

## **POLICY TITLE: SAFE WORKING PRACTICES FOR STAFF (incorporating HCC Model Code of Conduct)**

**STATUS: Statutory**

**REVIEWED BY: TEFAT**

**DATE of REVIEW: September 2013**

TEFAT staff are committed to providing a safe and supportive environment for both pupils and their colleagues. Staff, however, in the past have expressed concern about their vulnerability and have requested clear advice/and or support at times when incidents/situations have occurred that could be or have been misinterpreted by pupils or colleagues.

This document has been produced in response to these concerns and is a brief summary on what is expected and is considered safe practice by staff.

A lot of situations are covered in these guidelines but it would be impossible to cover all eventualities. Staff are urged, if in doubt, to consult their line manager or member of SLT. This summary does highlight behaviour that is illegal, inappropriate or inadvisable.

### **Underpinning Principles**

- The welfare of the child is paramount (Children Act 1989)
- Staff are responsible for their own actions and behaviour and should avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions.
- Staff should work, and be seen to work, in an open and transparent way.
- Staff should discuss and/or take advice promptly from their line manager or another senior member of staff over any incident, which may give rise to concern.
- Records should be made of any such incident and or decisions made/further actions agreed. Records to be stored confidentially in the personnel files.
- Staff should apply the same professional standards regardless of gender or sexuality.
- All staff should know the name of their designated person for child protection, be familiar with local child protection arrangements and

understand their responsibilities to safeguard and protect children and young people.

- Staff should be aware that breaches of the law and other professional guidelines could result in criminal or disciplinary action being taken against them.

## **Power and Positions of Trust**

All staff working with young people are in a position of trust, a relationship between a member of staff and a pupil cannot be a relationship of equals.

## **Confidentiality**

Staff may have access to confidential information about pupils in order to undertake their everyday responsibilities – in some circumstances they may be given additional highly sensitive or private information. All such information should only be shared on a “need to know” basis and never used casually in conversation.

In situations where a pupil has shared information that puts that child or another child at risk or harm this information should be shared immediately with those staff with designated child protections responsibilities. If in doubt about whether to share the information seek guidance from a member of SLT.

## **Propriety & Behaviour**

All staff have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interest of pupils and young people. They should adopt high standards of personal conduct in order to maintain the confidence and respect of their peers, pupils and the public in general. An individual’s behaviour, either in or out of the workplace, should not compromise her/his position within the work setting or risk bringing the school into disrepute. In particular, criminal offences that involve violence or possession or use of illegal drugs or sexual misconduct are likely to be regarded as unacceptable.

Staff should be particularly careful when socialising in public areas where pupils and/or parents may be present. For example, being seen under the influence of alcohol, being seen in the company of pupils (however innocent your motives) or being overheard discussing pupils or staff can lead to accusations of unprofessional conduct. There is also the risk that inappropriate images of staff could be placed on the Internet.

## **Dress and Appearance**

Whilst not wanting to dictate to staff what they can and can't wear, extremes of fashion should be avoided. We are modelling many aspects of behaviour to children including what is appropriate and when. It may also be good to remember that children see us from many angles and levels during the day; often different from the view we get in the mirror in the morning. We would



also point out that footwear should be practical for such a busy environment and therefore flip flops are not considered appropriate for daily wear. Perhaps the best advice about professional dress is - if in doubt, don't!

### **Gifts**

All gifts from suppliers or associates of the school need to be declared to the Principal, with the exception of "one off" small token gifts from pupils or parents. Personal gifts to pupils could be misinterpreted so should be agreed by your line manager.

### **Infatuation**

Staff need to be aware that it is not uncommon for pupils to be strongly attracted to a member of staff. A member of staff who becomes aware that a pupil may be infatuated with them or a colleague should discuss this at the earliest opportunity with a senior member of staff.

### **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.

Staff should not give their personal details such as home/mobile phone number; home or private email address to pupil(s) unless they have agreement from a member of SLT.

### **Physical Contact**

Staff need to be aware that even well intentioned physical contact may be misconstrued by the child, an observer or by anyone to whom the 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, arm wrestling or fun fights.

If you believe you have been involved in physical contact that could be misinterpreted it needs to be reported to a member of SLT at the earliest opportunity.

If a pupil makes an allegation that your behaviour towards them has been inappropriate (no matter how trivial it may seem) staff need to inform their line manager immediately even if the complaint is unfounded.

### **PE and other activities which require physical contact, showers & changing**

Those who teach PE or who offer music tuition for example, will on occasions have to initiate physical contact with pupils in order to support a child so they

can perform a task safely, demonstrate the use of a particular piece of equipment/instrument, etc. This should be done with the pupil's consent, for the minimum time necessary and take place in an open environment. Staff should remain sensitive to any discomfort expressed verbally or non-verbally by the pupil.

Young people are entitled to respect and privacy when changing clothes or taking a shower, however, there needs to be appropriate level of supervision. The supervision should be appropriate to the needs and age of the young people concerned and sensitive to the potential for embarrassment.

### **Pupils in Distress**

Staff need to consider the way in which they offer comfort to a distressed pupil and always tell a colleague when and how you offered comfort. Report and record any situations which may give rise to concern to a senior member of staff.

### **Behaviour Management**

Try to defuse the situation before it escalates and use the SJL senior support system consistently. The use of demeaning or insensitive comments towards pupils is not acceptable in any situation.

### **Care, Control and Physical Intervention**

Staff may legitimately intervene to prevent a pupil from committing a criminal offence, injuring themselves or others, causing damage to property, engaging in behaviour prejudicial to good order and to maintain good order and discipline. Under no circumstance should physical force be used as a form of punishment. Support staff should never be involved in the use of physical force without the written permission of the Principal.

In all incidences where physical intervention is deemed necessary the incident and subsequent actions should be documented and reported.

### **Sexual Contact with Young People**

Do not pursue sexual relationships with pupils and young people either in or out of school.

Avoid any form of communication with a child or young person which could be interpreted as sexually suggestive or provocative – including verbal comments, letters, notes, email, phone calls, texts, physical contact, watching inappropriate material.

Because of “grooming” allegations staff should be aware that conferring special attention and favour upon a child might be construed as being part of a grooming process which is an offence.

### **One to One Situations**

Avoid meetings with pupils in remote secluded areas of the Academy. 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. Always report any situation where a child becomes distressed or angry to a senior colleague. Prearranged meetings with pupils away from the school are not permitted and should not take place without the approval of a member of SLT.

### **Transporting Children**

Wherever practical when transporting an individual child in a private vehicle there should be an additional adult acting as an escort. The vehicle should meet all legal requirements, be roadworthy and appropriately insured.

### **Educational Visits**

Staff should take particular care when supervising pupils in the less formal atmosphere. Staff are reminded they are in a position of trust and need to ensure that their behaviour cannot be interpreted as seeking to establish an inappropriate relationship or friendship. Staff should read the Academy’s school visits procedures and guidelines before embarking on any school visit.

### **First Aid and Administering Medication**

Only appropriate trained staff should administer first aid or medications. When administering first aid wherever possible staff should ensure another adult is present or aware of the action being taken.

### **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. Responding to pupil questions can require careful judgement and staff may wish to take guidance in these circumstances from a senior member of staff.

### **Photography, videos and other Creative Arts**

Be clear about the purpose of the activity and about what will happen to the photographs when the lesson/activity is concluded. Ensure that a senior member of staff is aware that photography/image equipment is being used and for what purpose. Avoid taking images in one to one situations.

Do not take, display or distribute images of children in a public place unless consent has been received from their parents/carers.

A reminder – DVDs or other videos/film shown to pupils should be age appropriate with staff following the Censor’s guidelines i.e. U grade only.

## **Internet / Electronic Communication (i.e. Text messages etc.)**

Under no circumstances should staff in school access inappropriate images or indecent material.

Staff should not make contact with pupils on social networking sites – email contact should always be conducted through the member of staff’s school email address. If staff have to text a pupil they should advise their line manager or senior member of staff on each occasion of the content and time of message at the earliest convenience.

### ***The pleasures and perils of email:***

- Staff should be aware that email can be used in a defamation claim as emails are data and therefore fall under the Data Protection Act and a person is entitled to see what data is held on him or her!
- Staff need to be mindful that what seems to one staff member as a bit of banter may seem to another a gross and harassing intrusion into their private space or causes possible alarm and/or distress.
- Staff should be aware that there can be no expectation of privacy in using Academy equipment – Internet use, emails use, etc.
- Emails are treated in the same manner as paper communication.
- It is important that no communication with a pupil may in anyway take advantage of a position of trust or breach their duty of care.
- Staff wellbeing – we work in what is sometimes a stressful profession and anything we can do as a “stress buster” should be welcomed. Staff should use their measured professional judgement when deciding on the recipient field for an email. With this in mind please be aware that in-boxes constantly fill up with messages that are meant for a specific audience, but sent to “all” can create unnecessary irritation/stress. Please use “All Staff” email for essential items of information only and not as a discussion forum.

Any member of staff aware of an inappropriate message, site or film that could lead to hurt, distress for a pupil or colleague or being the Academy into disrepute in the public domain should report the matter, at the earliest convenience, to a senior member of staff.

## **Whistleblowing**

Whistleblowing is the mechanism by which staff can voice their concerns, made in good faith, without fear of repercussion. It is a member of staff’s responsibility to report any behaviour by colleagues that raises concern. Staff should report concerns to a member of the SLT or in the case of a complaint about the Principal to the Governors.

A copy of the Whistleblowing policy is available.

## **Safeguarding**

Staff have a duty to safeguard pupils/pupils from:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect

All staff should be aware of the child protection procedures at SJL and as a minimum attend the “in house” Child Protection training. All staff have a duty to report any child protection concerns to one of the designated persons. This SHOULD NOT be done by email.

Staff must not seriously demean or undermine pupils, their parents or carers, or colleagues.

Staff must take reasonable care of pupils/pupils under their supervision with the aim of ensuring their safety and welfare.

Staff who are the subject of allegations are advised to contact their professional association.

## **Staff Recruitment**

All new posts/vacancies within the school will be subject to increased scrutiny and DBS checks. Interview panels will include a member trained in safer recruitment.

If you have any query or concern about these guidelines please do not hesitate to see any member of SLT.

**DATE OF NEXT REVIEW: July 2015**