staff should only communicate with young people for professional reasons.

- Emails should only be sent from school email addresses. Staff are advised to take care with the language and terms of address used in order to maintain a formal distance.
- If email communication takes place with parents and the email contains any details about the student that goes beyond routine information a copy should be sent to the pastoral head to be filed. Normal practice should be for parents to email staff via the [admin@bournside.gloucs.sch.uk](mailto:admin@bournside.gloucs.sch.uk) email address, but parents may initiate contact through staff individual emails or reply directly to an email. Staff who wish to establish regular email contact with a parent or group of parents e.g. in relation to a planned trip, should ensure that a line manager is aware.
- Staff are strongly advised never to divulge to students personal information e.g. mobile numbers, personal email addresses. Staff should speak to a member of SLT if exceptional circumstances arise that make this necessary.
- Web based chat, messaging and social networking sites should never be used to send messages to young people or to expose students to inappropriate material including images and text.
- It is strongly advised that staff do not invite students to join their social networking sites and do not accept invitations from students.

## 6. Social Contact

- Social contact should be avoided unless:
  - the circumstances arise from an out-of-school relationship eg the student is a friend of a member of staff's child or a the member of staff is a friend of the family (see No 2 above)
  - the purpose of the contact is justifiable and open eg the member of staff leads a Sunday school class, coaches a youth team. Staff are advised to record any regular contact of this sort with SLT.
- Staff must report and record any cause for concern following this contact to SLT as soon as possible. This applies to anything that may put the young person, his/her family, the school or the professional standing of the member of staff at risk.
- Contact at a personal level with items such as birthday cards etc should be agreed with line managers. Staff must be aware of the personal risk of engaging in any one-to-one contact.

## 7. Sexual Contact

- Adults should not have sexual contact, make sexually suggestive remarks or engage in sexually suggestive communications with students at the school or about them.
- Relationships with students should always respect the professional and social boundaries of both adult and child.

## 8. Physical Contact

Staff should:

- seek to have no physical contact with students
- be aware that even well intentioned physical contact may be misconstrued
- never touch a child in a way which may be considered indecent
- always be prepared to report and explain actions
- always encourage children, where possible, to undertake self-care tasks independently
- work within health and safety regulations
- be aware of cultural or religious views about touching and always be sensitive to issues of gender

## 9. Activities that require Physical Contact

Staff should:

- treat children with dignity and respect and avoid contact with intimate parts of the body
- always explain to a child the reason why contact is necessary and what form that contact will take
- seek consent of parents where a child or young person is unable to do so because of a disability.
- consider alternatives, where it is anticipated that a child might misinterpret any such contact
- conduct activities where they can be seen by others
- be aware of gender, cultural or religious issues that may need to be considered prior to initiating physical contact

## **10. Behaviour Management**

Staff should:

- try to defuse situations before they escalate
- adhere to the organisation's behaviour management policy
- be mindful of factors which may impact upon a child or young person's behaviour e.g. bullying, abuse

## **11. Use of Control and Physical Intervention**

Staff should:

- always seek to defuse situations without physical intervention
- only intervene physically if such action is absolutely necessary to prevent injury to the young person, other young people or an adult
- only use minimum force for the shortest period necessary
- record and report to SLT as soon as possible after the event any incident where physical intervention has been used.

## **12. Children and Young People in Distress**

Staff should:

- always remember to be aware of professional boundaries when dealing with a distressed student, especially in a one-to-one situation. A distressed child does not always need, or expect, physical comfort.
- record and report to SLT all incidents where they have had to deal with a student who becomes distressed or angry in a way that is out of proportion to normal expectations and they are concerned

## **13. Intimate Care**

The responsibility of some jobs involving children with disabilities requires intimate physical contact. This should always be part of an agreed care plan. All children have a right to safety, privacy and dignity. Their views about the arrangements should be form part of the recorded agreement made between the child, parents/carers and the organisation.

## **14. Personal Care**

- Staff should avoid physical contact when young people are in a state of undress. Supervision should be appropriate to the needs/age of the child.
- Staff should not change, shower or bathe in the same area as children, or assist with any personal care task which a young person can undertake unaided.

## **15. First Aid and Administration of Medicine**

- Staff administering first aid should be suitably trained and qualified. Training should be regularly updated. The child should be informed about what is happening.
- Parents or carers must have given signed consent for medication to be administered. Regular medication should be part of a Care Plan.
- Where appropriate, young people should be encouraged to self-administer medication or treatment.

## **16. One to One Situations**

It is not realistic to state that one to one situations should never take place. However it needs to be recognised that adults working in one to one situations with young people are more vulnerable to unjust or unfounded allegations being made against them. One to one situations make young people more vulnerable to harm by those who may exploit their position of trust.

- Whenever possible staff should ensure that when they are in an *ad hoc* one-to one situation with a student doors and blinds are left open and/or another colleague is aware and nearby. Signs such as 'Engaged' should be avoided as they imply privacy. SLT or line managers should be aware of the time and purpose of any pre-planned one-to-one meeting.
- Staff should report to SLT any occasion when a child becomes distressed or angry in a way that is out of proportion to normal expectations and they are concerned.
- Meetings with young people outside of school should not take place without agreement of SLT.

## **17. Home Visits:**

Staff should not visit a child in their own home unless a member of SLT has agreed to the purpose of the visit. Where visits are made:

- Any potential risk should be assessed in advance.
- A record of the visit should be made, including times of arrival and departure and work undertaken.
- A member of staff should not undertake a visit alone.
- Staff should carry a mobile phone and an emergency contact.
- Staff should not invite a child to their own home or that of a family member, colleague or friend.

## **18. Transporting Children & Young People**

- On approved trips/visits staff must ensure that school guidelines for the use of minibuses, coaches, staff cars, ferries, trains and aeroplanes are followed.
- It is inappropriate for staff to offer lifts to a young person outside their normal working duties, unless this is agreed with SLT and parents/carers. Where a young person requires transport in an emergency situation or where not to give a lift may place a child at risk, the circumstances must always be reported to SLT as soon as possible. The school guidelines for the use of staff cars must be followed.

## **19. Trips and Outings**

- Staff remain in a position of trust and need to ensure that their behaviour remains professional at all times and stays within clearly defined professional boundaries.
- All trips and visits must conform to the school guidelines (see staff handbook). Sleeping arrangements for residential visits must be agreed with the Educational Visits Coordinator as part of the risk assessment.

## **20. Visitors to the School**

Staff must follow school procedures for hosting visitors to the school (see staff handbook).

## **21. Use of ICT**

### Internet Usage

- Staff are advised not to engage in any online activity that may compromise their professional responsibilities.
- Access to the Internet via the school's network should be used for professional purposes only. Please observe our Service Provider's Acceptable Usage Policy at <http://legacy.swgfl.org.uk/aup>

### Security

- Usernames and/or passwords should not be disclosed to anyone else.
- Passwords should be changed at regular intervals or whenever there is a risk of it having been compromised.
- Staff should ensure that passwords cannot be easily guessed or overseen.
- Staff must not leave computers unattended and unlocked whilst logged on.

### Data Protection

- Where personal data is transferred outside the school network, it must be done in a secure manner eg. a home computer should be password protected
- Confidential or irreplaceable data should not be stored on local laptop hard drives.
- Staff should ensure that computers or laptops are not displaying via a projector when accessing confidential or sensitive information.
- Use of the "allstaff" email facility should be restricted to occasions when it is really necessary. At other times, make use of appropriate distribution groups and individual addresses.

## **22. Photography and Videos**

### Staff should:

- be able to justify the purpose of photographs or videos in relation to school activities
- ensure that students understand why images are being taken and have agreed to the activity
- ensure that students are appropriately dressed

Staff are advised to use only school equipment to take photographs or videos of students

### Staff should not:

- display or distribute images of children without checking that parents /carers have not withdrawn their consent (see SIMs). Staff should avoid where possible publishing the names of students next to photographs.
- use mobile phones to take images of children
- take images in situations that are secretive or may be construed as such

## **23. Access to Inappropriate Images and Internet Usage**

### Staff should:

- as far as reasonably possible, be vigilant in preventing students from accessing inappropriate websites that may not be blocked by school filtering software
- ensure that films or material shown to students is suitable and age appropriate

## **24. Whistle blowing**

The school has a whistle blowing policy. This should be used where a member of staff has appropriate concerns.

## **Appendix**

### **Child Protection**

Key points - taken from the school's Child Protection policy and guidelines for staff from the Staff Handbook. Both documents can be found on Shared Resources.

- All staff should be vigilant for signs of physical and/or mental abuse or neglect. If uneasy about external signs such as bruising, evidence of injury, extreme tiredness, repeated sickness or headaches, you should discuss your concerns with the relevant pastoral head.
- Pastoral heads should also be informed if there are concerns about mood swings, signs of anxiety or depression, or undue attention-seeking. Students may also change their work patterns, becoming unreliable about deadlines, or producing work, which is not of their usual standard.
- Staff are asked to be vigilant in noting information about individual students disseminated by Pastoral Heads and student support and medical services in the school. These students may be children in public care, on the Child Protection register, or about whom there have been concerns relating to welfare. Please bear this in mind when dealing with the child. They may not be as well equipped or as well-organised as others. Please alert Pastoral Heads if there are any concerns.

### Disclosures

If a student talks to a member of staff about a matter of abuse or neglect, please follow these guidelines:

- Listen to what is said without displaying shock or disbelief
- Try to avoid interrogating the student, or leading their words
- Reassure him/her that they have done the right thing in telling someone. Do not promise confidentiality. Explain that you will have to talk to another member of staff in order to help them.
- If there is any question of the students being afraid to go home, or if you feel they are at immediate risk, contact one of the school's Child Protection Officers at once. If necessary they will be given cover to speak to the student. Even if you feel the risk is not immediate, please make contact as soon as possible. This should normally be on the same day.