

ANNEX 43

INTERACTION WITH PUPILS – CODE OF CONDUCT FOR STAFF

References:

- A: Reference Guide to the key standards in each type of social care service inspected by Ofsted (Reference 080117) www.ofsted.gov.uk
- B. ISI Handbook Part 3 (0309) www.isi.net
- C. "The Early Years Foundation Stage: Statutory Framework 2008" (www.teachernet.gov.uk)
- D. "Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education" DCSF guidance, dated 2007
- E. "Child Protection: Guidance towards Developing a School Policy" A Boarding Briefing Paper by the BSA, April 2006 (www.boarding.org.uk)
- F. "Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education" DCSF guidance, dated 2007, "Working Together to Safeguard Children", DCSF guidance dated 2006, (www.teachernet.gov.uk)
- G. EYFS Guidance for Registered Settings, ISI, September 2010

Introduction

The safety and well-being of every pupil at Vinehall is of paramount importance. Every child has the right to grow up and to live in a safe environment. All staff have a duty to protect pupils from abuse and bullying and to promote their well-being.

The school recognises the need for, and desirability of warm, friendly and respectful social and professional contacts between staff and pupils. Individual conversations between children and adults are the cornerstones of much that is best and most important in the life of Vinehall. These guidelines should enable both staff and pupils to be protected.

Every member of staff should read this code of conduct in conjunction with the school's Statement on Child Protection Policy, our Policy for Pupils on Confidentiality Issues and our Policy on Checking Employees, Temporary Workers, Governors, Parent Helpers and Contractors. Staff are invited to review this code of conduct annually, and copies are sent to the Governors.

Safer Recruitment

Vinehall School follows the Government's guidelines for the safer employment of staff who work with children. We obtain enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) certificates on all new members of staff, temporary staff, visiting and peripatetic staff, volunteers and contractors' employees, who work unsupervised in the school. Governors and parent helpers who have regular unsupervised access to children are also required to have up to date CRB certificates. CRB certificates are also required for the adult members of the families of members of staff who are accommodated on site. More details are set out in Policy on Checking Employees, Temporary Workers, Governors, Parent Helpers and Contractors.

New staff and Governors receive child protection training as part of their induction process. This training is repeated at not more than three yearly intervals.

Child Protection Officer

The Deputy Head is the school's Child Protection Officer (CPO). He has been fully trained for the demands of this role and inter-Agency working. He regularly attends courses with other child support agencies to ensure that he remains conversant with best practice. He undergoes refresher training every two years, and maintains close links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) for East Sussex. He reports at least once a year to the Governors on child protection issues, either via the Risk Committee, or directly to the Main Board.

The school's records on child protection are kept locked in the Deputy CPO's office, and are separated from routine pupil records. Access is restricted to the CPO and the Deputy CPO.

Promoting Awareness

Our curriculum and pastoral systems are designed to foster the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all our pupils. All our teaching staff play a vital role in this process, helping to ensure that all of our pupils relate well to one another and feel safe and comfortable within the school. We expect all the teaching and medical staff to lead by example, and to play a full part in promoting an awareness that is appropriate to their age amongst all our pupils on issues relating to health, safety and well-being. All the staff, including all non-teaching staff, have an important role in insisting that our pupils always adhere to the standards of behaviour set out in our behaviour policy and in enforcing our anti-bullying policy. Boarding house staff have a particularly important role to play.

Time is allocated in PSHE to discussions of what constitutes appropriate behaviour and on why bullying and lack of respect for others is never right. Assemblies, drama and RS lessons are used to promote tolerance and mutual respect and understanding. We use opportunities, such as the annual National Anti-Bullying week and the annual Safer Internet Day to teach about the unacceptability of bullying and abusive behaviour and to promote the safe use of the internet and mobile phones, inside and outside of school.

Interaction with Pupils

In general, pupils should be encouraged to discuss with their parents or guardians issues that are troubling them. It may be appropriate to suggest that a pupil sees the independent School Counsellor or member of the Medical staff or school doctor.

Staff need to ensure that their behaviour does not inadvertently lay them open to allegations of abuse. They need to treat all pupils with respect and try, as far as possible, not to be alone with a child or young person. Where this is not possible, for example, in an instrumental music lesson, or sports coaching lesson, it is good practice to ensure that others are within earshot. In instrumental music lessons, for example, the door should be left open where possible (many doors have glass panels). If alone in a room with an individual, staff should position themselves near a window.

Where possible, a gap or barrier should be maintained between teacher and child at all times. Any physical contact should be the minimum required for care, instruction or restraint. Staff should avoid taking one pupil on his/her own in a car. However, should this be unavoidable, the child should be seated in the rear of the car. In the event that a journey with a pupil takes place without prior knowledge of Head/Deputy Head he/she must be informed retrospectively and in writing as soon as possible.

Communication with Pupils

Staff at Vinehall have always enjoyed extremely good relations with pupils at Vinehall and also with ex-pupils (Vines). Many Vines may be personal friends of members of staff. However, staff should always be conscious that communications with pupils (especially current pupils) could be misinterpreted by both the child and also their parents.

To protect children from potential 'grooming' and staff from misinterpretation of their friendly actions, staff are strongly advised to:

- Avoid friendships based on websites such as 'Facebook'. It is not advisable to accept invitations to become 'a friend' from current pupils.
- Avoid phone 'texts' as a means of communication. Staff should avoid letting children have their mobile phone number.
- In all written communications (letter, email, texts) be aware that what seem to be friendly enquiries could be misconstrued, especially by adolescents, who may develop a 'crush' on an adult.
- If staff are in regular communication with pupils, they are strongly advised to inform the parents that such communications are taking place.
- If in communications with pupils, never reveal a home address and always instead use the school address.

Staff should avoid giving their personal mobile phone numbers to pupils, and they should avoid communicating with them by text message or personal email. If they need to speak to a pupil by telephone, they should try to use one of the school's telephones. The Group Leader on all trips and visits involving an overnight stay should take a school mobile phone with him/her, and may ask the pupils for their mobile numbers before allowing them out in small, unsupervised groups. The school mobile should be used for any contact with pupils that may be necessary. The Group leader will delete any record of pupils' mobile phone numbers at the end of the trip or visit and pupils will delete any staff details. See Policy on Pupils' Use of ICT, Mobile Phones and Other Electronic Devices.

It is customary for males to stay out of the girls' dormitory and bathroom areas. If you are taking visitors to the dormitories, you must check with the matron first.

Staffs are expected to exercise authority and discipline in a mutually respectful way so that pupils feel that their privacy is safeguarded. It is appropriate for staff to knock on bathroom doors and dormitory doors before entering in case pupils are changing.

Physical Restraint

Any physical restraint is only permissible when a child is in imminent danger of inflicting an injury on him/herself or on another, and then only as a last resort, when all efforts to diffuse the situation have failed. Another member of staff should, if possible, be present to act as a witness. All incidents of the use of physical restraint should be recorded in writing and reported immediately to the Head and the CPO who will decide what to do next.

If a Pupil Reports Abuse

Pupils who have a problem may speak to someone whom they trust. It is important that the member of staff sets the boundaries firmly at the outset of such a conversation, making it clear that no one can offer absolute confidentiality. A pupil who is insistent upon confidentiality should be referred to an external source, such as ChildLine (details are given in the Policy for Pupils on Confidentiality Issues, which is displayed in the homework diaries, and on notices in the school phone box and dispensary. If the pupil is only prepared to speak if absolute confidentiality is guaranteed, the member of staff should terminate the conversation at that point. The adult should provide the CPO with a written account of what has transpired as a matter of urgency.

If a pupil decides to speak to a member of staff about the fact that either he/she, or a pupil known to them, is being bullied, harassed and abused, the member of staff should:

- React professionally, and remember that they are not carrying out an investigation, (which is a task for specialists),
- Take what the child says seriously, and calmly, without becoming emotionally involved,
- Make it clear why unconditional confidentiality cannot be offered, (drawing on the policy for pupils on confidentiality issues as necessary),
- Explain that any adult member of staff is obliged to inform the CPO, if there child protection or safeguarding issues are involved, in order that specialist help can be arranged.
- Encourage the pupil to speak directly to the CPO,
- Explain that only those who have a professional "need to know" will be told, and, if appropriate, measures will be set up to protect the pupil from retaliation and further abuse,
- Reassure the child that he or she was right to tell, and that he/she is not to blame for having being bullied or abused,
- Allow the child to tell his or her own story, without asking detailed or leading questions
- Record what has been said,
- Inform the CPO or the Head as soon as possible - at least by the end of the morning/afternoon session of that day.

Inform the Head or CPO immediately in cases where abuse from a member of staff is alleged, or if the incident happened inside the school, or on a school trip. (If the Head is unavailable – or is involved - the Chairman of Governors should be told immediately).

Where there are evident signs of physical injury, that may (or may not) be the result of abuse or bullying, medical help should be summoned, or the pupil should be taken to the dispensary. In serious cases, the Police and the LADO should be informed from the outset.

Role of School Medical Staff

Health professionals in a school operate within their own professional guidelines, which include an obligation to refer cases of abuse to the CPO and or the Head.

Action to Protect the Child

Information about possible abuse may come to a member of staff in several ways - direct allegation from a child that has been abused, through a friend, relative or other child, through a child's behaviour or through observation of an injury to the child.

In the case of an allegation being made by the child concerned or by a third party it is important to remember that:

- Defendants have been acquitted where leading questioning or inappropriate investigation has been proven.
- It is vital that subsequent enquiries should not be prejudiced by detailed questioning in school.

The CPO and/or the Head will consider how best to support and monitor the pupil concerned through any process of investigation, liaising closely with parents, carers, Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), or other agencies involved to identify the support strategies that will be appropriate.

Whistle-Blowing

If a teacher or member of staff has concerns about the behaviour of another member of staff towards a pupil, he or she should report it at once to the Head or CPO. Any concern will be thoroughly investigated under the school's whistle-blowing procedures. If there is evidence of criminal activity, the Police will always be informed. Wherever possible, and subject to the rights of the pupil, the member of staff will be informed of the outcome of the investigation. No one who reports a genuine concern in good faith needs to fear retribution.

Confidentiality

A member of staff who uses the whistle-blowing procedure is entitled to have his/her name protected from being disclosed by the Head to the alleged perpetrator, without his/her prior approval. However, it has to be recognised that his/her evidence may be required by the Police to be used in any criminal proceedings.

Where a Member of Staff has Concerns about a Pupil

If a teacher or other member of staff has concerns about any pupil or incident that touches upon child protection issues, he or she should report them as soon as possible to the CPO, or to the Head.

Definition of Abuse

Abuse can affect children of all ages, sexes, different races and cultures and all social classes. In some cases behaviours or physical injuries suggest clearly that abuse is occurring but in others the signs will be less apparent.

Four categories of abuse are recognised in legislation:

- physical abuse
- neglect
- emotional abuse
- sexual abuse

The NSPCC defines child abuse as:

“Child abuse is the term used when an adult harms a child or a young person under the age of 18.....Child abuse can take four forms, all of which can cause long term damage to a child: physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect and child sexual abuse. Bullying and domestic violence are also forms of child abuse.

“A child may be experiencing abuse if he or she is:

- *Frequently dirty, hungry or inadequately dressed*
- *Left in unsafe situations, or without medical attention*
- *Constantly “put down,” insulted, sworn at or humiliated*
- *Seems afraid of parents or carers*
- *Severely bruised or injured*
- *Displays sexual behaviour which doesn’t seem appropriate for their age*
- *Growing up in a home where there is domestic violence*
- *Living with parents or carers involved in serious drug or alcohol abuse”*

“Remember, this list does not cover every child abuse possibility. You may have seen other things in the child’s behaviour in circumstances that worry you.”

“Abuse is always wrong and it is never the young person’s fault.”

The severity of impact on a child is believed to increase the longer the abuse continues, the more extensive the abuse, and the older the child.

Symptoms

The NSPCC lists some of the signs and behaviours which may indicate that a child is being abused:

- repeated minor injuries
- children who are dirty, smelly, poorly clothed or who appear underfed
- children who have lingering illnesses which are not attended to, deterioration in school work, or significant changes in behaviour, aggressive behaviour, severe tantrums
- an air of 'detachment' or 'don't care' attitude
- overly compliant behaviour
- a 'watchful attitude'
- sexually explicit behaviour (e.g. playing games and showing awareness which is inappropriate for the child's age), continual open masturbation, aggressive and inappropriate sex play
- a child who is reluctant to go home, or is kept away from school for no apparent reason
- does not trust adults, particularly those who are close
- 'tummy pains' with no medical reason
- eating problems, including over-eating, loss of appetite
- disturbed sleep, nightmares, bed wetting
- running away from home, suicide attempts
- self inflicted wounds
- reverting to younger behaviour
- depression, withdrawal
- relationships between child and adults which are secretive and exclude others

These signs are not evidence themselves; but may be a warning, particularly if a child exhibits several of them or a pattern emerges. It is important to remember that there may be other explanations for a child showing such signs. Abuse is not easy to diagnose, even for experts.

Parents

In general, we believe that parents should be informed about any concerns regarding their children. It is important that we are honest and open in our dealings with them. However, concerns of this nature must be referred to the CPO or the Head, who will decide on the appropriate response.

In a very few cases, it may not be right to inform them of our concerns immediately as that action could prejudice any investigation, or place the child at further risk. In such cases, advice will be sought from the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and the LADO.

Early Years Foundation Stage

Early Years (EY) children at Vinehall refer to children from 2 to 5 years of age in our Pre-Nursery, Nursery, Kindergarten and Reception classes. Vinehall EY is included in the Interactions with Pupils Policy (Code of Conduct for Staff) with the whole school. Requirements for EY children comply with the EYFS statutory framework and sit alongside other legal obligations, legislation and Vinehall School policies which cover the children of statutory school age.

As stated in the Pre-Prep and Early Years Behaviour Management Policy, the child's behaviour must be managed effectively, consistently and in a manner appropriate for the child's stage of development and particular individual needs. For example it may be necessary to comfort and settle a child who is upset and it would be appropriate for the key person to cuddle the child in an appropriate manner. Staff are advised not to be alone with a child in such circumstances. Physical intervention should only be used to manage a child's behaviour if it is necessary to prevent personal injury to the child, other children or an adult, to prevent serious damage to property or in what would reasonably be regarded as exceptional circumstances. Any occasion where physical intervention is used to manage a child's behaviour should be recorded and parents should be informed about it on the same day according to EYFS requirements.

As a provider of EY education and care we ensure that adults looking after children or having unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so and there are effective safe recruitment systems in place. All staff working with EY children and those living on the premises have an enhanced CRB Disclosure and records demonstrate that checks have been done. Any person without a CRB, are not allowed unsupervised contact with the children and staff are expected to declare all convictions, cautions, court orders reprimands and warnings which may affect their suitability to work with children.

Ofsted should be notified if there is any change to the address, telephone number, or the person or company managing the EY provision. Notification should be made in advance of the event occurring where practicable, in other cases it should be within 14 days of the event occurring. The Childcare (Disqualification) Regulations 2007 require registered providers to inform Ofsted of any court order, determination or conviction or any other grounds for disqualification from registration applying to them or any other person living or working in their household.

In addition to whole school INSET and Pre-Prep meetings, the EY staff have separate meetings to review, monitor and evaluate intervention practices and the findings inform IEPs, class planning, the department SEF and action planning.

Related Child Protection Policies:

1. Child Protection Policy.
2. Checking Employees, Temporary Workers, Governors, Proprietors, Volunteers and Contractors.
3. Induction of New Staff, Governors and Volunteers in Child Protection.
4. Procedures when a Member of Staff, Volunteer, Child Protection Officer or Head faces Allegations of Abuse.
5. Policy for Pupils on Confidentiality.
6. Use of ICT, Mobile Phones and Other Electronic Devices.
7. Taking, Storing and Using Images of Children.

Other Related Policies:

Physical Intervention Policy

Pre-Prep and Early Years Behaviour Management Policy