



International School

Safe Pupils, Safe Staff Policy

**Guidance for the Protection of Staff, including volunteer helpers
(e.g. Parents and Carers)**

Introduction

A Safe Environment, Professional Properties, Wise Precautions

The School seeks to provide an environment in which all pupils feel secure and supported in their endeavours to achieve their best in all spheres of school life. All staff, whether paid or voluntary, have a duty of care to keep pupils and children safe, and to safeguard and promote their well-being. This duty is to a large extent exercised through the development of caring and professional relationships between staff and pupils, and by staff behaviour which demonstrates integrity, maturity and good judgement.

It is recognised, however, that achieving such an aim is not always straightforward: so much relies on staff and pupil interaction, where tensions arise and misunderstandings can occur. It is here that staff 'behaviours' can give rise to allegations being made against them. Allegations may be misplaced, malicious or genuine: they often arise from differing perceptions of the same event. But when they occur, they are inevitably distressing and difficult for all involved, and staff should be aware that unwary or unprofessional actions can have potentially damaging effects on careers. We should all be alert to situations where we (ourselves) and other staff (including visiting staff) are vulnerable to allegations of abuse.

Whilst every attempt has been made to cover a wide range of situations, it is recognised that this policy cannot cover all eventualities. There may be times when professional judgements are made in situations not covered by this policy, or which directly contravene the guidance given. It is in these situations that colleagues must always advise a senior member of staff of the justification for any action taken or proposed.

This **Safe Pupils, Safe Staff** Policy is therefore designed to encourage and sustain an atmosphere of trust in which all colleagues can conduct their professional lives with confidence.

Staff should feel able to discuss with senior members of staff any difficulties or problems that they experience in their relationships with pupils, so that appropriate advice can be provided, or action taken.

This policy is based upon the following guidance from the DCSF :

- IRSC document - '*Guidance for Safe Working Practice for the Protection of Children and Adults in Education Settings* 2009 commissioned by DCSF
- 'Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education' DCSF 2011
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021
- Working Together to Safeguard Children. A guide to interagency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children HM Government 2018
- Managing Medicines in schools and early years settings: DCSF/Department of Health 2014

Safe Recruitment and Selection

All staff, including volunteer helpers, are subjected to DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks if they have been teaching in the U.K or their equivalent CRO (Criminal Records Office) if they have been resident in the Czech Republic or within any other country. N.B. UK citizens teaching abroad are also required to provide an International Child Protection Certificate (ICPC). Individuals without an appropriate clearance will not be able to be involved with our pupils in any capacity.

Guidance for Safe Working Practice

1 Power and Positions of Trust

- A relationship between a member of staff and a pupil is not a relationship between equals, and the unequal balance of power should never be used for personal advantage or gratification.
- Staff should not use their position to intimidate, bully, humiliate, threaten, coerce or undermine pupils.
- Staff should not use their status and standing to form or promote relationships which are of a sexual nature, or which may become so. Adults working in educational settings, whether in or out of school, are in a position of trust.
- Staff should always maintain appropriate professional boundaries and avoid behaviour which might be misinterpreted by others. If staff are in any doubt about how a situation might be interpreted, they should record the incident and pass the information to a senior member of staff.
- Staff should be aware that pupils are sometimes attracted to a member of staff of the same or opposite sex. A member of staff who becomes aware that a pupil may have a crush on him or her, or a colleague, should discuss this with a senior member of staff, so that the appropriate action can be taken. In this way, steps can be taken to avoid hurt and mistrust for all concerned.

2 Behaviour Outside School

- All adults working with our pupils have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard their welfare and best interests. It is therefore expected that they will adopt high standards of personal conduct in order to maintain the confidence and respect of colleagues, pupils, parents and members of the public. There may be times, for example, when our behaviour or actions in our personal life comes under scrutiny from local communities, the media or public authorities. This could be because this behaviour is considered to compromise your position at the school or indicate an unsuitability to work with pupils. Misuse of drugs, alcohol or acts of violence would be examples of such

behaviour. The behaviour of partners or members of our family may in some circumstances raise similar concerns.

3 Dress and Appearance

- Staff should ensure that they are dressed appropriately for the tasks that they are involved with. Staff should take care that their choice of clothing is not viewed as offensive, revealing, sexually provocative or likely to cause embarrassment or give rise to misunderstanding.

4 Use of Staff Homes

- Unless there is a good reason and permission has been sought from both parents and a senior member of staff, no pupil should be invited into the home of a member of staff. Staff should be vigilant in maintaining their privacy. Under no circumstances should pupils assist with chores or tasks in a member of staff's home. (Also see 8 – Social Contact).
- Teachers with children enrolled at Park Lane should disclose to a member of the senior staff at their site if another pupil from the section of the school they work in (Primary/Secondary) visits their home.

5 Gifts, Rewards and Favouritism

- Staff should strive to ensure that they do not confer special attention or favour upon individual pupils. Social contact with pupils (whether at their or your initiative) should be conducted with discretion. Unless agreed with a senior member of staff, staff should not give out home or mobile phone numbers, or home and personal email addresses.
- Gifts (both given to and received from children) should not be of significant value, nor should they be accepted or given on a regular basis. Staff should be aware of the potential for the giving of a gift to be misconstrued as a gesture to either bribe or 'groom' a pupil.

6 Image Recording

- Image-recording (photography, video etc) should be undertaken in line with school policy (i.e. for justifiable curricula, extra curricula, publicity and celebration purposes) and should be carefully set up, organised and approved. Any images or videos taken must be GDPR compliant and stored in line with the 'Essential Guide for Data Security for Teachers' and if used for curricula, publicity or other purposes, then in line with a consent provided by parents. Staff should be aware of the potential for these aspects to be misused for 'grooming' or pornographic purposes. One to one situations in such instances are best avoided.

- Photographs, videos etc. taken of pupils during school activities **must** be stored on the school network or a school computer. It is not acceptable for staff to have any photographs of pupils on their home computers. If transferring data via memory stick or another form of portable storage media then please ensure this data is copied quickly. (i.e. within a few hours). If a member of staff intends to store on their home PC photographs of pupils during school activities, they should notify the Principal in writing unless they intend to transfer them to the school network quickly and delete them from their home PC.

7 Communication with Pupils

All staff should adhere to the requirements of the Acceptable User Policy for Staff.

- Staff must not use internet or web-based communication channels to send personal messages to a pupil or parent.
- Staff should not give their personal contact details to pupils, including mobile telephone numbers and personal e-mail addresses. All staff are provided with a school e-mail address which is accessible remotely.
- Staff using personal social networking sites such as *Facebook/Instagram* should ensure that the settings are as private as possible and that pupils are never listed as contacts. Staff should take care when joining groups where pupils are also likely to be members.
- Staff should never use or access social networking sites of pupils.
- Staff should only use school e-mail facilities for communicating with pupils or parents. Please refer to your line manager when responding to e-mails involving parental concerns. Any contact with pupils should be for professional reasons only.
- Staff should only exchange mobile telephone numbers with pupils for professional reasons and should not store these numbers on personal mobile phones without the permission of both parents and a senior member of staff. Text messages should only be used as a last resort, when e-mail or telephone contact is not available and where at all possible should be sent from a school mobile telephone.
- Contact between pupils using e-mail, text messages or social network sites that is deemed to be inappropriate may lead to disciplinary and/or criminal investigation.

8 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, or if this occurs coincidentally, staff should exercise their professional judgement in making a response. There will be occasions when there are social contacts between pupils and staff, where for example the parent and teacher are part of the same social circle. These contacts are easily recognised and openly acknowledged. Nevertheless staff should be aware that some social contacts, especially where these are not common knowledge, can be misconstrued as being part of a grooming process. This can also apply to social contacts made through outside interests or through the staff member's own family.

- 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. In such situations, staff members should consult a senior member of staff for advice.

9 Sexual Contact

- Sexual behaviour by a member of staff with or towards children is illegal, whether the child consents or not. This includes non-contact happenings such as watching sexual activities or producing pornographic material. Staff should avoid any form of communication which might be interpreted as sexually suggestive or provocative (verbal comments, physical contact, emails, texts etc).
- There are occasions when adults embark on a course of behaviour known as 'grooming' where the sole purpose is to gain the trust of a child, and manipulate that relationship so sexual abuse can take place. Staff should be aware that consistently conferring inappropriate special attention and favour upon a pupil might be construed as being part of a 'grooming' process and as such will give rise to concerns about their behaviour.

10 Physical Contact

As a general rule, there should be no physical contact between staff and pupils.

- A physical response to pupil misbehaviour is unlawful, unless intended to restrain the pupil from causing harm to him/herself, or to others, or causing damage to property. It is obviously best to defuse (or seek help to defuse) such situations before they become inflammatory. If force has to be used, it should always be 'reasonable' – that is, kept to a minimum and applied for the shortest possible time. The use of unwarranted physical force is likely to constitute a criminal offence. A detailed record of the circumstances should be written up on the appropriate form and reported to the Principal or a senior member of staff immediately, who will then inform the parents on the same day. Please refer to the Physical Restraint Policy or further guidance.

- Well-meaning but gratuitous contact such as ruffling hair, patting a bottom, putting a hand on shoulder etc should be avoided.

Exceptions to the 'no physical contact' rule would include:

- Administering essential First Aid. The School Nurse or trained First Aiders will administer this. The appropriate records must be kept, in line with the School's Medical Policies, and parents are always informed when first aid has been administered.
- The technical coaching of games, drama, ICT, music etc. Contact under these circumstances should again be for the minimum time necessary; staff should remain sensitive to any discomfort expressed verbally or nonverbally by the pupil.
- Cases of distress and support (e.g. bereavement) where a pupil might benefit from an arm round the shoulder, or a hand held when in pain as he/she is taken to the Medical Centre. Staff should be 'self-aware,' on such occasions, and should use professional discretion over the appropriate thing to do in the given situation: physical contact might be the action of a caring parent, but it is as well to be aware of possible misconstruction (e.g. it might be better if another person were present). If you are uncertain or uneasy about a situation, seek advice or help from a senior member of staff. Staff should make a written record of any such contact and let the Principal have a copy.

One to one Contact

- Staff working in one to one situations with pupils are inevitably more vulnerable, and should take all reasonable precautions for working arrangements or practice, in line with advice from Key Stage Leaders, or senior members of staff.
- Staff should be aware of the possible dangers arising from private interviews with pupils. It is as well to have in mind furniture and seating arrangements, and to pay due regard to 'visibility' and 'audibility'. If you do not feel comfortable with a one to one 'situation', seek assistance from a senior member of staff. See also the Guidelines for Teachers / Pastoral Staff when Interviewing Pupils.
- Meetings with pupils off school premises, or on car journeys where a member of staff is taking an unaccompanied pupil, should be made known to another member of staff, and if in doubt, approved by the Principal or a senior member of staff. A risk assessment is advisable, particularly where a child has special or medical needs, or is potentially disruptive, or unreliable or vulnerable.
- You should report as quickly as possible any situation which might be misconstrued.

11 Sensitivity to Personal Issues

- Pupils are entitled to respect and privacy when they are changing clothes. There does, however, need to be an appropriate level of supervision in order to safeguard children, satisfy health and safety considerations, and ensure that bullying or teasing does not occur. The level of supervision should be appropriate to the needs and age of the children concerned and sensitive to the potential for embarrassment.
- Staff should not change in the same place as children.
- Staff should avoid any physical contact when pupils are in a state of undress and should be aware of any visually intrusive behaviour. When staff enter pupil changing areas they should announce their intention to enter in advance.
- Staff should never discuss pupils - or their families - within the hearing of other pupils.
- Staff should use discretion in conversations that cover sensitive matters, and avoid making remarks of a personal nature.
- Staff should avoid entering into or encouraging inappropriate or offensive discussion about sexual matters. It is recognised that areas of the curriculum (Biology, PSHEE, Literature etc) include or can include or raise subject matter of a sexual nature which may lead to unplanned discussion of an explicit or sensitive nature. Responding to pupils' questions may require careful judgment and handling, and guidance may be sought from senior members of staff.
- Pupils undoubtedly derive pleasure and benefit from 'other' staff endorsing their efforts and achievements. Disciplinary matters, however, should be left in the hands of the member of staff dealing with the issue (Head of Year/Deputy Head of School). The temptation to add gratuitous remarks should be resisted.

12 Anger Management

- Never lose your temper with pupils. A sharp word can be useful and appropriate, but an angry tirade or prolonged shouting are rarely so. Do not ever humiliate pupils (e.g. with a dressing-down in public), and be sensitive to a pupil's personal space (i.e. don't invade it).
- If you feel yourself getting angry, hand the situation over to a senior member of staff (there is no loss of face in this), or return to the matter later when you feel calmer and more controlled.
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13 Confidentiality

- Staff often have access to sensitive information about pupils, on a 'need to know' basis, in order to help them undertake their regular duties. Such information must be regarded as confidential and should never be used to intimidate, humiliate or embarrass a pupil. Such information should not be used casually in conversation, or shared with any person other than those who need to know. If

in doubt, seek advice from a senior member of staff. See the Essential Guide to Data Security for Teachers for more detailed advice.

NB. This guidance does not apply to circumstances where abuse is alleged or suspected: in such instances, staff have a legal duty to pass such information on to the Senior Designated Officers for Safeguarding (See Child Protection – Safeguarding Policy).

Conclusion

Much of what is best about Park Lane International School derives from the warm, friendly and respectful relations which exist between adults and pupils. It is, however, important that, from time to time, we reappraise our relationships with pupils, and subject our teaching and working styles to scrutiny, to ensure that they give no grounds for any doubts in the minds of colleagues, pupils or parents. This Safe Pupils, Safe Staff Policy, together with such reappraisals, should serve only to confirm that the School and its staff are operating professional 'best practice' and that what is written here is only common sense.

J Eyles

Reviewed and ratified by SMT: October 2021