

Professional Behaviour for School Personnel

Staff student relationship must always be conducted in a manner that is respectful, professional and appropriate.

Teachers are in a position of trust and 'in loco parentis'. They have a duty of care that a careful and responsible parent would exercise.

Staff must always maintain an arms length professional relationship with students. It is appropriate to encourage a warm friendly relationship with students.

Physical Boundaries

Any physical contact which is likely to be misinterpreted by student, parent or another person should be avoided.

Everyone must respect the personal space and privacy of individuals.

It is unwise for activities such as sport or drama to occur on a one-to-one basis and the present of other students or another adult is advised.

Any relationship of a romantic or sexual nature is never permissible.

To protect staff management must be firm with students who seek the affections of staff.

With reference to changing rooms, toilet areas and shower areas- staff should remain outside and intervene only in emergencies or for disciplinary reasons. There should be a clear code of conduct for students in the use of these facilities.

One-to-One Meetings

When confidential meetings must take place staff should ensure that the room has visual access or door ajar. If these conditions are not possible then another adult should be made aware of the meeting. Doors should never be locked. Never detain a student alone. Disciplinary situations give rise to the greatest risk of complaint.

A student should never be given a lift alone. Another adult or two students should accompany. A book should keep note of time, date and names.

First Aid

First Aid should be administered in the presence of other students or adult. Do not hesitate to administer first aid if others are not present.

Dignity and Respect

The principles of dignity and respect should permeate the school environment. The environment should be free from harassment, intimidation or offensive behaviour whether verbal or non-verbal.

Awareness needs to be created regarding offensive language, sexual comments, offensive jokes, racist remarks, offensive texts, offensive emails, offensive or pornographic web-sites. Issues of harassment and discrimination should be addressed through SPHE and RSE programmes.

Schools are referred to the JMB/ASTI – Sexual Harassment Policy for Schools and the JMB template for dignity in the work place.

Photographing of teachers, pupils, fighting or malicious intent must be dealt with in accordance with the code of behaviour.

Searches

A policy on searching should be agreed with parents and pupils.

In requesting a student to empty pockets or bag there should be a reasonable belief that the student is in possession of stolen goods, illegal substances or weapons. Reasonable belief might be established through an informant, observation or someone acting suspiciously.

It is advised that the student should be invited to have his/her parents present or a teacher or pupil of his/her choice. The search should be carried out in the presence of the Principal or Deputy Principal with another teacher as witness.

If a student refuses s/he may be prompted by a parent. The Gardaí may be the only solution. The student should be present if a locker is being searched. A policy should include a clause reminding students and parents that the lockers remain school property and that management reserve the right to search lockers.

Use of Reasonable Force

It is permitted to use reasonable force to protect oneself or another from assault, injury or detention caused by a criminal act or to project one's property. It must be reasonable, proportionate and not excessive.

In England

- Physically interposing between pupils
- Blocking a pupils path
- Holding
- Pushing or pulling

- Leading a pupil by hand or arm
- Sheparding with hand in centre of back or in extreme cases more restrictive holds

Prompt action by a teacher, moving towards an accident can often bring situations to an end. A shout or call is often all that is needed. Not to intervene may be a failure of duty of care. If pupils are emotionally- charged it is often prudent to stand back or walk away. Avoid head on confrontation.

Date of Review: _____

Signed by Chairperson: _____

Date: _____