



**Ormiston  
Sheffield**  
Community Academy

# **Conduct Guidance Policy**

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## **GUIDANCE ABOUT CONDUCT FOR STAFF, VOLUNTEERS, GOVERNORS, ETC WHOSE WORK BRINGS THEM INTO CONTACT WITH YOUNG PEOPLE**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 It would be impossible and inappropriate to lay down hard and fast rules to cover all the circumstances in which staff relate to students and where opportunities for their conduct to be misconstrued might occur. Staff must exercise professional judgement in their dealings with students. For the vast majority of staff this code of conduct will serve only to confirm what has always been their practice. If staff have any doubts about the advice contained in this document they should consult the Principal.
- 1.2 From time to time, however, it is advisable for all staff to reappraise their teaching styles, relationships with students and their manner and approach to individual students, to ensure that they give no grounds for any doubts in the minds of colleagues, students or parents.

### **2. Child Abuse**

- 2.1 Child abuse may be physical, sexual or psychological. Whilst child abusers may be relatives or friends of the family, some meet children in other contexts and a small minority of these may gain access to children in schools as teachers or support staff or through their voluntary involvement in school activities. Students should not feel inhibited from reporting abuse against them by staff or volunteers, or any incident where a student has grounds to believe that a member of staff has crossed the boundary of acceptable behaviour. The Principal and staff will continue to do all they can to ensure that the environment within schools encourages students and staff to make truthful reports of any inappropriate behaviour.
- 2.2 The action to be taken by staff when they suspect a student is being abused by a person outside or inside the school, and the steps that should be taken if an allegation of abuse is made against a member of staff by a student, are set out in the school's child protection procedure and all staff should be familiar with that.

### **3. Other procedures and guidance**

- 3.1 Staff should also be familiar with the school's policies about physical contact with students, the use of reasonable force to control or restrain students, and the procedures that should be followed if a student needs first aid or medical attention.

#### **4. Guidelines for Staff**

##### **4.1 Private meetings with students**

Staff and volunteers should be aware that private meetings with individual students may give rise to concern. There will be occasions when a confidential interview or a one to one meeting is necessary, but, where possible, such interviews should be conducted in a room with visual access, or with the door open, or in a room or area which is likely to be frequented by other people, and another student or adult should be present or nearby. Where such conditions cannot apply, staff should to ensure that another adult knows that the interview is taking place.

Meetings away from the school premises should only be arranged with the specific approval of the Principal.

##### **4.2 Physical Contact with students**

Physical contact may be misconstrued by a student, parent or observer. Touching students, including well intentioned informal and formal gestures such as putting a hand on the shoulder or arm, can, if repeated regularly, lead to serious questions being raised. As a general principle staff must not make gratuitous physical contact with their students. It is particularly unwise to attribute touching to their teaching style or as a way of relating to students.

Any form of physical punishment of students is unlawful as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour unless it is by way of restraint. It is particularly important that staff understand this both to protect their own position and the overall reputation of the school.

##### **4.3 Where physical contact may be acceptable**

There may be occasions where a distressed student needs comfort and reassurance which may include physical comforting such as a caring parent would give. Staff should use their discretion in such cases to ensure that what is, and what is seen to be by others present, normal and natural does not become unnecessary and unjustified contact, particularly with the same student over a period of time. Where a member of staff has a particular concern about the need to provide this type of care and reassurance he/she should seek the advice of the Principal.

Some staff are likely to come into physical contact with students from time to time in the course of their duties. Examples include: showing a student how to use a piece of apparatus or equipment; demonstrating a move or exercise during games or PE, and contact activities at a youth club. Staff should be aware of the limits within which such contact should properly take place and of the possibility of such contact being misinterpreted.

There may be occasions where it is necessary for staff to restrain a student physically to prevent him/her from inflicting injury to others or self-injury, damaging property, or causing disruption. In such cases only the minimum force necessary may be used and any action taken must be to restrain the student. Where an employee has taken action to physically restrain a student he/she should make a written report of the incident in the form prescribed by the school's policy on restraint.

#### **4.4 Caring for students with particular problems**

Staff who have to administer first aid should ensure wherever possible that other children or another adult are present if they are in any doubt as to whether necessary physical contact could be misconstrued.

Wherever possible staff who have to help children with toileting difficulties should be accompanied by another adult, and students should, wherever possible, be encouraged to change themselves. It is accepted that there will be some situations where students will present particular problems for staff and the emphasis will be on what is reasonable in all the circumstances.

#### **4.5 Relationships and attitudes**

All staff should clearly understand the need to maintain appropriate boundaries in their dealings with students. Intimate or sexual relationships between staff and students will be regarded as a grave breach of trust, and any sexual activity between a member of staff and a student under 18 years of age may be a criminal offence.

All staff should ensure that their relationships with students are appropriate to the age and gender of the students, and take care that their language or conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Attitudes, demeanour and language all require care and thought, particularly when members of staff of either sex are dealing with adolescent boys and girls.

From time to time staff may encounter students who display attention seeking behaviour, or profess to be attracted to them. Staff should aim to deal with those situations sensitively and appropriately, but must ensure that their behaviour cannot be misinterpreted.



In these circumstances, the member of staff should also ensure that the Principal or a senior colleague is aware of the situation

#### **4.6 Where conversation of a sensitive nature may be appropriate**

Many staff have a pastoral responsibility for students and in order to fulfil that role effectively there will be occasions where conversations will cover particularly sensitive matters. Staff must, in these circumstances, use their discretion to ensure that, for example, any probing for details cannot be construed as unjustified intrusion.

Other staff in schools may, from time to time, be approached by students for advice. Students may also appear distressed and staff may feel the need to ask if all is well. In such cases staff must judge whether it is appropriate for them to offer counselling and advice or whether to refer the student to another member of staff with acknowledged pastoral responsibility for the particular student.

#### **4.7 Inappropriate comments and discussions with students**

As with physical contact, comments by staff to students, either individually or in groups, can be misconstrued. As a general principle therefore staff must not make unnecessary comments to and/or about students which could be construed to have a sexual connotation. It is also unacceptable for staff to introduce or to encourage debate amongst students in class, or elsewhere, which could be construed as having a sexual connotation that is unnecessary given the context of the lesson, or the circumstances. At the same time it is recognised that a topic raised by a student is best addressed rather than ignored.

Systematic use of insensitive, disparaging or sarcastic comments are also unacceptable.

#### **4.8 Extra-curricular activities**

Staff should be particularly careful when supervising students in extra-curricular activities, or a residential setting such as a ski trip, outdoor education camp or extended visit away from home. Typically a less formal approach than usual is appropriate in these settings, but that can be open to misinterpretation. Although a more informal approach is usual in such circumstances, the standard of behaviour expected of staff will be no different from the behaviour expected within school.

Staff should take care in receiving or giving gifts to students which could be misunderstood. Gifts to individual students from staff will be exceptional and should be assessed against the school's policy or by a senior member of staff.

Inappropriate gifts from students should be reported – refer to Gifts and Hospitality Policy.

#### **4.9 Reporting incidents**

Following any incident where a member of staff feels that his/her actions have been, or may be, misconstrued he/she should discuss the matter with the Principal. Where it is agreed with the Principal the member of staff or volunteer should provide a written report of the incident. A detailed written report should always be made if a member of staff had been obliged to restrain a student physically, or where a complaint has been made by a student, parent or other adult.