



HEYFORD PARK  
FREE SCHOOL

BONUM COMMUNE COMMUNITATIS

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# HEYFORD PARK FREE SCHOOL

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Code of Conduct  
Policy

September 2018

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## **Code of Conduct Policy:**

### **IMPACT OF THIS POLICY**

The impact on Heyford Park Free School using this policy is as follows:-

Staff are aware of their duty to adhere to code of conduct, not just to protect themselves but to ultimately protect the children. The contents of this policy is reiterated in our annual staff training too.

### **Introduction**

Heyford Park Free School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. The vast majority of staff who work with children act professionally and aim to provide a safe and supportive environment, which secures the well-being and very best outcomes for students in their care. However, it is recognised that in this area of work tensions and misunderstandings can occur. It is here that the behaviour of staff can give rise to allegations of abuse being made against them. Allegations may be malicious or misplaced. They may arise from differing perceptions of the same event, but when they occur, they are inevitably distressing and difficult for all concerned. Equally, it must be recognised that some allegations will be genuine and there are persons who will deliberately seek out, create or exploit opportunities to abuse children. It is therefore essential that all possible steps are taken to safeguard students and ensure that the staff working with them are safe to do so.

### **STAFF BEHAVIOUR AND CODE OF CONDUCT**

Staff need to ensure that their behaviour does not inadvertently lay them open to allegations of abuse. They need to treat all pupils with respect and try, as far as possible, not to be alone with a child or young person. Where this is not possible, for example, in an instrumental music lesson, or sports coaching lesson, it is good practice to ensure that others are within earshot. Where possible, a gap or barrier should be maintained between teacher and child at all times. Any physical contact should be the minimum required for care, instruction or restraint. Staff should avoid taking one pupil on his/her own in a car.

### **APPROPRIATE PHYSICAL CONTACT AND INTIMATE CARE**

#### **Introduction**

All teachers understand the need to maintain appropriate boundaries in their dealings with pupils. From January 2001 it became a criminal offence for a teacher or other persons who work with young children to breach the relationship of trust between them. The offence is punishable on conviction by a fine of up to the statutory maximum

and /or a term of imprisonment of up to 6 months. This Code of Conduct is intended to help colleagues reduce further the risk of any vulnerability to false or malicious allegations of misconduct or abuse towards pupils and students with whom they work. All teachers will understand and appreciate that a code of conduct cannot cover all eventualities and will not totally remove the risk of false or malicious allegations. In many cases it will simply confirm good professional practice. However, heightened awareness of abuse on the part of parents and pupils and a high media profile given to child abuse cases make it advisable for all staff to re-examine their approaches to individual pupils and their teaching styles to ensure that these do not give any grounds for doubt or suspicion on the part of colleagues, parents or pupils.

## **THE CODE**

General Teachers should take care that their relationships with pupils reflect the age, gender and maturity of the pupils. It will be particularly important to ensure that all aspects of demeanour, language and attitudes - however conveyed - do not give rise to misunderstandings, especially when dealing with adolescent boys. Ambiguous or ambivalent comment and conduct, in particular, should be avoided.

### **Physical contact with pupils**

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. Staff should, therefore, use their professional judgment at all times. Staff should not have unnecessary physical contact with pupils and should be alert to the fact that minor forms of friendly physical contact can be misconstrued by pupils or onlookers.

A member of staff should be cautious of any demonstration of affection, making sure it is appropriate to the situation. Physical contact should never be secretive, or for the gratification of the adult, or represent a misuse of authority. If a member of staff believes that an action could be misinterpreted, the incident and circumstances should be recorded as soon as possible, the DSL informed and, if appropriate, a copy placed on the pupil's file.

Contact under these circumstances should be for the minimum time necessary to complete the activity and take place in an open environment. Staff should remain sensitive to any discomfort expressed verbally or non-verbally by the child. Touching pupils, including well-intentioned informal and formal gestures such as putting a hand on the shoulder or arm, may, if repeated regularly, be inappropriate. Staff must not make gratuitous physical contact with pupils and should avoid attributing 'touching' to their teaching style as a way of relating to pupils. There will be occasions when physical contact will be acceptable. In general, these will fall into one of three categories:

1. Action to prevent harm or injury to the pupil or to others. If it is necessary to prevent a pupil causing injury to him/herself or to others the use of minimum force and contact necessary to prevent harm or injury is acceptable and defensible. Such incidents must always be reported accordingly to Head of Primary, Principal and DSL. A record will be kept on Integris and parents

informed immediately. Where a difficulty arises from the interplay between the rule against corporal punishment and the legitimate use of reasonable force, the DfE's Advice for Schools is a useful resource.

2. Comforting a pupil in distress. There is no easy definition of what is acceptable since much will depend on the circumstances, the age of the pupil, the extent and cause of the distress and the alternative means of providing comfort. Colleagues will need to use their professional judgement and discretion in relation to these factors. They should consider how others might perceive the action, even if no one else is present, and ensure that it does not develop into unnecessary contact. Particular care must be taken in instances which involve the same pupil over a period of time.

3. Unavoidable contact. This is a particularly sensitive issue in subjects such as Physical Education and Drama and in some forms of skills coaching. It is acknowledged that some staff, for example, those who teach PE and games, or who offer music tuition, will, on occasions, have to initiate physical contact with pupils in order to support a pupil so they can perform a task safely, to demonstrate the use of a particular piece of equipment/instrument or assist them with an exercise. This should be done with the pupil's agreement. All teachers must be alert to the possibilities of misinterpreting any contact. To avoid such misunderstanding all planned contact must be demonstrably unavoidable. It may be, for example, that alternative methods involving demonstrations of particular techniques by the teacher or a particularly competent pupil may be more appropriate than modifying a pupil's technique by physical contact. It will generally not be acceptable for physical contact to take place between adolescent pupils and teachers. In cases of doubt or uncertainty staff should seek advice from the Principal or Senior Assistant Principal.

For more information on what to do if Physical contact has been necessary see *PHYSICAL RESTRAINT AND USE OF REASONABLE FORCE POLICY*

## **COMMUNICATIONS WITH PUPILS**

Staff should not give their personal mobile phone numbers or email addresses to pupils, nor should they communicate with them by text message or personal email. Nor should they communicate with pupils via any form of social media site. If they need to speak to a pupil by telephone, they should use one of the school's telephones and email using the school system. The group leader on all trips and visits involving an overnight stay should take a school mobile phone with him/her and may ask the pupils for their mobile numbers before allowing them out in small, unsupervised groups. The school mobile should be used for any contact with pupils that may be necessary. The group leader will delete any record of pupils' mobile phone numbers at the end of the trip or visit and should ensure that pupils delete any staff numbers that they may have acquired during the trip.

### **Comments and discussions with pupils**

Teachers must avoid comments to or about pupils which could be taken to have sexual overtones. It is equally unacceptable for colleagues to encourage debate and

discussion between groups of students, which could be interpreted as having sexual overtones which are not justified in the context of the teaching programme. It will be especially helpful if Schemes of Work highlight particular areas of risk and sensitivity. Specific guidance may be needed to assist newly qualified or other teachers who are new to this area of work. This will call for the exercise of careful judgment in responding to questions raised by pupils.

Notwithstanding the advice given above it is recognised that, in order to discharge particular pastoral responsibilities, teachers may from time to time need to engage in conversation with pupils which cover sensitive matters. Teachers must use their professional judgement to ensure that they are not drawn into areas inappropriate to their duties or their relationship with the pupils concerned. Staff must also use their discretion to ensure that, for example, any probing for details cannot be construed as unjustified intrusion.

In responding to individual students' distress staff will need to consider carefully whether they should offer advice, sympathy or counselling if a discussion enters a sensitive area or, alternatively, refer them to a colleague or agency who is better placed to offer appropriate advice.

The persistent and hurtful use of sarcastic, demeaning or insensitive comments towards young people may also be regarded as a form of abuse which is potentially very damaging and should be avoided.

### **Personal letters and on-line communication**

It will rarely be appropriate for teachers to write personal notes or letters, or to send e-mail, to individual students. If a teacher believes it to be necessary to write a personal note to a pupil, s/he should discuss the purpose and context with a senior colleague, who should refer to the Principal if further guidance is required.

This advice is not intended to curtail the use of e-mail where schools have agreed the use of this medium for submission of work, advice over aspects of subjects being covered or other professional matters and have ensured that parents and carers are aware of the school's policy. However, all teachers and other adults using e-mail in this context need to be aware of the less formal style that can characterise this form of communication and should ensure that responses do not convey an inappropriate tone. In particular, a friendly and chatty style committed to e-mail can easily be misconstrued by the recipient as the 'conversation' is effectively private to just two individuals, with all that this implies. Teachers should keep passwords secure and ensure that no other person can gain access to their email account and maliciously send messages which appear to have been written by them. Ideally, both teachers and pupils should use an e-mail address provided as part of an official school internet service, even if they are sending messages while working at home. Since these services can be monitored, they provide a measure of protection for both parties **[See Internet Policy]**.

The increased availability of internet 'chat rooms' and similar on-line forums also poses risks for children and teachers. While they are popular among young people and offer many positive experiences, there is widespread concern about their potential abuse

by paedophiles attempting to groom new victims. Teachers should not use unregulated chat rooms for children and should be aware that it is impossible to determine the age of any participant in these environments. Managed services are available in which on-line discussions for educational purposes can be organized in a secure environment for bona fide participants.

## **PRIVATE MEETINGS**

Private meetings, by their very nature, provide opportunities for pupils to make malicious allegations. Teachers and others must therefore recognise this possibility and plan such meetings accordingly. It is advisable to avoid remote areas of the school and to ensure that wherever possible the door is left open or visual contact with others is maintained. Under no circumstances should meetings with individual pupils be arranged off the school premises without the prior approval of the Principal or any senior colleague with delegated authority to approve such meetings. This includes the transporting of individual children in private cars. Such meetings should, in any event, be discouraged.

Where it is not possible to meet in the circumstances referred to above another member of staff should be told of the meeting beforehand. Steps to prevent others entering a room by the use of 'Meeting in Progress' signs or similar actions are especially likely to be open to misinterpretation. In many cases it will be advisable for another pupil or adult to be present or in a position to minimise risk during the interview.

Where a teacher is conducting an individual lesson with a pupil, including individual music lessons, a room with a window in the door should be used.

## **SUPERVISING CHANGING ROOMS AND SHOWERS**

It is important that the changing rooms are supervised to ensure that behaviour is appropriate, that students get changed as speedily as possible and that pupils have showers. Nonetheless the following guidelines should be followed:

- 1.) Staff should, whenever possible, supervise in pairs
- 2.) Staff should knock before entering changing rooms in order to warn pupils of their approach
- 3.) If supervising showers, the member of staff should stand by the wall at the entrance to the shower room and should not look into any of the individual cubicles.

## **CAMERAS IN SCHOOL**

The word 'camera' includes all devices capable of recording images e.g. mobile phones, Ipads etc. Cameras may be used to record:

Whole school events  
Class events o Sports  
Outings  
Pupils' progress  
Displays etc.

Staff should use the school camera for these purposes. If they use their own cameras or mobile phones, they should let a member of the SLT know that they have done so and should not keep images of children on their devices any longer than is necessary to ensure that they are transferred to the school's database.

Any photographic material involving the School, its staff or pupils may only be used within School (e.g. in displays) or in School publications; newsletters, the prospectus, cards, the School's website, or in press advertisements and articles.

At the time of their children joining the school, parents are asked to agree that photographs of their children may appear on the website using only the child's first name, and in all other internal publications. Specific permission must always be sought if a photograph is to be submitted to the local press since non-attributed photographs are unacceptable.

No photographic material relating to the school, its staff or its pupils may be published or circulated by staff in any other way such as through social networking sites. For the safety of staff and in line with safeguarding principles, photographs should not be taken in situations liable to misinterpretation.

No Photos should, therefore, be taken in the Changing Room or in the Boarding House, unless, in the case of the latter, for publicity purposes.

It is particularly important that these procedures are observed when dealing with EYFS pupils.

## **THE RECEIVING OF GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY**

It is of course only natural that many parents will wish to give teachers presents to thank them for looking after their children, particularly at the end of terms. The receiving of gifts and hospitality by members of staff is acceptable if there is no possibility that the gift might be misinterpreted or that it is being given or received with the intention of gaining advantage for the giver or the receiver.

The gift should be of an appropriate value and type for the circumstances and so, as a guideline a member of staff might well be given a bottle of wine or chocolates by grateful parents or be asked to attend a social event.

If the gift is obviously worth in excess of £50 the member of staff should seek permission from the Principal to receive the gift. A note will be made of the decision. It is essential that all staff should not put themselves in a position where their acceptance of a gift could lead to misinterpretation.

## **RESPECTING HOSPITALITY**

Staff should be very careful to respect the confidentiality of staff, parents and pupils. Anything which they have heard in school about people should not be shared with others outside of school.

The school understands that staff will need to share information amongst themselves but data protection legislation restricts the sharing of information to those who need to know professionally.

## **OUT OF SCHOOL AND AFTERSCHOOL ACTIVITIES**

Colleagues should take particular care when supervising pupils in the less formal atmosphere of a residential setting or after-school activity. The more relaxed relationships that may promote successful activities can be misinterpreted by young people.

It is important to emphasise that the standards of professional conduct and behaviour expected of teachers in these situations should be no different from those which apply within school.

## **TRANSPORTING PUPILS**

A teacher should never give a lift in a car to a pupil alone, unless in an emergency in which case the Principal should be informed. Certain staff have permission to transport students in between sites. Wherever possible and practicable it is advisable that transport is undertaken other than in private vehicles, with at least one adult additional to the driver acting as an escort. If there are exceptional circumstances that make unaccompanied transportation of pupils unavoidable, the journey should be made known to a senior member of staff.

## **PUPILS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

If pupils require assistance with going to the toilet staff should consider whether it would be possible to arrange for the presence of another adult in the vicinity. Where this is not possible employees should discuss with the Principal what arrangements will be reasonable in all the circumstances.

## **FIRST AID**

The existence of any life threatening or serious condition will determine the suitability and necessity of physical contact. In the absence of such justification employees who administer first aid should ensure that, wherever possible, other children or another adult can be present if there is any doubt over the possibility of any physical contact being misconstrued.

## **TEACHING MATERIALS**

The use of books, videos and films of an explicit or sensitive nature, particularly in relation to language or sexual behaviour must be given careful consideration to ensure that its selection is not subsequently misinterpreted. In case of doubt, staff should consult the Principal before using such resources. Staff wishing to show video resources, such as DVDs, which have a rating classification (U, PG, 12, 15, 18) must ensure that only pupils who fall into the correct classification have access to the content. There should always, therefore, be a clear link with the targets of the teacher's programme.

## **CORPORAL PUNISHMENT**

Any form of physical punishment is prohibited under disciplinary procedures and potentially actionable in law. This also applies to any form of physical response to misbehaviour. In addition, for EYFS pupils, the threat of using corporal punishment is also prohibited.

## **REPORTING INCIDENTS**

Teachers should report any concerns they may have following any incident where s/he feels that his/her actions may have been misinterpreted. This report should be made to the Principal as soon as possible after the incident and should include as an immediate follow-up the preparation of a written note of the incident, a copy of which should be given to him. The teacher may also wish to seek advice from his/her professional association. Whilst reporting of incidents is always advisable it is particularly important to ensure that a contemporary written record is made if any form of restraint has been used against a pupil or whenever a pupil, parent or third party has complained about an action or expressed an intention to complain.

**Adopted by Governing Body: September 2018**  
**Review due: September 2019**