

Belfast Model School for Girls

Achievement for All



Code of Conduct for Child Protection for all member of staff

Agreed by Board of Governors: Jun 2006

To be reviewed: Jun 2007

All actions concerning children and young people must uphold their best interests. We must always be mindful of the fact that we hold a position of trust, and that our behaviour towards pupils must be beyond reproach. This Code of Conduct is not intended to detract from the enriching experiences that children and young people gain from positive interactions with members of staff. It is intended to assist us in dealing with the complex issue of child protection, by drawing attention to areas of risk and offering guidance on prudent conduct.

Code of Conduct

Private meetings with Pupils

- 1) We all should be aware of the dangers which may arise from private interviews with individual pupils. Clearly there will be occasions when confidential interviews must take place. As far as possible, we should conduct such interview in a room with visual access, or with the door open.
- 2) Where such conditions cannot apply, we are advised to ensure that another adult knows that the interview is taking place. It may be necessary to use a sign indicating that the room is in use, but it is not advisable to use signs prohibiting entry to the room.
- 3) Where possible another pupil, or preferably, another adult should be present or nearby during the interview, and the school will facilitate this if necessary.

Physical Contact with Pupils

- 1) As a general principle, we should not make unnecessary physical contact with pupils. It is unrealistic and unnecessary, however, to suggest that we should touch pupils only in emergencies. In particular, a distressed child, especially a younger child, may need reassurance involving physical comforting, as a caring parent would provide. We should not feel inhibited about providing this.
- 2) We should never touch a child who has clearly indicated that she is, or would be, uncomfortable with such contact, unless it is necessary to protect the child, others or property from harm.
- 3) Physical punishment is illegal, as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour, unless it is by way of necessary restraint
- 4) Staff who have to administer first aid to a pupil should ensure wherever possible that this is done in the presence of other children or another adult. **However, no member of staff should hesitate to provide first aid in an emergency simply because another person is not present.**
- 5) Any physical contact which could be misinterpreted by a pupil, parent or other casual observer should be avoided.

- 6) Following any incident where a member of staff feels that his/her actions have been, or may be misconstrued, a written report of the incident should be submitted immediately to the Principal.
- 7) We should be particularly careful when supervising pupils in a residential setting, or in approved out-of-school activities, where more informal relationships tend to be usual and where staff may be in proximity to pupils in circumstances very different from the normal school environment.

Choice of Teaching Materials

- 1) Teachers should avoid using teaching materials, the choice of which might be misinterpreted and reflect upon the motives for the choice.
- 2) When using teaching materials of a sensitive nature a teacher should be aware of the danger that their application, either by pupils or by the teacher, might be criticised after the event.
- 3) If in doubt about the appropriateness of particular teaching materials, the teacher should consult the Principle before using it.

Relationships and Attitudes

We should ensure that our relationships with pupils are appropriate to the age, maturity and sex of the pupils, taking care that our conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Our attitudes, demeanour and language all require care and thought. Children and young people have a right to be treated with respect. We should be alert to the risk of emotional abuse, such as persistent and vindictive sarcasm, verbal bullying, or severe and persistent negative comments or actions, particularly when directed consistently at a single pupil or a small number of pupils. Such bullying behaviour is unacceptable. We should reflect on every aspect of our contact with pupils which may give rise to perceptions or allegations of this form of abuse.

Conclusion

It is impossible and inappropriate to set hard and fast rules to cover all the circumstances in which we interrelate with pupils, or where opportunities for our conduct to be misconstrued might occur. In all circumstances, our professional judgement should be exercised and for the vast majority of us this Code of Conduct will serve only to confirm what has always been our practice. From time to time, however, it is prudent for all of us to reflect on our teaching styles, relationships with pupils and our manner and approach to individual pupils, to ensure that we give no grounds for doubt about our intentions in the minds of colleagues, pupils or parents/guardians.

This Code of Conduct for Staff is translated into action through policies such as:

Pastoral Care Policy

The Use of Reasonable

Force Complaints Procedure

Behaviour Management Policy

Child Protection Policy