



SHARMANS CROSS JUNIOR SCHOOL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ADULTS WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

1. INTRODUCTION

Sharmans Cross Junior School is committed to the safeguarding of everyone that comes into contact with our community. This is especially true of children, but also includes staff, parents, governors, visitors and neighbours. We recognise that everyone has the right to be safe, feel respected and cared for.

This code must be read, explained and signed by anyone wishing to participate actively in working with our young people.

2. THE CODE

2.1 **General**

Adults should take care that their relationships with pupils reflect the age, gender and maturity of the pupils. It will be particularly important to ensure that all aspects of demeanour, language and attitudes - however conveyed - do not give rise to misunderstandings and are thoroughly professional in nature. Ambiguous or ambivalent comment and conduct, in particular, should be avoided.

2.2 **Physical Contact**

Physical contact may be misconstrued by a pupil, parent or observer. Touching pupils, including well-intentioned informal and formal gestures such as putting a hand on the shoulder or arm, can, if repeated regularly, lead to questions being raised. Staff must not make gratuitous physical contact with pupils and should avoid attributing 'touching' to their teaching style as a way of relating to pupils.

There will be occasions when physical contact will be acceptable. In general these will fall into one of three categories:

2.2.1 Action to prevent harm or injury to the pupil or to others.

If it is necessary to prevent a pupil causing injury to him/herself or to others the use of minimum force and contact necessary to prevent harm or injury is acceptable and defensible. Such incidents must always be reported to a member of the SMT and the appropriate actions taken. (see 2.10 below).

2.2.2 Comforting a pupil in distress.

There is no easy definition of what is acceptable since much will depend on the circumstances, the age of the pupil, the extent and cause of the distress and the alternative means of providing comfort. Adults will need to use their professional

judgement and discretion in relation to these factors. Adults should consider how others might perceive the action, even if no one else is present, and ensure that it does not develop into unnecessary contact. Particular care must be taken in instances, which involve the same pupil over a period of time.

2.2.3 Unavoidable contact.

This is a particularly sensitive issue in subjects such as Physical Education and Drama and in some forms of skills coaching. All adults must be alert to the possibilities of misinterpreting any contact. To avoid such misunderstanding all planned contact must be demonstrably unavoidable. It may be, for example, that alternative methods involving demonstrations of particular techniques by the teacher or a particularly competent pupil may be more appropriate than modifying a pupil's technique by physical contact. It will generally not be acceptable for physical contact to take place between adolescent pupils and adults. In cases of doubt or uncertainty staff should seek advice from the Head Teacher.

There are other occasions when physical contact may be questioned even if innocent in intention. Adults should therefore ensure that their actions recognise the possibility of misinterpretation and are open to the scrutiny of colleagues.

Individual professional judgments will be required about the level of physical contact with individual children, which will take account of their age, circumstances and background. If unavoidable contact is made and you have concerns about how it might be construed, report it immediately.

2.2.4 Corporal Punishment

Any form of physical punishment is prohibited under disciplinary procedures and potentially actionable in law. This also applies to any form of physical response to misbehaviour, with the exception noted in 2.2.1 above.

2.3 Private meetings

It is advisable to avoid remote areas of the school and to ensure that wherever possible the door is left open or visual contact with others is maintained. Under no circumstances should meetings with individual pupils be arranged off the school premises without the prior approval of the Head Teacher or any senior colleague with delegated authority to approve such meetings. This includes the transporting of individual children in private cars. Where transport has been approved, two adults should accompany the child. Such meetings should, in any event, be discouraged.

Where it is not possible to meet in the circumstances referred to above another member of staff should be told of the meeting beforehand. Steps to prevent others entering a room by the use of 'Meeting in Progress' are especially likely to be open to misinterpretation. In many cases it will be advisable for another pupil or adult to be present or in a position to minimise risk during the interview.

2.4 Pupils with Special Needs

If pupils require assistance with toileting staff should consider whether it would be possible to arrange for the presence of another adult in the vicinity. Where this is

not possible adults should discuss with their Head Teacher what arrangements will be reasonable in all the circumstances. The Head Teacher may refer to the matter to the relevant agency for further advice.

2.5 First Aid

The existence of any life threatening or serious condition will determine the suitability and necessity of physical contact. In the absence of such justification adults who administer first aid should ensure that, wherever possible, other children or another adult can be present if there is any doubt over the possibility of any physical contact being misconstrued.

2.6 Comments and Discussions with Pupils

Adults must avoid comments to or about pupils which could be taken to have sexual overtones. It is equally unacceptable for adults to encourage debate and discussion between groups of students, which could be interpreted as having sexual overtones, which are not justified in the context of the teaching programme. This will call for the exercise of careful judgment in responding to questions raised by pupils.

Notwithstanding the advice given above it is recognised that, in order to discharge particular pastoral responsibilities, adults may from time to time need to engage in conversation with pupils and students which cover sensitive matters. Adults must use their professional judgement to ensure that they are not drawn into areas inappropriate to their duties or their relationship with the pupils concerned. Staff must also use their discretion to ensure that, for example, any probing for details cannot be construed as unjustified intrusion.

In responding to individual students' distress adults will need to consider carefully whether they should offer advice, sympathy or counselling if a discussion enters a sensitive area or, alternatively, refer them to a colleague or agency who is better placed to offer appropriate advice.

No conversation of this nature should be entered into without the adult telling the child that this discussion will need to be reported to either parent or Head for the child's own safety.

The persistent and hurtful use of sarcastic, demeaning or insensitive comments towards young people may also be regarded as a form of abuse which is potentially very damaging and should be avoided.

2.7 Infatuations and Crushes

These unfortunately do develop and can involve pupils and adults of both sexes on both a heterosexual and homosexual basis. They need to be handled sensitively. Careless and insensitive reactions have been known to provoke false accusations. It is therefore in the interest of all parties to avoid adding to the pupil's problems by encouraging the crush or making jokes about the situation. In such situations the advice of a senior colleague must be sought. Other members of staff have a part to play, too, in alerting a colleague to the possibility of an infatuation in order that appropriate steps can be taken to minimise hurt and distress and the risk to the teacher concerned. Whilst the risk of infatuation is not limited to younger

members of staff, newly qualified adults must recognise their particular vulnerability to adolescent infatuation.

2.8 Out of School and After-School Activities

Adults should take particular care when supervising pupils in the less formal atmosphere of a residential setting or after-school activity. The more relaxed relationships that may promote successful activities can be misinterpreted by young people. It is important to emphasise that the standards of professional conduct and behaviour expected of adults should be no different to that which applies within school. Adults should be aware of the particular care, which should be taken with older, more mature students in these circumstances.

2.9 Teaching materials

The use of books, videos and films of an explicit or sensitive nature, particularly in relation to language or sexual behaviour must be given careful consideration to ensure that its selection is not subsequently misinterpreted. There should always, therefore, be a clear link with the targets of the teacher's programme.

2.10 Reporting Incidents

Adults should report any concerns they may have following any incident where s/he feels that his/her actions may have been misinterpreted. This report should be made to the Head Teacher as soon as possible after the incident and should include as an immediate follow-up the preparation of a written note of the incident, a copy of which should be given to the Head Teacher. The teacher may also wish to seek advice from his/her professional association. The Head Teacher facing similar situations is advised to contact the school's SIP.

Whilst reporting of incidents is always advisable it is particularly important to ensure that a contemporary written record is made if any form of restraint has been used against a pupil or whenever a pupil, parent or third party has complained about an action or expressed an intention to complain.

This also applies to any adult who witnesses an incident that they feel contravenes this code of conduct or makes them feel uneasy in any way at all. This is directly in line with the school's Speak Up Policy.

Should any Police or Social Services investigations be instigated outside of the school environment, then the adult concerned must, in confidence, report this to the Head Teacher, or Chair of Governors in the case of the Head Teacher, as soon as is possible. Failure to do so could lead to disciplinary action being taken.

2.11 Personal letters and on-line communication

It will rarely be appropriate for adults to write personal notes or letters, or to send e-mail, to individual students. If an adult believes it to be necessary to write a personal note to a pupil, s/he should discuss the purpose and context with a senior colleague, who should refer to the Head Teacher if they require further advice. This advice is not intended to curtail the use of e-mail where schools have agreed the use of this medium for submission of work, advice over aspects of subjects being covered or other professional matters and have ensured that parents and

carers are aware of the school's policy. However, all adults and other adults using e-mail in this context need to be aware of the less formal style that can characterise this form of communication and should ensure that responses do not convey an inappropriate tone. In particular, a friendly and chatty style committed to e-mail can easily be misconstrued by the recipient as the 'conversation' is effectively private to just two individuals, with all that this implies.

Adults should keep passwords secure and ensure that no other person can gain access to their e-mail account and maliciously send messages which appear to have been written by them. Ideally, both adults and pupils should use an e-mail address provided as part of an official school or LEA internet service, even if they are sending messages while working at home. Since these services can be monitored, they provide a measure of protection for both parties. Schools should implement a code of conduct in which pupils and adults understand what to do if they receive inappropriate e-mail messages from any source.

The increased availability of internet 'chat rooms' and similar on-line forums also poses risks for children and adults. While they are popular among young people and offer many positive experiences, there is widespread concern about their potential abuse by paedophiles attempting to groom new victims. The school's advice is that adults should not use unregulated chat rooms for children and should be aware that it is impossible to determine the age of any participant in these environments.

Managed services are available in which on-line discussions for educational purposes can be organized in a secure environment for bona fide participants.

February 2009

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____