

GORDON'S SCHOOL

STAFF CODE OF CONDUCT 2019-20

1. INTRODUCTION

This guidance has been produced to help staff establish the safest possible learning and working environments which safeguard young people and reduce the risk of staff being falsely accused of improper or unprofessional conduct.

2. DUTY OF CARE

All staff and adults on site, whether paid or voluntary, have a duty to keep young people safe and to protect them from sexual, physical and emotional harm. Failure to do so may be regarded as professional neglect.

The duty of care is, in part, exercised through the development of respectful, caring and professional relationships between staff and students and behaviour by staff that demonstrates integrity, maturity and good judgement.

3. EXERCISE OF PROFESSIONAL JUDGEMENT

This guidance highlights behaviour that is illegal, inappropriate or inadvisable. There will be occasions and circumstances in which staff have to make decisions or take action in the best interests of the child or young person which could contravene this guidance or where no guidance exists. Individuals are expected to make judgements about their behaviour in order to secure the best interests and welfare of the children in their charge and in so doing, will be seen to be acting reasonably.

Staff should always consider whether their actions are warranted, proportionate and safe, and applied equitably.

4. POWER AND POSITIONS OF TRUST

As a result of their knowledge, position and/or the authority invested in their role, all adults working with children and young people in education settings are in positions of trust in relation to the young people in their care. A relationship between a member of staff and a student cannot be a relationship between equals.

Wherever possible, staff should avoid behaviour which might be misinterpreted by others, and report and record any incident with this potential.

5. CONFIDENTIALITY

Members of staff:

- are expected to treat information they receive about children and young people in a discreet and confidential manner
- should seek advice from a senior member of staff if they are in any doubt about sharing information they hold or which has been requested of them
- need to be cautious when passing information to others about a child/young person
- need to know and understand all elements of the School's Child Protection Safeguarding Policy.

6. BEHAVIOUR

All staff should adopt high standards of personal conduct in order to maintain the confidence and respect of their peers, students and the public in general.

Staff should not:

- make sexual remarks to, or about, a student
- discuss their own sexual relationships with or in the presence of students
- discuss a student's sexual relationships in inappropriate settings or contexts
- make (or encourage others to make) unprofessional or inappropriate comments about students which might humiliate them.

7. **DRESS AND APPEARANCE**

At all times staff dress and appearance must be appropriate, formal and professional and should mirror the requirements made of students. Male members of staff should wear a suit/tie or formal jacket/trousers and tie. Female members of staff should ensure that their dress is smart and formal eg trouser/skirt suit, dress or skirt and jacket/smart cardigan. PE/sports staff should wear appropriate Gordon's School sports wear or sports kit which should be cleaned regularly. Staff must not wear shorts in the dining hall. Support staff should wear appropriate dress/uniform as designated for their role.

Piercings are limited to ears, however, discrete nose piercings may be allowed for religious or cultural reasons. Ear piercings and earrings should be discrete and in keeping with Gordon's ethos. Other piercings are discouraged, and this includes lip, face, eyebrow etc.

Visible tattoos are discouraged and where present should not be offensive to others. Where they are deemed to be offensive they should be appropriately covered.

8. **GIFTS, REWARDS AND SELECTION OF STUDENTS**

There are occasions when children or parents wish to pass small tokens of appreciation to staff eg at Christmas or as a thank-you and this is acceptable. However, it is unacceptable to receive gifts on a regular basis or of any significant value.

Staff must not give personal gifts to students.

Staff should exercise care when selecting students for school teams, productions, trips and/or specific work tasks in order to avoid perceptions of favouritism or injustice. Similar care should be exercised when students are excluded from an activity.

9. **INFATUATIONS**

Staff need to be aware that it is 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. Staff should also be aware that such circumstances always carry a high risk of words or actions being misinterpreted and for allegations to be made against staff.

A member of staff who becomes aware that a student may be infatuated with them, or a colleague, should discuss this at the earliest opportunity with a senior colleague so that appropriate action can be taken.

10. **SOCIAL CONTACT**

Staff should not establish or seek to establish social contact with students **or parents** for the purpose of securing a friendship or to pursue or strengthen a relationship.

Staff should:

- always approve any planned social contact with students or parents with senior staff
- advise senior management of any social contact they have with a student which may give rise to concern
- report and record any situation which they feel might compromise the school

- or their own professional standing
- refrain from sending personal communication to students e.g. letters and cards unless agreed with senior staff.

11. **COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENTS USING TECHNOLOGY (see Safe Use of Technology Policy)**

Communication with children and adults, by whatever method, should take place within professional boundaries and staff should avoid any personal subject matter. This includes the wider use of technology such as mobile phones, text messaging, emails, digital cameras, videos, webcams, websites and blogs.

Staff should not give their personal contact details to students including email, home or mobile telephone numbers unless the need to do so is agreed with senior staff. Internal email systems should only be used in accordance with school policy.

Staff should:

- only use equipment provided by school to communicate with children
- only make contact with children for professional reasons and in accordance with any school policy
- recognise that text messaging students is rarely an appropriate response to a child in a crisis situation or at risk of harm. It should only be used as a last resort when other forms of communication are not possible.

Social Media

Staff with private / personal social media accounts must ensure privacy systems are in place. They must not accept students or parents as “friends”.

12. **PHYSICAL CONTACT AND INTERVENTION**

There are occasions when it is appropriate for staff to have physical contact with students but it is crucial that they only do so in ways appropriate to their professional role. Staff should be familiar with the School’s Positive Handling Policy.

Staff should:

- be aware that even well intentioned physical contact may be misconstrued by the child, an observer or by anyone to whom this action is described
- never touch a child in a way which may be considered indecent
- always be prepared to explain actions and accept that all physical contact be open to scrutiny
- never indulge in horseplay, tickling or fun fights
- always encourage children, where possible, to undertake self-care tasks independently.

13. **STUDENTS IN DISTRESS**

There may be occasions when a distressed student needs comfort and reassurance. This may include age-appropriate physical contact. Staff should remain self-aware at all times in order that their contact is not threatening, intrusive or subject to misinterpretation.

Staff should:

- consider the way in which they offer comfort to a distressed student
- always tell a colleague when and how they offered comfort to a distressed child
- record situations which may give rise to concern.

14. **PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND OTHER ACTIVITIES WHICH REQUIRE PHYSICAL CONTACT**

Some staff, for example those who teach PE, games and physical activities or who offer music tuition, will, on occasions, have to initiate physical contact with students in order to support a child 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 student's agreement.

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.

15. **SHOWERS AND CHANGING**

Staff should:

- avoid any physical contact when children are in a state of undress
- avoid any visually intrusive behaviour
- where there are changing rooms/bedrooms/dorms in boarding Houses, announce their intention of entering
- avoid remaining in the room unless student needs require it.

Staff must not:

- change in the same place as children
- shower with children.

16. **BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT**

Staff should adhere to the guidelines in the Behaviour and Discipline Policy.

17. **SEXUAL CONTACT**

The Sexual Offences Act 2003 states that it is "an offence for any adult to intentionally behave in sexual ways in relation to a child aged under 18 where the adult is in a position of trust in respect of the child".

Staff must:

- not pursue sexual relationships with children and young people either **in or out of school**, including any student that has left the school or attends a previous school.
- avoid any form of communication with a child or young person which could be interpreted as sexually suggestive or provocative i.e. verbal comments, letters, notes, electronic mail, phone calls, texts, physical contact.

18. **ONE TO ONE SITUATIONS**

One to one situations with students should be avoided where possible but where it is unavoidable staff should:

- avoid meetings with students in remote, secluded areas of school
- ensure there is visual access and/or an open door in one to one situations
- inform other staff of the meeting beforehand, assessing the need to have them present or close by
- avoid use of 'engaged' or equivalent signs wherever possible. Such signs may create an opportunity for secrecy or the interpretation of secrecy
- always report any situation where a child becomes distressed or angry to a senior colleague.

Line managers of staff who may be required to be in a one to one situation with students must ensure that they regularly visit the one to one sessions where practicable. Line managers must regularly meet those staff in one to one situations with students to discuss any issues arising with particular students.

Where a one to one situation is demonstrably unavoidable eg one to one music lessons a risk assessment should be undertaken.

Additional safeguarding training will be provided to any members of staff likely to be in regular one to one situations with students.

19. **HOME VISITS**

The need to visit a student's home rarely, if ever, occurs at Gordon's School. Any such visit must be discussed with a member of the Senior Leadership Team in advance.

20. **TRANSPORTING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

In certain situations e.g. out of school activities, staff or volunteers may agree to transport children in their own car or school minibus eg to take a child to hospital. Staff should take note of guidance relating to insurance if they are using their own car, this is available from the Assistant Bursar.

Staff should:

- plan and agree arrangements with all parties (ie staff, **parents**, students) in advance, reporting the reason for the journey, route, time of arrival etc including informing the Deputy Head (P)
- ensure that they are alone with a child for the minimum time possible
- If they are on their own in a vehicle with a student, the student should sit in the back
- be aware that the safety and welfare of the child is their responsibility.

21. **EDUCATIONAL VISITS AND AFTER SCHOOL CLUBS ETC**

Staff should take particular care when supervising students in the less formal atmosphere of a residential setting or after school activity.

During school activities that take place off the school site or out of school hours, a more relaxed discipline or informal dress and language code may be acceptable. However, staff remain in a position of trust and need to ensure that their behaviour cannot be interpreted as seeking to establish an inappropriate relationship or friendship.

Where out of school activities include overnight stays, careful consideration needs to be given to sleeping arrangements. These should be agreed with the Trips and Visits Coordinator.

Staff should:

- always have another adult present in out of school activities, unless otherwise agreed with senior staff in school
- undertake a risk assessment and have parental consent to the activity
- ensure that their behaviour remains professional at all times.

22. **FIRST AID AND ADMINISTRATION OF MEDICATION**

Unless there is an emergency, only Medical Centre staff and House staff should administer medication / "homely remedies". Otherwise only trained first aiders should do this. Staff must be familiar with the school's Medical Policy.

23. **CURRICULUM**

Many areas of the curriculum can include or raise subject matter which is sexually explicit, or of an otherwise sensitive nature. Care should be taken to ensure that resource materials cannot be misinterpreted and clearly relate to the learning outcomes identified by the lesson plan. This plan should highlight particular areas of risk and sensitivity.

Staff should:

- have clear written lesson plans
- not enter into or encourage inappropriate offensive discussions

24. **PHOTOGRAPHY, VIDEOS ETC**

Staff must not:

- take, display or distribute images of children unless they have consent to do so/it is part of a planned lesson/activity
- store images of children on personal devices.
- For clarification, staff may use personal devices to take photographs to be uploaded immediately to school-owned web space (including social media space) or onto school network / cloud drives. The images must then be deleted immediately from the staff member's device.

25. **INAPPROPRIATE IMAGES**

Staff should take extreme care to ensure that students are not exposed, through any medium, to inappropriate or indecent images.

Staff must

- ensure that students are not, through the use of any medium, exposed to indecent or inappropriate images
- follow the school policy on the Safe Use of Technology and the Acceptable Use Policy.

26. **ACCOMMODATION ON SITE**

Staff should not invite one or more students into their home unless the reason to do so has been firmly established and agreed with senior staff. It is not appropriate for private living space to be used to meet students.

Under no circumstances should students be asked to assist staff living on site with jobs or tasks in their private accommodation.

This guidance also applies to all persons living in or visiting the accommodation.

Staff should:

- be vigilant in maintaining their privacy when living in on-site accommodation
- be mindful of the need to avoid placing themselves in vulnerable situations
- be mindful of the need to maintain professional boundaries
- be circumspect about asking students to undertake personal jobs or errands.

27. **WHISTLE BLOWING**

Whistle blowing is the mechanism by which staff can voice their concerns, made in good faith, without fear of repercussion. Staff should be familiar with the Whistle Blowing Policy and report any behaviour by colleagues that raises concern.

Staff should be familiar with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and understand that they have a duty to report any child protection concern to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL.

This guidance summarises "Guidance for Safe Working Practice for the Protection of Children and Staff in Education Settings" 2019.

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September 2019