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SAFE WORKING PRACTICES FOR THE PROTECTION OF STAFF* AND CHILDREN

Introduction

Following current legislation and national guidance this document has been produced to ensure that young people are safeguarded and to reduce the risk of staff being falsely accused of improper or unprofessional conduct. It applies to all adults working in a paid or unpaid capacity in the Greek supplementary schools.

Duty of Care

Teachers and other staff (volunteers, committee members and others) have a duty to keep children and young people safe and to protect them from physical and emotional harm and should always act in the child's best interests.

Confidentiality

Staff is expected to treat information about children and young people in a discreet and confidential manner. However, there are some circumstances in which information must be shared, for example when abuse is alleged or suspected. In such cases, information should be passed to the designated child protection officer of the school (usually the head teacher).

Behaviour

All staff should adopt high standards of personal conduct and not behave in a manner, which would lead people to question their suitability to work with children. For example, staff should not

- discuss their own personal relationships with or in the presence of pupils
- discuss a pupil's personal issues in inappropriate settings
- make sexual remarks to a pupil(including email ,text messages, letter etc)
- make comments which scapegoat, demean or humiliate pupils

Dress and appearance

Staff should ensure they are dressed appropriately. They should wear clothing that is not likely to be viewed as offensive, revealing or which may place staff vulnerable to criticism or allegation.

Gifts

There are occasions when children or parents wish to offer teachers small tokens of appreciation e.g. at Christmas or as a thank you, which is acceptable. It is unacceptable to receive gifts on a regular basis or of any significant value. Similarly, it is inadvisable to give such personal gifts to pupils, although small gifts, as part of an agreed reward system are acceptable.

Infatuations

Staff should report to the Head teacher any indications that suggest a pupil may be infatuated with a member of staff.

Social contact

Friendships/social contact between families of staff and pupils is acceptable. However, staff should not establish or seek individual social contact with pupils. Staff should not give their personal details such as telephone numbers, home or email address to pupils, unless this is agreed by the Head teacher.

Physical contact

There are occasions when it is appropriate for staff to have physical contact with pupils but it is crucial that they only do so in ways appropriate to their role, and taking into consideration a pupil's age, stage of development and gender. There may be occasions when a distressed pupil needs comfort and reassurance and this may include age-appropriate physical contact.

Staff must never indulge in horseplay, tickling or fun fights. Schools should ensure that they have a system in place for recording serious incidents.

Showers and Changing

Young people are entitled to respect and privacy when changing clothes. Staff should avoid remaining in the room unless pupil needs require it. The supervision should be appropriate to the needs and age of the young people concerned and sensitive to the potential for embarrassment.

Behaviour Management

All pupils and teachers have a right to be treated with respect and dignity. Corporal punishment is unlawful in all schools. Staff should not use any form of degrading treatment to punish a pupil and should not use demeaning or insensitive comments towards a pupil. Parents should be kept informed of any sanctions. In all cases where physical intervention is deemed necessary, the incident and subsequent action should be recorded and reported.

Sexual contact with young people

Any sexual behaviour by a member of staff with or towards a child or young person is both inappropriate and illegal. Children and young people are protected by the same laws as adults in relation to non-consensual sexual behaviour but additionally protected by specific legal provisions regardless of whether the child or young person consents or not.

One to one situations

Staff working in one to one situations with children and young people may be more vulnerable to allegations. Teachers and others should recognise this possibility and plan and conduct such meetings accordingly. Every attempt should be made to ensure the safety and security of both staff and pupils are met. Staff should ensure there is visual access and/or an open door on one to one situations and inform other staff of the meeting beforehand, assessing the need to have them present or close by.

Transporting Children/Educational Visits

In certain situations staff or volunteers may agree to transport children for out of school activities. Parents will be notified about trips and will be asked to give written consent for the children to participate. The school will ensure that transport arrangements meet all legal requirements and that the vehicle is roadworthy and appropriately insured. Staff/volunteers should be made aware that the safety and welfare of the children is their responsibility until this is safely passed over to a parent/carer. Where out of school activities include overnight stays, careful consideration needs to be given to sleeping arrangements and pupils and parents should be informed of these prior to the start of the trip.

First Aid and Administration of Medication

All schools must have trained first aiders /appointed persons who should receive appropriate training before administering first aid or medication. In circumstances where a pupil needs medication during school hours, a written health care plan should be drawn up with the parent/carer and pupil to ensure the safety and protection of pupils and staff.

Intimate care

All children have a right to safety, privacy and dignity when contact of an intimate nature is required (e.g. assisting with toileting). A care plan should be drawn up and agreed with parents for all children who require intimate care on a regular basis.

Photography, videos

Many school activities involve recording images for publicity or to celebrate achievement. Parents/carers will be asked at the beginning of the academic year to indicate they are giving permission for their child/ren to be photographed. Parents will also be asked to give a written undertaking that any images (photographic or video) taken by them will not be used inappropriately.

Sharing concerns and recording incidents

All staff should be aware of the school's child protection procedures, including procedures for dealing with allegations against staff. All staff and volunteers should know who the designated member of staff for child protection is and take responsibility for recording and passing concerns to the relevant officer.