ABBOTSHOLME SCHOOL

Staff Behaviour Policy

The aim of this policy is to provide clear guidance about staff behaviour and actions so as not to place pupils or staff at risk of harm or of allegations of harm to a pupil. It includes reference to staff/pupil relationships and the use of communications technology and social media. It should be read in conjunction with the Acceptable Use of Cameras, Mobile Phones & Personal Electronic Devices by Staff and Visitors Policy.

Further information can be seen in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' and https://www.ddscp.org.uk/

Confidential Information

Members of staff may have access to confidential information, which may be highly sensitive or private. They should never use confidential or personal information for their own, or others' advantage. Information must never be used to intimidate, humiliate, or embarrass the pupil. Confidential information about a child or young person should never be used casually in conversation or shared with any person other than on a need-to-know basis. In circumstances where the child's identity does not need to be disclosed the information should be used anonymously.

There are some circumstances in which a member of staff may be expected to share information about a child, for example when abuse is alleged or suspected. In such cases, individuals have a duty to pass information on without delay, but only to those with designated child protection responsibilities.

Making a Professional Judgement

This guidance cannot provide a complete checklist of what is, or is not appropriate behaviour for staff in all circumstances. Staff are expected to make judgements about their behaviour in order to secure the best interests and welfare of the pupils. Such judgements should always be recorded and shared with a member of the senior management team. In undertaking these actions individuals will be seen to be acting reasonably. Adults should always consider whether their actions are warranted, proportionate, and safe and applied equitably.

Power and Positions of Trust

As a result of their knowledge, position and/or the authority, all staff are in positions of trust. A relationship between a member of staff and a pupil is not a relationship between equals. There is

potential for exploitation and harm of vulnerable young people and all staff have a responsibility to ensure that an unequal balance of power is not used for personal advantage or gratification. Staff should always maintain appropriate professional boundaries and avoid behaviour which might be misinterpreted by others. They should report and record any incident with this potential.

Propriety and Behaviour

All staff working with pupils have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of pupils. It is therefore expected that they adopt high standards of personal conduct and use judgement and integrity about behaviours in places other than the work setting and whilst using social media/online.

The Use of Personal Living Space

The School acknowledges that Boarding staff and resident staff may at times invite pupils into their school property, for example: birthday parties or sleepovers with their children. The member of staff must at all times remain professional and act in accordance with the Safeguarding Children Policy. Resident staff must inform the Headmistress's PA of anyone staying overnight in their accommodation, including school pupils.

Staff should not invite pupils into their own homes unless there has been prior agreement in advance from the Headmistress and/or Safeguarding Team.

Gifts, Rewards and Favouritism

The giving of gifts or rewards to pupils should be part of an agreed policy for supporting positive behaviour or recognising achievements. Any gifts should be given openly and not be based on favouritism. Staff should exercise care when selecting pupils for school teams, productions, trips, and/or specific work tasks. Methods of selection should always be subject to clear, agreed criteria. Staff should also ensure that they do not accept any gift that might be construed as a bribe by others, or lead the giver to expect preferential treatment.

Infatuations

Occasionally a pupil may develop an infatuation with a staff member. These situations should be dealt with sensitively and appropriately to maintain the dignity and safety of all concerned. Such infatuations carry a high risk of words or actions being misinterpreted and adults should therefore make every effort to ensure that their own behaviour is above reproach. An adult who becomes aware that a child or young person is developing an infatuation should discuss this at the earliest opportunity with a senior member of staff so appropriate action can be taken to avoid any hurt, distress or embarrassment.

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Communication with Pupils (including the Use of Technology)

E-safety risks are posed more by behaviours and values than the technology itself. Staff working with digital technologies must therefore ensure that they establish safe and responsible on-line behaviours.

Communication between pupils and adults, by whatever method, should take place within clear and explicit professional boundaries and via the school systems. Staff should not share any personal information with a pupil; they should ensure all communications are transparent and open to scrutiny and be circumspect in their communications with children so as to avoid any possible misinterpretation of their motives or any behaviour which could be construed as grooming. All social networking with pupils should be avoided. Members of staff should not give their personal contact details to pupils unless the need to do so is agreed with senior management. Staff should also be aware of the need to maintain professional boundaries with pupils who have recently left the school.

Social Contact

Staff should not establish or seek to establish social contact with pupils for the purpose of securing a friendship or to pursue or strengthen a relationship. If a pupil or parent seeks to establish social contact, the member of staff should exercise her/his professional judgement in making a response. There will be occasions when there are social contacts between pupils and staff, for example where the parent and teacher are part of the same social circle. However, there must be awareness that this can be misconstrued. It is recognised that staff can support a parent who may be in particular difficulty. Care needs to be exercised in those situations where the parent comes to depend upon the staff member for support outside their professional role. This situation should be discussed with senior management and where necessary referrals made to the appropriate support agency.

Staff should be aware that their behaviour out of school is open to scrutiny by parents and the local community. Staff should not deliberately behave in a way as to bring the school into disrepute and they should take great care when expressing an opinion in public about their employer, any pupils or parents, they should be careful not to defame or disparage the school, its pupils or parents or breach Data Protection policies by disclosing information about a member of staff. Staff should not denigrate a school employee in the presence of third parties or adversely criticise in the presence of others except in appropriate procedure.

Sexual Contact

Staff should clearly understand the need to maintain appropriate boundaries in their contacts with pupils. Intimate or sexual relationships between pupils and staff will be regarded as a grave breach of trust. It is an offence for a person aged 18 or over, such as a teacher, to have a sexual relationship with a child under 18 where that person is in a position of trust in respect of that child, even if, in the case of those over 16, the relationship is consensual. Allowing or encouraging a relationship to develop in a way which might lead to a sexual relationship is also unacceptable. Adults should be aware that consistently conferring inappropriate special attention and favour upon a child might be construed as being part of a 'grooming' process and as such will give rise to concerns.

Physical Contact

There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for staff to have physical contact with pupils, but it is crucial that they only do so in ways appropriate to their professional role. When physical contact is made with pupils this should be in response to their needs at the time, of limited duration and appropriate to their age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity and background. Staff should use their professional judgement at all times. Staff should not have unnecessary physical contact with pupils. Where feasible, staff should seek the child's permission before initiating contact. Staff should listen, observe and take note of the child's reaction or feelings and – so far as is possible - use a level of contact and/or form of communication which is acceptable to the child for the minimum time necessary. The general culture of 'limited touch' should be adapted, where appropriate, to the individual requirements of each child. Staff should understand that physical contact can be easily misinterpreted. See Physical Contact, Use of Force and Restraint Policy.

Other activities that require physical contact

Staff who work in certain areas will have to initiate some physical contact with children, for example to demonstrate technique in the use of a particular piece of equipment, adjust posture, or perhaps to support a child so they can perform an activity safely. Such activities should be carried out in accordance with existing codes of conduct, regulations, and best practice. Physical contact should take place only when it is necessary in relation to a particular activity. It should take place in a safe and open environment i.e. one easily observed by others and last for the minimum time necessary.

There will be occasions when a distressed child needs comfort and reassurance and this may involve physical contact. Young children, in particular, may need immediate physical comfort.

Adults should use their professional judgement to comfort or reassure a child in an age-appropriate way whilst maintaining clear professional boundaries. Where an adult has a particular concern about the need to provide this type of care and reassurance, or is concerned that an action may be misinterpreted, this should be reported. On school trips, do not share beds with a pupil and do not share bedrooms or tents. Only in exceptional circumstances (for example, in trips involving Alpine huts, where accommodation might only be available in large dormitories) and where the arrangements have been previously discussed and agreed with safeguarding (DSL), will this ever be permitted.

Behaviour Management

Adults should not use any form of degrading treatment to punish a child. The use of sarcasm, demeaning or insensitive comments towards children and young people is not acceptable in any situation. The use of physical intervention can only be justified in exceptional circumstances and must be used as a last resort when other behaviour management strategies have failed.

Personal care

Young people are entitled to respect and privacy at all times and especially when in a state of undress, changing clothes, bathing etc. There are occasions where there is a need for an appropriate level of supervision in order to safeguard young people and/or satisfy health and safety considerations. This supervision should be appropriate to the needs and age of the young people concerned and sensitive to the potential for embarrassment (see entering dormitories and changing room procedure). Also see pre-prep and prep policies on personal care.

One to one situations

The school acknowledges and understands that at times staff do need to work in a one to one situation. This mainly occurs in teaching and boarding, and with School nurses in the Medical Centre**.** If you are teaching on a one to one basis it would be good practice for a staff member to keep the door open, inform a colleague, and ask for them to drop in on a random basis. 'Engaged' signs should not be used, as these create an opportunity for secrecy or the interpretation of secrecy. In cases, such as in the Music Department, where it is inappropriate for doors to be left open, one-to-one teaching should only be done in rooms which are part-glazed and can thus be seen through. Nurses must refer to their professional code of conduct.

Transporting children and young people

There will be occasions when staff are asked to transport children as part of their duties. Staff should ensure that the vehicle is roadworthy, appropriately insured and that the maximum capacity is not exceeded. It is a legal requirement that all passengers should wear seat belts and

it is the responsibility of the staff member to ensure this requirement is met. Staff should ensure if they are alone in the car if possible the pupil travels in the rear seat. It is inappropriate for staff to offer lifts to a pupil outside their normal working duties, unless this has been brought to the attention of the line manager and agreed. There may be occasions where the child or young person requires transport in an emergency situation or where not to give a lift may place a child at risk. Such circumstances must always be recorded and reported to a senior manager.

Access to inappropriate images and internet usage

There are no circumstances that will justify adults possessing indecent images of children. Staff should not use equipment belonging to their organisation to access adult pornography or bring personal equipment containing these images into the workplace. Adults should ensure that children and young people are not exposed to any inappropriate images or web links.

Responding to allegations or concerns about staff or volunteers

If a member of staff, or any other person, has any reason to believe that another adult in school has acted inappropriately or abused a child or young person, they will take action by reporting to the Headmistress (or the DSL where the Headmistress is not immediately available). Even though it may seem difficult to believe that a colleague may be unsuitable to work with children, the risk is far too serious for any member of staff to dismiss such a suspicion without taking action.

The term 'low-level' concern is any concern – no matter how small – that an adult working in or on behalf of the school may have acted in a way that:

- Is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work, **and**
- Does not meet the allegations threshold or is otherwise not considered serious enough to consider a referral to the designated officer at the local authority

Examples of such behaviour could include, but are not limited to:

- Being overly friendly with children
- Having favourites
- Taking photographs of children on their mobile phone
- Engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door
- Using inappropriate sexualised, intimidating or offensive language
- Making inappropriate comments, giving pupils nicknames

Staff are encouraged to come forward with any concern they may have, no matter how small it may seem. They may choose to discuss this with the DSL in the first instance or in situations where the Headmistress is not immediately available. All low-level concerns raised in this way will be passed on to the Headmistress at the earliest possible opportunity.

Any concerns raised will be followed up in order to determine whether further action is needed. Concerns raised may help to identify weaknesses in the school's safeguarding systems. All concerns will be handled sensitively and proportionately when they are raised.